

The National Flag of Viet Nam: Its Origin and Legitimacy

An English translation from the Vietnamese article:

Quốc Kỳ Việt Nam: Nguồn Gốc và Lễ Chính Thống

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I. Introduction

By definition, a legitimate National Flag is the official flag of a people living in a territory governed by its own government, one trusted by the majority of the people in its duty to protect the boundaries and existence of that particular nation.

Long ago, when the world was ruled by monarchs, “the royal flag” also served as the symbol of that nation. However, this flag was only raised where monarch resided. Citadels and territories displayed flags of their respective commanders. The concept of using one flag to represent national sovereignty throughout the land was a much later development. For example, the national flag of Denmark, with its red field and white cross is considered to be the world’s oldest national flag and was inaugurated in 1219. The flag of the United Kingdom, “The Union Jack,” was recognized by Parliament in 1707. The French Tricolore (Tricolor) with three equal vertical bands of blue, white and red appeared with the French Revolution in 1789. The original flag of the United States was proclaimed by the Continental Congress in the First Flag Act of 1777. This flag consisted of alternating 7 red, 6 white horizontal stripes, and a blue rectangle in the upper left hand corner bearing a circle of 13 white stars representing the thirteen states in the Union at the time the country was founded. After many changes due to the increasing number of states being admitted to the Union, the circle of white stars gradually turned into rows of stars. On July 4, 1958, the U.S. Flag acquired 50 stars with the admission of Alaska and Hawaii. Most other national flags in the world have only appeared within the Twentieth Century, when these countries began to change from a monarchy to a democratic government, thus needing a national flag to represent the country and its people instead of representing only the dynasty.

Since the late nineteenth century, Viet Nam has changed its national flag approximately ten times. Most notable are the yellow flag with three horizontal red stripes (commonly known as the “Yellow Flag”), and the red flag with a centered yellow star (commonly known as the “Red Flag”). These flags have had a history of conflict for more than five decades. From 1954 to 1975, these two flags were used as national flags and symbolized the division of the country into South and North Viet Nam respectively. Thirty years of warfare caused by the Vietnamese Communist Party's efforts to invade South Viet Nam have caused more deaths than in any other period in the nation's history. After 1975, with the Vietnamese Communists (VC) having successfully taken the South, the Red Flag has dominated the skies of Viet Nam and is used to represent Vietnam at offices of international organizations worldwide, wherever Vietnam is a member nation. Also since 1975, with millions of Vietnamese refugees around the world, the Yellow Flag continues to fly overseas, wherever communities of exiled Vietnamese exist. This is the reality that no one is able to dispute.

Within the last few years, many articles about the Yellow and Red Flags have appeared in printed media, such as books, newspapers and the Internet. The history of the Red Flag is easily found on the websites of the Vietnamese Communist Party and the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam. Articles about the history of the Yellow Flag can be found in books and newspapers published before 1975, as well as a few essays that have been widely circulated in the overseas Vietnamese community in recent years.

All documents cited as references at the end of this article contain dissimilar details about the origins and meaning of the Red Yellow and Yellow Red Flags. There has been research by foreigners citing the existence of the Yellow Flag since the end of the nineteenth century. All such research has been elaborately and scientifically presented, but has failed to cite sources or references for verification. Furthermore, the current regime has always wanted to glorify its achievements and strives to smother or destroy all that is associated with the vanquished opposition, thus leading to the unfortunate situation where historical documents both inside and outside Vietnam since 1930 onwards all convey conflicting data.

For this reason, the need to review and unify historical accounts of Viet Nam’s national flags has become essential. What that aim in mind, in this research article the author wishes to present more objective data about the history of all the flags used by all or some Vietnamese over time as the “national flag.” All of the acquired data, discussed below, although based on publicized historical documents, were carefully selected and contain comparisons, explanations, and analysis so that each datum is *presented with authenticity*. The author hopes this small contribution will be found useful by future generations.

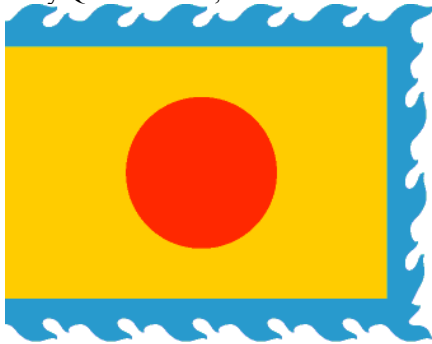
II. National Flag from the Nineteenth Century to Present

Today, younger generations of Vietnamese wanting to learn about the legitimate national flag of the Vietnamese people within the last 100 years have been and are still left bewildered by the *contrasting nature*, as well as the differing origins and

significance of each flag. Thus, to searching for the origin of each flag requires study of the evolutionary history of the Vietnamese people. Following are summaries of the historical contexts, as well as the meaning of each flag as presented in one or many of the documents referenced at the end of this article.

1. Long Tinh Ky: The Original National Flag of the Nguyen Dynasty

According to all documents referenced, the first national flag was established during the Nguyen Dynasty and in Han-Viet was known as “Long Tinh Ky.” (Originally the Vietnamese used Chinese characters for their written language. While the characters retained their original meanings, Vietnamese words replaced the Chinese reading, thus creating the Han-Viet language system. The meaning of “Long Tinh Ky” is as follows: “Ky” means flag. “Long” means Dragon, representing the emperor, and has the color yellow. The blue fringe around the flag represents the Fairy Queen and is also the color of the ocean, where the Dragon dwells. “Tinh” is the stars in the sky as well as the color red. Red also stands for the South and for enthusiasm. Long Tinh Ky is the Dragon flag, with a red dot and blue fringe, symbolizing a people originating from the Dragon Lord Lac Long Quan and the Fairy Queen Au Co, located in the south near the tropic).



Long Tinh Flag (1802-1885)

- * *The yellow field represents the king and the ethnic Viet*
- * *The red dot signifies the South*
- * *The blue fringes signify the ocean and dragon's scales*

The Long Tinh flag originated during the reign of Emperor Gia Long, shortly after he unified the country and ascended the throne in 1802. However, in the early nineteenth century, the Nguyen Dynasty did not have diplomatic relations with Western nations and therefore the Long Tinh Ky was considered the “Emperor's Flag.” The emperor's flag differs from the national flag in that:

1. The emperor's flag is the flag of the dynasty, and is raised wherever he is present.
2. The national flag represents the entire nation and is displayed at all civil offices, not just at the imperial residence.

In 1863, after Ambassador Phan Thanh Gian carried out Emperor Tu Duc's order to visit France and observed the French saluting the Tricolore Flag during their ceremonies, the idea of using the Long Tinh Ky as the “national flag” began.

In 1885, as colonial France's desire to control Viet Nam became apparent and the Nguyen Court could no longer tolerate the mounting pressure of foreign invasion, Premier Ton That Thuyet ordered an attack on the French army. The attack failed and the capital city of Hue fell. Ton That Thuyet assisted Emperor Ham Nghi in their flight from the Imperial City to Quang Tri, then on to their military base of Tan Son, in the Truong Son mountain district, near the border of Laos, to continue the fight against the French. They carried with them the Long Tinh flag to signal the presence of Emperor Ham Nghi as well as to appeal to the people for support in the “Can Vuong” Movement (Can Vuong means to aid the emperor). Many patriots responded to the Can Vuong movement and rose up to revolt against the French from the south to the north; modern day history clearly documents the uprisings of such heroes as Phan Dinh Phung, Hoang Hoa Tham, Cao Thang, Nguyen Thien Thuat, etc. They raised the Long Tinh flags at all command posts as well as at outposts to affirm their support for the Can Vuong initiative. (Excerpt from Viet Su Toan Thu, page 467: “From the Central to the Northern regions, the flags of the revolution were seen flying everywhere”). For this reason, world history books recorded the existence of the Long Tinh Ky beginning in 1885, although in truth it had already been in use as the emperor's flag since the beginning of the nineteenth century.

2. Dai Nam National Flag

Viet Nam as a country went through many name changes since its founding up until the beginning of the Nguyen Dynasty. From 1010, Emperor Ly Thai To established the Ly Dynasty and changed the country's name from Dai Co Viet of Dinh Bo Linh's era to Dai Viet. This name continued to be used through many dynasties; including the Tran, Ho, and Le Dynasties, until the end of the Tay Son Dynasty at the end of the nineteenth century. However, all of the Chinese dynasties never acknowledged Dai Viet as the country's name, but continued to use “An Nam,” which implied a peacefully dominated southern country fully submitted to the Chinese. When Emperor Gia Long ascended the throne in 1802, he sent his ambassador to China for conferment and requested that Nam Viet be used as the country's official name. However, the Qing Dynasty thought that the name Nam Viet was the country's name since the time of Emperor Trieu Da in 207 B.C.E. At that time, Nam Viet also included two large provinces of Quang Dong, Quang Tay and the island of Hai Nam. Since the A.D. era, the Chinese occupied these territories. Until the eighteenth century, Emperor Quang Trung, an undefeated Vietnamese warrior, considered asking the Qing to return these lands. However, he died at the age of 40, before succeeding in this mission. Therefore, when Emperor Gia Long unified the country and wanted to change the country's name to Nam Viet, the Qing recalled the demands of Emperor Quang Trung and refused the request. However, in order to maintain diplomatic harmony, the Qing Court decided to switch the words, placing the

word “Viet” before the word “Nam” so as not to confuse it with the old national name. As the result, Viet Nam became the country’s national name beginning in 1804.

In 1820, Emperor Minh Mang succeeded his father to the throne and expanded Viet Nam to the west and to the south. He also sent his ambassador to China for bestowment and requested to change Viet Nam to Dai Nam, which means a large southern nation. The Qing Court did not officially agree to allow Emperor Minh Mang to change the national name to Dai Nam. However, when the Qing Dynasty was weakened two decades later, Emperor Minh Mang boldly decided to change the country’s name to Dai Nam and publicized this new name on February 15, 1839. This national name was used during the reign of Emperor Tu Duc throughout the reigns of successive emperors. Many of the renowned literary works during this time mentions the nation of Dai Nam. Evidence of this can be found in the volumes of “Dai Nam Thuc Luc Chinh Bien” and “Dai Nam Nhat Thong Chi” by the national historian Quan of Emperor Tu Duc, containing all of the historical accounts from the reigns of preceding emperors.

During this time the French, following the historical accounts of China, continued to refer to Viet Nam as “An Nam,” with the same hopes as the Chinese to “peacefully rule” the Vietnamese. In 1885, because Long Tinh flag followed Emperor Ham Nghi into hiding to resist the French, France did not agree for Emperor Dong Khanh to use Long Tinh Ky as the national flag. The court of Emperor Dong Khanh decided to design a new flag. This new flag, Dai Nam Ky, also contained a yellow field, with two red Chinese characters “Dai Nam,” the national name at that time. However, looking at the new flag, Chinese calligraphy scholars agreed that the characters used are not completely similar to the strokes in the Chinese characters for “Dai” and “Nam.” Thus, no one is able to assert that this flag is connected to the national name Dai Nam.



Dai Nam Kỳ (1885-1890)

** Yellow field*

** The two words Dai Nam in red & rotated in opposite directions by 90o*

The words "Dai" and "Nam" written in Chinese Han characters:

大 Dai 南 Nam

After rotating the word "Dai" 90° counter clockwise and the word "Nam" 90° clockwise:

大 Dai 90°CCW 𠂔 Nam 90°CW

One can see that the two characters “Dai” and “Nam” when rotated as above look very similar to the flag of Viet Nam during the years 1885-1890. However, the character on the left of the flag looks very similar to the character “Dai,” while the character on the right of the flag does not look completely like the character “Nam.” The reason for this might be due to the foreigners’ lack of proficiency in Chinese calligraphy, therefore missing a few strokes when transcribing the picture of the word “Nam” onto their websites. It is also possible that this was the intention of the Dong Khanh Court when creating this flag because Emperor Dong Khanh, who had a weak constitution and was lacking in independence, was enthroned by the French as a puppet emperor. Therefore, not wanting to offend neither the Qing nor the French protectorate, the Court decided to make this small change.

3. The Yellow Flag Under Two Dynasties That Resisted French Occupation From 1890-1920.

Emperor Dong Khanh was on the throne for three years when he died from severe illness on December 12, 1888 at the age of 25. Because his children were too young, the Court decided to enthrone the son of the late Emperor Duc Duc, Prince Buu Lan, in 1889, who then changed his name to Thanh Thai.

Emperor Thanh Thai was a very intelligent emperor, eager to learn at a very young age, but possessed an ideal for national autonomy and national reform. He liked to find opportunities to mingle with the people, often leaving the walls of the imperial palace, pretending to go hunting or on excursions, sometimes even pretending to be insane, to try to make contact with people with revolutionary ideals.

Prior to this time, during the reign of Emperor Hiep Hoa, in August of 1883, the French attacked and pushed their control to the port of Thuan An and delivered an ultimatum demanding that the Imperial Court sign a Peace Treaty. This treaty acknowledged that the Southern region to be a colony of France, while the Central and Northern regions would become French protectorates

(meaning the loss of sovereignty in international relations and the national military.) From this time until 1945, Viet Nam was no longer a unified nation.

From his interaction with patriotic intellectuals outside the palace, Emperor Thanh Thai was able to understand and sympathize with the people's discontent. Consequently, not only did he refuse to satisfy the demands of the dominating government, but also utilized many honest and virtuous talents like Ngo Dinh Kha and Nguyen Huu Bai, with the hope of restoring and reforming the country. In 1890, the Emperor passed a decree, changing the flag with Chinese characters to a new flag. The yellow flag with three red stripes was created and used for the first time as the national flag.



Dai Nam National Flag (1890-1920)

** Yellow field*

** Three equal red stripes signify the indivisible North, Central, and South*

It should be noted that the yellow flag with three red stripes (called The Yellow Flag for short) is the first true “national flag” of the Vietnamese people for it reflects the aspiration and hope of the people, not just the emperors, for independence and unification of the Viet nation.

The creation of this new national flag was significant for many reasons:

1. It represented the will to struggle of the Vietnamese, rejecting the Quy Mui "Peace Treaty" and the “divide to govern” policy of the colonial French, which had led to a French-colonized Southern state and French-protected Central and Northern regions.
2. It affirmed the unification of Dai Nam's territory; all three regions having similar political positions without distinction, within the “yellow” foundation of the Viet people- a people who reside in the southern region.
3. It inspired the spirit of love for “country and people,” by breaking off all associations with the Chinese characters, as well as separating from the protective power of the French and discontinuing to pay tribute to the Chinese.

Furthermore, the Yellow Flag was also called the flag of the “nation.” Therefore, the words “nation” and "nationalist" existed since the late nineteenth century, as opposed to the word “colony” and "colonist,” long before they were used again in the Mid-Twentieth Century to be opposite the word “communist”.

That national flag lasted throughout the reign of Emperor Thanh Thai. In 1907, due to his strong and resistive character, refusing to be a puppet emperor and disobeying French demands, Emperor Thanh Thai was disgraced and decried by the French, who claimed that he was “psychologically insane.” He was then dethroned and sent to the confines at Vung Tau. Taking the name Duy Tan, Prince Vinh San was crowned by the Imperial Court. Like his father, Emperor Duy Tan was still very young, but showed great courage and love for his country. He insisted on keeping the Yellow Flag as the national flag. For this reason, the national flag remained until Emperor Duy Tan himself was also condemned for participating in the anti-French revolution and was exiled to the African island of Reunion with his father in 1916.

Note: The document about the existence of the Yellow Flag since 1890-1920 can be found on the Worldstatesmen website. The owner of this domain is Ben Cahoon, a University of Connecticut graduate. To find out more about Mr. Cahoon, please visit:

[<http://www.worldstatesmen.org/AUTHOR.html>](http://www.worldstatesmen.org/AUTHOR.html)

Worldstatesmen is a huge website, containing the political history of almost all the nations in the world, including Viet Nam. With the collaboration of many renowned literary professors, the information contained in this website is vast and quite accurate, particularly pertaining to many aspects of Viet Nam, such as the various dynasties, and the lives of officials under the French protection, etc.

The author of this article thinks that aside from using historical documents, historians need to consider and analyze the historical accounts that sometimes can be contradictory. They need to compare all existing events of that time to find the most logical data, while keeping in mind that all things are caused by something; nothing happened naturally. Likewise, the history of Viet Nam from thousands of years ago was written by historians of respective periods. Each person wrote from a different perspective, which also differed from the history written by the Chinese (i.e. The History by Tu Ma Thien). The later historians used the accounts of the preceding historians for their own research, sometimes adding new discoveries. This is the innovation of history. *Innovation* is discovering new data based on old data, which is different from invention or fabrication. All the history series written most recently by the historian Pham Van Son are very dense, containing many new and interesting details that are not found anywhere else, and is a good example of using innovative approaches.

After comparing all the historical literature and considering the knowledge and sincerity of Ben Cahoon, this author does not think that the writer of the website fabricated the existence of the Yellow Flag from 1890-1920 or that of the Dai Nam flag with the Chinese characters rotated by 90 degrees. Obviously, Ben Cahoon used data from many documents, archives and libraries from France and the U.S., but did not name any specific documents. As for the flag of Dai Nam, he also failed to explain its origin

or to describe it (perhaps due to the lack of knowledge of Chinese). This causes much confusion, as no one has been able to ascertain what the flag was. Only after much testing and trying to rotate the characters “Dai” and “Nam” did the author discover the profound intention of the predecessors of the Nguyen Dynasty.

In the spirit of respecting the historical documents and literature by respected elderly scholars, the author was initially skeptical of the report that the Yellow Flag existed since 1890 because no other Viet history literature containing this detail had been found. However, the author later found this account to be reasonable when examining the period in which our country was forced to sign the treaties of 1883 and 1884, making the Southern province a French colony. Following that, France exiled emperors Thanh Thai and Duy Tan for their effort in trying to unify the territory. These facts very much agree with the significance of the Yellow Flag.

The above is the author’s selection and comparison that lead to the conclusion that the information presented by Worldstatesmen is accurate and trustworthy. However, readers are encouraged to present different sources and analysis for rebuttal if they are not satisfied with the Worldstatesmen's documents.

4. The Flags of the North, Central and South Regions During French Colonization of the South.

After Emperors Thanh Thai and Duy Tan were exiled to Africa, the son of the late Emperor Dong Khanh ascended the throne. Like his father, Emperor Khai Dinh was also a puppet emperor, known for fawning Westerners. In 1920, obeying the French, Khai Dinh issued a decree to change the national flag. Consequently, the Yellow Flag, which signified the three unified regions, was replaced by a yellow flag with one red horizontal stripe, to symbolize two regions of North and Central of the Hue Court only (the Southern region was a French Colony and had its own flag).



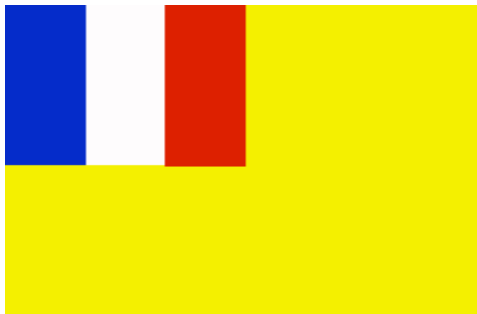
Long Tinh Ky (1920 - 10 Mar, 1945)

- * Yellow field - One large red stripe
- * This flag only represents the North Central regions
- * Inaugurated on March 10, 1945, which was the end of the French protectorate

This yellow flag with one red stripe was also called the “Long Tinh” flag because it was transformed from the original Long Tinh flag of the Nguyen Dynasty. The yellow background was rectangular, similar to other national flags. The red circle was stretched into the horizontal stripe in the center of the flag. The blue fringe was taken away. This new flag symbolized a country with only north and central regions under the *French protection*. It remained throughout the reign of Emperor Khai Dinh and into the time of Emperor Bao Dai, following the death of Emperor Khai Dinh in 1925. After ascending the throne at the beginning of 1926 at age 12, Emperor Bao Dai deferred all authority to the “*Regent Council*” under the guidance of the French Protectorate Governor. He then returned to Paris to complete his studies until 1932 before returning to assume power. The Long Tinh flag continued to be used to represent the Hue Imperial Court, which only had ruling jurisdiction over the North and Central regions, under the protectorate of France.

5. Colonized Nam Ky Flag (The South was a French Colony)

Meanwhile, since 1923, the South became an official French colony, “Nam Ky Quoc,” with its own government, military, and a “national flag” that was different from Long Tinh flag. The flag of the colonized Nam Ky had a yellow background with the Tricolore of the “modeled nation” France on the upper left hand corner, pictured below.



The flag of Colonist South Vietnam (1923 - Mar 10, 1945)

- * Yellow field
- * On the upperleft corner is the French Tricolor flag of blue, white and red
- * On March 10, 1945 Japan overthrew the French

This flag lasted until March 10, 1945 when Japan overthrew the French in Indochina.

6. The Long Tinh Imperial Flag during Japanese Occupation, from March 11, 1945- August 1945

One day after Japan overthrew France, Emperor Bao Dai took the throne in Hue on March 11, 1945 to announce the

abolishment of the treaties of 1883 and 1884. Viet Nam was unified and independent, with a modern monarchy similar to a few western nations. Emperor Bao Dai entrusted the scholar Tran Trong Kim with the task of establishing a government. Then, he declared Long Tinh flag to be used as the emperor's flag once again, and only raised at the imperial capital of Hue or carried to places where the emperor visited. The Long Tinh Imperial flag was similar to the Long Tinh National Flag during French protection, but the yellow field was darker and the red stripe was narrowed to about 1/3 of the flag's height, corresponding to the Que Ly flag of the Tran Trong Kim government.



Long Tinh Imperial Flag (Mar 11 - Aug 30, 1945)

- * Yellow field,
- * Red stripe in center, equals 1/3 the width
- * Mar 11, 1945: Bảo Đại declared Vietnam independent
- * Long Tinh Flag was designated Imperial Flag
- * Aug 30, 1945: Bảo Đại resigned from his throne.

7. Viet Nam's Que Ly Flag during Japanese Occupation of Indochina.

To signify the monarchical nation, Bao Dai signed a decree, accepting the proposal of Prime Minister Tran Trong Kim to retake the national name of Viet Nam that was granted by the Qing Dynasty during the reign of Emperor Gia Long, and to create a new national flag. This flag has a yellow field similar to the Long Tinh Emperor flag, with the red stripe being divided into three equal horizontal stripes; the middle stripe being disconnected, similar to the hexagram Que Ly of the Ba Gua Octagon.

There is no literature documenting the scholar Tran Trong Kim's explanation of the Que Ly Flag's significance. However, in the article titled, "Quoc Ky va Quoc Ca Viet Nam," (Vietnamese National Flag and Anthem) the late professor Nguyen Ngoc Huy had written:

"Ly is a side of the Ba Gua. Similar to the color red, it represents the South. In the past culture of Viet Nam and China, red was the essence of heat, representing the sun or fire; Que Ly also stands for the sun, fire, light, enthusiasm, and socially, it stands for civilization. In appearance, the Que Ly flag of the Tran Trong Kim government consisted of one continuous red stripe, one disconnected red stripe, and finally one continuous red stripe. Therefore, appearing within the Que Ly is a yellow background, consisting of two horizontal stripes and one yellow vertical stripe connecting the two horizontal stripes. In Chinese literature, this character is the word "Cong" [literally, labor]. Cong is used within words like "cong nhan" [worker], or "cong nghe" [handicraft] to mean the artisan and the trade of transforming available resources to benefit humanity. So, besides signifying a brilliant civilization, Que Ly also meant to praise the Vietnamese people for their diligence and skills in the manufacturing trade."

Documents from the Co So Viet Toc Paris (Vietnamese Ethnic Foundation in Paris) wrote:

"Based on the I-Ching (Kinh Dich) (Eastern Science on the law of transformation of all things) the Que Ly is the Fire essence located in the South. Accordingly, the word Ly has to signify the red color of fire. The shape of the flag symbolizes the territory, hence it must be square (the round heaven and square earth); is now made in the shape of the rectangle in accordance with international agreement. Consequently, the flag with Que Ly implies the position of a southern nation, that is, the Nam country. Who is the master of the Nam country? The color yellow expanding throughout the flag, formerly Hoang Dia [literally, Emperor's Territory], and now called the yellow field, implies the Vietnamese people as the master of this land."



***Que Ly Flag during the Japanese occupation
(11 Mar - 5 Sep, 1945)***

- * Yellow field, three red stripes with the middle one broken up into. The whole picture resembles the Que Ly Hexagram of the Ba Gua Octagon
- * It was the official national flag during the Pajanes occupation parallel to the Long Tinh Imperial Flag

Thus, the significance of the Que Ly Flag is the independence and unification of all three regions into one body, under a monarchy. However, in reality, the government of Tran Trong Kim was only given jurisdiction by the Japanese over the Central and Northern regions. South Viet Nam, after freeing itself from French domination was then dependent on the Japanese.

Although the Que Ly Flag carried great significance, it was criticized by many that it “depended on the I-Ching, meaning it was still influenced by the Chinese Han culture.” This flag was compared to the Dai Nam flag with the Han characters of Emperor Dong Khanh’s reign, near the end of the nineteenth century.

8. The Red Flag with Red Star of the Provisional Revolutionary Government of the “Socialist Republic of Viet Nam.”

The two nuclear bombs the United States dropped on Japan’s territory on September 6, 1945 caused Japan to unconditionally surrender to the Allies. This resulted in a political chaos never witnessed before in Viet Nam, throughout the month of August. Many revolutionary groups continuously organized protests to demand independence. The Tran Trong Kim Administration was regarded as a “Japan-friendly government,” with whom no one wanted to cooperate. Prime Minister Tran Trong Kim had to resign.

In the midst of this chaos, the Vietnamese Independent League of the Allies, called the Viet Minh for short, established “the Provisional Revolutionary Government” of the “Democratic Republic of Viet Nam,” with Ho Chi Minh as Chairman. Owing to their cunning strategies and tactics, the Viet Minh were able to gain control of the country after the following events:

- On August 19, 1945 in Hanoi, the Viet Minh organized a protest in front of the French Resident Superior Compound (Toa Kham Su) and “seized government” in front of millions of people in Hanoi.
- On August 22, 1945 in Thuan Hoa, the Viet Minh lowered the Que Ly flag in front of the Administrative Office of the Tran Trong Kim government, and raised the Red Flag of the Viet Minh.
- On August 24, 1945 in Saigon, the Viet Minh convinced all the revolutionary organizations to give them the rights to “receive Japanese fire-arms” and established the “Provisional Administrative Committee.”
- On August 30, 1945 in Hue, in Emperor Bao Dai’s Abdication Ceremony witnessed by thousands of Vietnamese, the Viet Minh received the Emperor’s official seal, then lowered the Long Tinh flag and raised the Red Flag, officially ending the monarchy in Viet Nam.
- On September 2, 1945 at Ba Dinh Square in Hanoi, witnessed by thousands of people, Ho Chi Minh read the “Declaration of Independence” of the “Democratic Republic of Viet Nam,” and introduced the constituents of the “Provisional Revolutionary Government,” including all members of the Indochinese Communist Party or its affiliates. Particularly Ho Chi Minh, previously unknown to everyone, was recognized as Nguyen Ai Quoc or Ly Thuy, member of the Communist Party.

The condition of the country after September 2, 1945 can be summarized as follows:

- On September 5, 1945 in Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh signed a decree to abolish the Que Ly flag and to use the Red Flag of the Viet Minh as the “national flag,” officially ending the Que Ly flag’s existence.
- On January 6, 1946, the Ho Chi Minh government organized the election of the “National Assembly,” resulting in the Viet Minh gaining a great majority of the total 356 representatives. Soon after, the National Assembly gathered for the first time on March 2, 1946 and recognized the Red Flag as the national flag.
- On February 20, 1946, the people of Hanoi rallied to protest the election results citing evidence of fraud, criticizing the Ho Chi Minh government and requesting that the former Emperor Bao Dai take control to unify the people.
- On March 2, 1946 under the pressure of the people and with the threat of French re-domination, Ho Chi Minh established a new cabinet, called the “Allied Resistance Government,” consisting of party members from various national revolutionary organizations such as Nguyen Hai Than, Huynh Thuc Khang, Nguyen Truong Tam, etc. The former Emperor Bao Dai was invited to be the “Supreme Advisor.” After about half a year, the union state disintegrated due to repeated secret persecutions of the Viet Nam Quoc Dan Dang (Vietnamese Nationalist Party), which was exposed in public since July 12, 1946.



The Việt Minh (5 Sep, 1945 - 20 Dec, 1946)

- * Red field Yellow star, the star sides are curvy.*
- * Sep 5, 1945: Ho Chi Minh signed a decree No. 5 for replacing the Que Ly Flag with the Viet Minh flag as a national flag.*
- * Dec 20, 1946: Viet Minh withdrew in to jungly hideouts, so the flag lost its status as a National flag.*

- Throughout 1946, the French Army gradually gained advantage in battles with the Viet Minh Army. On December 20, 1946, when France conquered the Government Central Office "Bac Bo Phu" in Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh withdrew to his jungle hideouts. Gradually, the French occupied and controlled populous cities, counties, and villages, while the Viet Minh hid in the countryside. As a result, the Viet Minh’s Red Flag lost its status as the “national flag” from December 20, 1946, the day the French occupied Bac Bo Phu, until July 20, 1954 when the country was divided into two halves and the Viet Minh returned to control of North Viet Nam, north of the 17th.

9. The Yellow Flag with Blue Stripes of the Provisional Government of the “Republic of South Viet Nam”

After disarming the Japanese, the British officially gave France administrative control of South Viet Nam below the 16th parallel on September 9, 1945. Then, France reversed its position, re-establishing the “French Indochina Union.” On June 1, 1946 the “Republic of South Viet Nam” was born, with Doctor Nguyen Van Thinh as President.

The flag of the “Republic of South Viet Nam” had a yellow field and three blue horizontal stripes in the center; alternating between the blue stripes are two white stripes. The three horizontal stripes stood for the three parts of Viet, Cambodia and Laos within the French Indochina Union, living peacefully and prosperously (blue and white). The era of the dominated South existed for two years before ending with the establishment of the Viet nation, with the former Emperor Bao Dai as Head of State beginning June 2, 1946.



Republic of South Nation (Jun 1, 1946 - Jun2, 1948)

** Jun 1, 1946: Republic South Nation of the Indochinese United States.*

** Yellow field with three blue stripes and two white stripes in the middle*

** June 2, 1948: Bảo Đại establish Việt Nam Nation within the French union, unifying three regions..*

10. The Yellow Flag with Three Red Stripes of “Viet Nam Nation” and the “Republic of Viet Nam”

In Hanoi, after the Viet Minh withdrew to hideout to continue the French Resistance, the administration of the Central and Northern regions temporarily fell under French control. Following that, former Emperor Bao Dai was invited by many revolutionary parties as well as by the French to command the country as “Chief of State.” He asked that France grant Viet Nam independence and unification of the North, Central and South. He then established the “Vietnamese Provisional Grand Central Government,” appointing General Nguyen Van Xuan as Prime Minister to command the country and negotiate with France. Subsequently, the Council of Representatives of the South Viet Nam Government of the "Republic of South Viet Nam" sent its letter to recognize the Grand Central Government, accepting true independence and unification of all three regions. On June 2, 1948 the Nguyen Van Xuan Administration introduced to the French Allies the Vietnamese National Flag and National Anthem that are to be applied to all three regions of North, Central and South.

The new National Flag also has a yellow field with three horizontal red stripes, like that of the Dai Nam Quoc flag from 1890-1920. The difference, however, is that this was the first time the Yellow Flag was officially used for the nation of “Viet Nam,” now no longer belonging to the Nguyen dynasty or any other monarchy.

In discussing the origin of the new regime’s Yellow Flag, the late Professor Nguyen Ngoc Huy reported that this flag was drawn by “ a famous artist named Le Van De during World War II, and was selected by the former Emperor Bao Dai from many drawings presented to him in a meeting in Hong Kong in 1948.” However, a few sources indicated that it was not by coincidence that Bao Dai chose this flag, nor by reason that the Yellow Flag was “beautiful and meaningful.” The chief reason was the Le artist re-drew a national flag that had existed in the country 50 years ago, throughout the reigns of the two patriotic emperors Thanh Thai and Duy Tan. This fact was clearly explained in section 3.



National Flag of Vietnam Nation (2 Jun, 1948 - 20 Jul, 1954)

** June 2-48: The Grand Central Government used the same flag of the Đại Nam Nation in 1890-1920*

** July 20-54: The country was divided in two regions by the Geneva Agreement. Since then the Yellow flag was used as a national flag of the Republic of Việt Nam until April 30, 1975*

In 1948, Bao Dai did not want to re-use the Long Tinh Flag because it was a monarchical emperor’s flag, which he himself had terminated in August 1945. An emperor who was willing to do away with the monarchy for the sake of independence and unification of his country, Bao Dai had to know the origin of the Yellow Flag. Besides, other important historical details also

contributed to the final selection of the Yellow Flag: the tragic death of Prince Vinh San (former Emperor Duy Tan) in Africa at the end 1945 and the presence of former Emperor Thanh Thai, father of Duy Tan, in Saigon since 1947. The Yellow Flag was used as the first national flag during the reigns of these two emperors. Both were the soul of the anti-French movement at the beginning of the 20th century, which had resulted in the execution of Viet Nam Quang Phuc Hoi leaders like the brave Thai Phien and Tran Cao Van in 1916 and the exile of these two patriotic emperors to Africa. In 1942, Prince Vinh San joined the French Army (of De Gaulle) and was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant, Battalion Commander. When World War II ended, General De Gaulle returned home to resume command, and had plans to allow Vinh San to return to Viet Nam. However, it was reported to De Gaulle that Vinh San had always meditated independence and unification of all regions for Viet Nam. Consequently, in a meeting with De Gaulle on December 14, 1945, he was reprimanded and stripped of all ranks. During that time, Vinh San had confided to a close friend that he feared he would be hurt. On December 24, 1945, he was sent back to Reunion Island. Two days later, he died in a plane crash in Central Africa. The suspicious death of the former Emperor Duy Tan had caused the Vietnamese public much anguish and bereavement. In 1947, France allowed his father, former Emperor Thanh Thai, age 68 at the time, back to Saigon, under the condition that he would not hold any political position. Still, the presence of former Emperor Thanh Thai, along with the death of former Emperor Duy Tan, obviously awakened a desire to honor the dreams of these two emperors. Without a doubt, Bao Dai had visited his beloved Emperor and consulted him in the selection of the Yellow Flag as the national flag. However, he could not expose this fact for it would violate De Gaulle's condition for allowing former Emperor Thanh Thai back in Viet Nam, which was to not participate in any political matters. The news that the Yellow Flag was drawn by the artist Le Van De, without mentioning the existence of this flag 50 years earlier was intentional. It was to protect the well being of Emperor Thanh Thai. For this reason, the fact that Chief of State Bao Dai chose the Yellow Flag of the French resistance era as the national flag for the new regime was a brilliant decision, in accordance with just causes.

In 1955, Premier Ngô Đình Diệm called for a people resolution to establish the First Republic of Vietnam. Respecting the heroic anti-French mission of the Yellow Flag, the new congress continued to use the Yellow Flag as the National Flag. The 1963 coup-d'etat replaced the First Republic regime with the Second Republic of Vietnam, but the Yellow Flag remained as the National Flag until the South was invaded by the North in 1975.

11. The Red Flag of the “Democratic Republic of Viet Nam” and the “Socialist Republic of Viet Nam”

In 1954, the Geneva Accords were signed, dividing the nation in two. The territory north of the 17th parallel (at the border of Quang Tri and Quang Binh) was under the control of the Viet Minh. Fully recognized by this time as a Vietnamese Communist Party (VCP), the Viet Minh returned to Hanoi and re-established the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam. The flag used as the “national flag” of the North remained red with a yellow star, called “Hong Ky” or Red Flag. However, all the edges of the star are no longer curved like that of the Viet Minh, but are drawn straight.

According to the websites of the VCP, especially http://www.sfc.keio.ac.jp/apd/minh/flag_emblem_anthem.html, the Red Flag was drawn by Nguyen Huu Tien and appeared in the South for the first time on November 23, 1940.

"Viet Nam Nien Bieu" - The Vietnamese Directory 1939-1975 by Chinh Dao also documented “the first time the Communists used the Red Flag with the yellow star as a symbol flag” in the “general uprising” on November 23, lasting until the beginning of December 1940. The “general uprising” was ordered by the Indochinese Communist Party at Saigon, Gia Dinh (11/23) and at a number of provinces in the south such as Can Tho, Cho Lon, Soc Trang (11/24), My Tho, Vinh Long, Tan An (11/23), Long Xuyen, and Kien An (11/30).

The Communist uprising was repressed by the French, with thousands of members imprisoned and 106 leaders of the Communist Party executed. This event showed that the Red Flag was originally the flag of the Indochinese Communist Party, before it was altered and used as the flag of Viet Minh.



The Red Flag of North Vietnam before 1976 and currently flag of the Socialist Democratic Vietnam since Jul 20, 1954

- * *Similar to the Viet Minh flag, but had straight edges to resemble the flags of Soviet Union and China*
- * *It was the flag of the Indochinese flag first appeared on Nov 23, 1940 in its uprising in the South Region.*
- * *July 1976, the country was unified, the Red flag has been used as the regime's national flag.*

12. The Flag of the "National Liberation Front of South Vietnam"

On April 30, 1975 the North seized control of the South. Within the first few months, to manipulate south Vietnamese people, the Vietnamese Communist Party (VCP) directed its puppet organization, “The National Liberation Front of South Viet Nam,” to establish a “Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Republic of South Viet Nam,” which created a new “national flag,”

consisting of a red top half, a blue bottom half, and a centered yellow star similar to that of the North Vietnam's flag. On July 2, 1976, the VCP unified the two regions to form the "Socialist Republic of Viet Nam" (SRVN), discarded the Liberation Front flag, and used the Red flag as the national flag for the whole country. It has lasted until this day.



The flag of National Liberation Front of South VN

Apr 30, 1975 - Jul 2, 1976

- * Similar to the North Vietnam flag, but the bottom half is blue*
- * Was discarded in 1976 when the two reunited.*

It should be noted that the SRVN's Red Flag follows very closely the format of the "red flags" of the Soviet Union and the Republic of China, that is to say all share the same red background and contain yellow stars. The Soviet Union's flag is red; the upper left corner contains a sickle, hammer and a star outlined in yellow. The VCP's flag has a red field with the yellow star, similar to that of the Soviet Union. The flag of the Republic of China is also red and in its upper left corner contains a big yellow star and four smaller yellow stars forming an arc to the right of the big star. There have been two conflicting explanations for the stars. The first describes that the large star is the Chinese Communist Part, and the four little stars represent four major classes of the society: workers, peasants, petty bourgeoisie, and the patriotic capitalists. In the second, the big star signifies the Han people, the majority race, and the four little stars are minorities of Manchu, Tibetan, Mongolian, and Hui [or Muslim]. Both concepts have illogical elements. In the first explanation, the CCP has members of all of the classes and the military represents the largest group but is not mentioned. In the second, the four named races are small, as compared to a larger one, Zhuang. Also, at the time the flag was used, Tibet was still an independent nation. The author of this article believes that the CCP flag represents the CCP's ambition. The large star represents China, while the four little stars are its vassals: Korea, Viet Nam, Laos, and Cambodia (not including Taiwan and Tibet, which are regarded as China's territories). So, in contrast to the symbol of independence and unity of the Yellow Flag, the Red Flag signifies "Viet Nam is one of many vassals within the Communist block."



The Soviet Union flag



The People's Republic of China



The flags of VCP and government

13. The Yellow Flag of the "Communities of Vietnamese Overseas"

From April 30, 1975 to present, millions of Vietnamese have sought many ways to leave the country, not wanting to live under the Vietnamese Communist regime. Within the last three decades, in all the free countries in the world, the Yellow Flag has always been used to represent the Vietnamese people in all celebrations and meetings. From the Tet celebration to the commemoration of April 30th, the Yellow Flag is always raised; regardless of the organizing committee's political affiliation or social organization.



Yellow Flag of overseas Vietnamese community

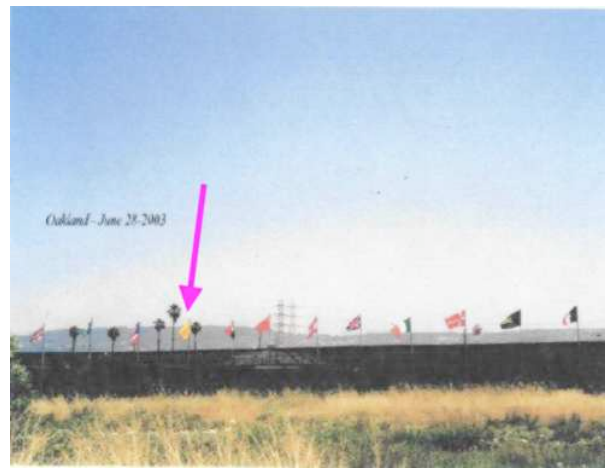
Since 1754 to this day

- * Similar to the Flag of:*
 - The Resistance Dai Nam Flag 1890-1920*
 - The Vietnam Nation Flag 1948-1955*
 - The First Republic Of Vietnam Flag 1955-1963*
 - The Second Republic Of Vietnam Flag 1963-1975*

Following are a few examples of thousands of similar scenes overseas within the last three decades, where the Yellow Flag has always been considered the symbol of the country and people of Viet Nam.



Frankfurt-Germany-June30-2003



Oakland-USA-June28-2003



New York, Cultural Parade, 2000



Sydney 2-12-2003: Over 12,000 protesters rallied against SBS TV which transmitted directly Thoi Su program from Vietnam

III. Analysis of The “Just Cause” of Yellow Flag and Red Flag

1. The Legitimacy of the Yellow Flag

Recently in the United States, the Yellow Flag has been recognized by council members of many cities, counties and states as the “Freedom and Heritage Flag of the Vietnamese Community.” The movement of “honoring the Yellow Flag” was initiated and has succeeded due to the strong belief of many overseas Vietnamese that the Yellow Flag is the only true “national flag” of the Viet nation. For this reason, this movement has been supported by the people, organizations, and social elites of Viet Nam, and most active is the Vietnamese-American Political Action Committee (VPAC).

In response, the Hanoi government has zealously counteracted this movement by sending diplomats to many council members, asking that the resolutions for the Yellow Flag be withdrawn. The reasons used by the Foreign Department of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam (SRVN) in their appeal can be summarized as follows: “*The Yellow Flag ceased to exist along with the former Republic of Viet Nam; therefore, it can not be honored or raised at public institutions in any country.*”

Based on that argument, the SRVN has failed to consider history and international laws and to understand the following:

The Yellow Flag was not only used during the Republic of South Viet Nam era, but it was also used as the national flag during earlier regimes. For example, during the era of French colonization, South Viet Nam was forced to use the French Tricolor as the national flag and to sing the French national anthem. However, the Viet people refused to comply and fought endlessly to rid the country of the colonial regime and reinstated the Yellow Flag as the national flag.

The SRVN Administration does not represent the community of Vietnamese overseas in law or in morale. It can only have the right to ask the U.S. Federal Government to respect the Red flag during diplomatic meetings. Furthermore, the United States Constitution does not allow the Federal Government to force its people or any local public institutions to honor actions that they do not accept, especially in regards to politics and thoughts.

The act of honoring the Yellow Flag affirms the Viet people’s indomitable spirit, and their love for independence, freedom and democracy, which was clearly displayed during the resistance against colonial France. These ideals are nobler than the existence of any regime, and should be understood by the Viet people, without discriminating political affiliations, be it nationalism or communism. Therefore, the Yellow flag, which was not created by the Republic of South Viet Nam, cannot be eliminated just

because the regime ceased to exist.

Another argument used by members of the Hanoi's Administration in their appeal for the withdrawal of resolutions regarding the Yellow Flag: *"The overseas Vietnamese community conspires to prevent the Red flag's appearance in foreign nations and wants to restore the Republic of Viet Nam regime, recreating a war that had passed thirty years ago."*

The fact that the Vietnamese overseas only want to recognize the Yellow Flag, not the Red Flag, by publicly rejecting the Red Flag for many decades cannot be classified as "conspiracy" since it involves no secrecy or concealment. During all social gatherings such as Tet festivals, Quoc To Hung Vuong Commemoration Ceremonies, opening ceremonies, and commemorations of 4-30-1975, the Vietnamese throughout the world have always openly and proudly saluted the Yellow Flag. Recently, on December 2003, over twelve thousand Vietnamese weathered the rain in Australia, carrying both the Yellow Flags and the flags of Australia to protest SBS TV for directly transmitting "Current Events" news broadcasts from Hanoi. This action clearly indicated that the Viet people everywhere strongly share the same belief and are unified in their quest to protect the Yellow Flag, refusing to recognize the Red Flag. Similarly, in the highly publicized event of Tran Van Truong wanting to display the Red Flag in southern California a few years ago, an uproar of protest from the Vietnamese community was seen, clearly showing the people's wish not to recognize the Red Flag. To the Vietnamese people overseas, the Red Flag represents the dependency on an antiquated communist ideal, which is anti-people and is a satellite of Communist China.

Although the Republic of South Viet Nam regime that existed before 1975 was many times more democratic than the current SRVN regime, no one wants to "restore" that regime. The majority of the Viet people, especially the younger generations of Vietnamese, only hope to see a government that is just, humane, democratic and independent; one that places the interests of its people over the interests of the Party. One that truly cares for the happiness of its people, not one that is self-serving and is only interested in enriching the lives of the ruling powers. All the Viet people inside and outside the country, with the exception of the high ranking members of the Communist Party, recognize that the existing government does not serve the needs and interests of its people, and is in dire need of change. Therefore, a wish for change in governmental policies is a legitimate and rightful wish.

Interestingly, if there were to be an open referendum inside Viet Nam, which truly allows the people to freely vote their choice without fear of retribution, the Red Flag is sure to be eliminated and replaced by the Yellow Flag immediately. This certain reality poses a grave threat to the existing regime!

Due to the lack of accurate and reliable historical documents, the search for true historical events within the 1940's has become very necessary. It is important for the younger generations of Vietnamese inside and outside the country, as well as the younger members of the Communist Party, to understand the events of the past, in order to cease the Yellow Flag abolition campaign. Instead, it is more desirable for all to collaborate in trying to protect and maintain the noble traditions of Viet Nam.

2. The "Anti-People" Nature of the Red flag.

From the beginning of the Twentieth Century until the 1940's, the world went through many changes due to the events of WWI and WWII. In Viet Nam, Hoang Hoa Tham, a well-known anti-French leader who responded to the Can Vuong Movement of Emperor Ham Nghi, was assassinated in 1913. Following this event was the exile of Emperor Duy Tan and Emperor Thanh Thai to Africa for their love of country and people. With Emperor Khai Dinh's willingness to be a puppet emperor, and openly favoring the French, the "Can Vuong" (rescue the Emperor) Movement slowly faded. Consequently, many revolutionary groups began to form, aiming to reclaim the country for the people, instead of aiding the emperor to restore the Nguyen Dynasty. Most well-known and longest-running was the Vietnamese Nationalist Party (Viet Nam Quoc Dan Dang, VNQDD). In 1930, Party leader Nguyen Thai Hoc and twelve members were captured and guillotined. The remaining VNQDD members, with Mr. Vu Hong Khanh as the new party leader, went through a rough and trying period due to the persistent French-led manhunt. Soon after, the Indochinese Communist Party (ICP), led by Nguyen Sinh Cung, was organized which secretly and quickly grew in membership.

On August 1934, the VNQDD merged with the ICP and a number of revolutionary members such as Nguyen Hai Than and Ho Hoc Lam to form the League for the Independence of Viet Nam (Viet Nam Doc Lap Dong Minh Hoi), called the Viet Minh for short. However, at the end of 1935, the VNQDD withdrew from the League for the Independence of Viet Nam due to the corruption of the Viet Minh by the Communists. From then on, Viet Minh became a façade for the ICP.

WWII began toward the end of the 1930's and subsequently spread to Asia. Seizing opportunities amidst the chaos, many revolutionary parties emerged such as the Dai Viet Nationalist Party (Dai Viet Quoc Dan Dang, DVQDD, led by Truong Tu Anh), Dai Viet Dan Chinh (led by Nguyen Tuong Tam), Vietnamese for National Liberation of the Allies (led by Cuong De), Dai Viet Duy Dan (led by Ly Dong A), along with a number of smaller parties. Eventually, all of these parties merged with the Viet Minh to form a new party, known as Viet Nam Cach Mang Dong Minh Hoi, called the Viet Cach for short, and led by Nguyen Hai Than, Truong Boi Cong, and Vu Hoang Khanh. With this merger, the Viet Minh's members no longer held any leadership positions; therefore, Nguyen Ai Quoc, now taking the name Ho Chi Minh, decided to separate from this party. In May 1941, Ho Chi Minh assembled the eighth conference of the ICP in Pac-Bo, Cao Bang to disclose the "Viet Minh Front," proceeding with the "revolution of the international proletariat" under the Red Flag and with the armed forces as "Ve Quoc Dan." Similarly, the Viet Cach also declared a "Nationalist Front" to carry out a "national revolution," using the red flag with a white star and the motto, "Quoc Dan Quan."

Review of these events shows that from its conception, the ICP has never served the interests of the people. On the contrary, it primarily served the ideals of Communism in the name of a "revolution for the people," at the same time, utilizing Third World

tactics to seize power. The Red Flag was born from the ideals of Communism, and continues to serve Communism; therefore, the Red Flag does not carry the “pro-people” ideal.

3. The “Anti-Revolutionary” Reality of the August 1945 Revolution in Hanoi

It would be incomprehensible to discuss the Red Flag without analyzing the events of August 1945 because the Red Flag has direct ties with this political upheaval, which has had a profound effect on the history of Viet Nam.

After the Japanese overthrew the French forces in Indochina, the Tran Trong Kim Administration was established on March 1945 and lasted until September 6, 1945 when the U.S. dropped two nuclear bombs on Japan. The Japanese subsequently surrendered to Allied forces. This led to chaos and a period of rapid political changes throughout all three regions in Viet Nam.

On August 12, 1945, a “serving the country” movement led by Tran Van Cuong gathered for protest in Hanoi, calling on all people to come together to save the country. At the same time, in Thuan Hoa, Tran Trong Kim was unable to invite anyone to join and serve in his administration because people no longer wanted to be associated with a “Japan-friendly” regime.

On August 14, 1945, in Saigon, the United National Front emerged, which included Cao Dai, Hoa Hao, the Civil Workers League, the Vanguard Youths, and the Viet Nam Nation Independent Party by Ho Van Nga, Nguyen Van Sam, and Tran Van An.

On August 16, 1945, Ho Chi Minh and several long-time party members of the Third Communist International, under the guise of the Viet Minh Front, called for a “Nationalist Assembly” at Tuyen Quang and declared the country as a new “Democratic Republic of Viet Nam.” They also rallied for a “general uprising.” At that time, very few people knew of these members of the Viet Minh Front, but news about the Viet Minh Front’s “general uprising” nevertheless spread quickly throughout the country.

On August 17, 1945, Emperor Bao Dai headed the meeting with the Tran Trong Kim Administration at Thuan Hoa. This meeting resulted in the following important decisions:

- They approved the diplomatic letter, asking the Allied Nations for assistance in trying to guarantee independence for Viet Nam.

- They approved Decree 105, which stated that they will voluntarily step down and hand the country’s administrative control to a government that would be “democratic and republic,” and will readily execute any plans made by the people.

- They passed the decree, announcing to all people that the emperor places the happiness of the people above the throne of the Nguyen Dynasty, that he “would rather be a commoner of an independent nation than to be emperor of a slave state.” They also called for all people to join together and to be active in working for the benefit of the country.

- Also on August 17, 1945, the Hanoi civil workers rallied in support for the Tran Trong Kim Administration. However, members of the Communist Party within the Viet Minh Front penetrated this crowd after about midday, carried with them the Red Flags, fired shots to intimidate the crowd, and steered the tone of the protest into one that cheered for the Viet Minh.

- On Sunday, August 19, 1945, the Viet Minh rallied thousands of people in Hanoi to carry the Red Flags for demonstration at Ba Dinh Square, in front of the compound of French Envoy Phan Ke Toai. Here, the Viet Minh members took Dr. Nguyen Xuan Chu hostage at gunpoint, forcing the Director of the North Politicians Committee to order security to open the compound’s gate. The Viet Minh soldiers then confiscated the security’s arms and officially overtook the French Compound and City Hall. Consequently, the protest became an introduction of the “National Salvation of the Viet Minh Front.” Since this event, the phrase, “Viet Minh seized power” was often used, in contrast to “The August Revolution” mantra documented by the Vietnamese Communist historians.

- Also on August 19, 1945, the United Nations Front emerged in Saigon. This group focused primarily on contacting and receiving weaponry as well as machinery from Japan. However, not very long after its birth, members of the United Nations Front were convinced by the Viet Minh that the Allies considered the Viet Minh as an “anti-Japan” group; therefore, the Viet Minh would be able to continue receiving support from the Allies if they were to receive Japanese weaponry. The Viet Minh then immediately established local People’s Committees. By August 24, 1945, the Viet Minh had gained full control of Saigon with the establishment of the “Provisional Administrative Committee.”

According to the book “Saigon” by Anthony Grey, after Ho Chi Minh called for a “general uprising” in Cao Bang, he and his comrades returned to Hanoi with a number of Americans. These Americans were OSS spies, parachuted to the mountains of North Viet Nam at the beginning of 1945 to supply weapons to the Viet Minh, and train them to find and rescue the American pilots shot down by the Japanese. Vo Nguyen Giap sent groups of Viet Minh soldiers to lead the way in these expeditions. At the same time, they called all local people to come out and welcome them. This showed the Americans that the Viet Minh were being supported by the people, and showed the people that the Americans were supporting the Viet Minh. They often burned and destroyed villages that refused to appear to welcome them, only to later blame those acts on the VNQDD. In addition, Vo Nguyen Giap also ordered groups of Viet Minh to destroy roads and bridges behind them in order to prevent VNQDD and Viet Cach from returning to Hanoi. Due to these roadblocks and the fact that they were weaker in numbers, the Viet Cach, was forced to remain at the Viet Nam-China border from the time the Japanese surrendered until early September, when they followed the China Nationalist army back to Hanoi. As the result, the August 1945 protest in Hanoi did not include the participation of any national revolutionary forces.

The Viet Minh’s campaigns to take control of the country were considered complete when Emperor Bao Dai announced his abdication of the throne on August 25, 1945 in Hue, “ceding power to a democratic and republic government.” The Emperor ended his announcement with two phrases: “Long live Vietnamese Independence!” and “Long live democracy and the Republic!”

On August 30, 1945, the formal Abdication Ceremony was held at noon in front of the main gate of the Imperial Palace, with millions of participants and witnesses. After the Emperor completed his speech, the emperor's Long Tinh Flag was lowered and the Red Flag was raised. In his memoir "The Dragon Viet Nam," former Emperor Bao Dai summarized the situation at that time as follows: "...taking advantage of the exaggerated propaganda and threats, the Viet Minh was able to seize complete control of the country within fifteen days after Japan surrendered."

Based on the historical events discussed above, a question raised since 1945 was: Was the Viet Minh-led political crisis of August 1945 "a legitimate revolution"?

To thoroughly answer this question, it is necessary to first look at the definition of the term "cach mang" [revolution]:

According to the Chinese definition, "cach" is to "change, discard," and "mang" or "menh" means "life"; the words "cach mang" written side by side means to "change a king's dynasty."

According to the Western definition, "cach mang" means "revolution," which means "a political movement which seeks to overthrow a government."

Therefore, a "legitimate revolution" must consist of the following characteristics: replacing the old with the new, the people, independence, autonomy, the masses, and unity. Now, let's see if these characteristics are found in the political upheaval of August 1945:

"Replacing the old with the new": this event caused the end of one regime and replaced by a new regime.

"Independence": this event was self-generated and propagated without instigation or support by any foreign nation.

"Autonomy": this event was not directly controlled or influenced by any foreign forces

"The masses": this event involved the participation of many people, be it voluntary, invited or forced.

"The people": this event was initiated by the constituents of a country to serve the people of that same country, and not to serve any other ideology.

"Unity": this event utilized the country's resources, like the anti-Nguyen of the Tran Dynasty and the anti-Minh of the Le Dynasty in the past.

Based on the outward agreement, the political upheaval of August 1945 consisted of a number of "revolutionary" characteristics due to the following facts:

-Fact 1: It "replaced the old with the new," ending the Nguyen's monarchy, leading eventually to new regimes.

-Fact 2: It consisted of the "independent" characteristic, showing the desire of the people, including that of Emperor Bao Dai, to see an independent nation that was not controlled by colonial French. The Viet Minh League was initially established with the goal of fighting both the French and the Japanese to gain independence for Viet Nam. Many people without communist ideals have followed the League of the Viet Minh after August 1945 for the very same reason of wanting independence for Viet Nam.

-Fact 3: It consisted of "autonomy." Around August 1945, there were three great political powers active in Indochina: France, Japan and the Nationalist China, headed by Chiang Kai-shek. The League of Viet Minh was not dependent on any of these powers.

-Fact 4: It consisted of "the masses." Millions of people were persuaded and threatened by the Viet Minh into participating in the August 19 and September 2, 1945 demonstrations.

Reading this far, the "nationalist" readers probably argue that the political upheaval of August 8, 1945 was not independent or autonomous. They would inevitably point out "the administration of Ho Chi Minh, announced on September 2, 1945, consisted of members who were lackeys of the Soviet Union and Communist China. Therefore, the events of August 1945 were dependent on foreign powers."

This argument is not historically correct. In the mid 1940's, the political make up of the Soviet Union was still very weak. Most of its military forces were concentrated in Eastern Europe and were not active in Indochina, except for teaching communist ideology to members of the Indochinese Communist Party. At that time, China was still under a republic regime of the Chinese Nationalist Party. From the time of Sun Yat-sen to the time of Chiang Kai-shek, they were tirelessly fighting the Japanese on their own soil. The United States was asked to help guard military bases in Southeast Mainland China. During this time, Communist forces of Mao Ze-dong had just been established in Northwest China, and were yet to be spread to the south. Only after they overtook Mainland China in 1949 did they start to exert influence in Indochina.

The Viet Minh Front at that time consisted of the constituents of Viet Nam. Its participation by the masses stemmed from the desire for independence, and not directly influenced by China or the Soviet Union. The Viet Minh's ability to gain full control of the country was the result of their effort and that of the people of Viet Nam. Therefore, it consisted of "autonomy." (The Soviet Union and Communist China's involvement only began in the 1950's, especially for supplying weaponry to the Viet Minh in the battle of Dien Bien Phu and in the invasion process of South Viet Nam)

To discuss "influence" in terms of material, ideology and spirit, it is important to point out the "influence" of the United States through three important events: First, the OSS spies (Office of Strategic Services) had supplied the Viet Minh with weapons, ammunitions and training. Second, the OSS spies had accompanied Ho Chi Minh (a spy at that time with the pseudonym Lucius) and Vo Nguyen Giap when the Viet Minh army left Cao Bang to return to Hanoi from August 20 to August 25, 1945. Third, the "declaration of independence" that Ho Chi Minh read in front of Ba Dinh Square on September 2, 1945 was based on the United States' "Declaration of Independence." These three facts had led the masses to believe that the Viet Minh was supported by the United States. For this reason, many people had joined and supported the Viet Minh. However, the "influences" discussed were

only auxiliary and can not be considered as lack of “autonomy.” Or can it be said that it was dependent on the United States since all the plans and actions involved in “seizing power” were wholly carried out by the people of Viet Nam, and not by any other foreign powers.

Yet, looking deeper into the political upheaval of August 1945, although consisting of a number of “revolutionary” characteristics, it cannot be called a true “revolution.” It did not “replace a bad regime with a new and better regime” (Chinese-Vietnamese Dictionary by Dao Duy Anh). The upheaval in August 1945 lacked these following characteristics:

-**Fact 5: It lacked the mission of “For the people.”** As presented in section III.2, the government introduced by Ho Chi Minh on September 2, 1945 mostly comprised of members of the Third Communist International, whose ultimate goal was to serve the ideals of the International World Community according to Materialist Dialectics. They only used “the people” as a front to enable them toward this goal.

-**Fact 6: It lacked “unity.”** As discussed previously, before the Japanese surrendered to Allied forces, many revolutionary groups in Viet Nam merged together to form the Viet Nam Cach Mang Dong Minh Hoi (Vietnamese Revolutionary Allies), in which the Viet Minh was a constituent. However, not very long after, the Viet Minh separated from the Viet Cach, causing a drift between them and many other groups. Soon after Japan surrendered, the Viet Minh introduced the “Provisional Revolutionary Government” on August 19, 1945, consisting primarily of members of the Communist Party. Ho Chi Minh announced the members in this new government on December 2, 1945, which also included a few members from groups affiliated with the Indochinese Communist Party. Other “nationalist” groups did not have representatives in this new government.

The Viet Minh also caused further division and skepticisms with the “fraudulent National Election” on June 1, 1946. Following this event, many of the country’s constituency began to organize demonstrations almost daily to protest this government’s “exclusive seize of power,” especially after the Viet Cach and the Viet Quoc returned to Hanoi.

In addition, after taking complete control, the Viet Minh began to annihilate the Viet Cach and Viet Quoc. These cruelties marked the beginning of the thirty-year long conflict, in which millions of lives from the North and South Viet Nam were lost. To this day, the Vietnamese Communists (VC) still tries to maintain exclusive control of the country and does not allow for the existence of any other party. As the result, the “August 1945 political upheaval” did not consist of “unity.”

Further analysis of “independence” shows that the independence gained in August 1945 was not wholly achieved by the Viet Minh Front alone because:

-**Fact 7:** Emperor Bao Dai himself had revoked the 1884 Agreement and proclaimed an Independent Viet Nam on August 17 at Thuan Hoa, followed by his abdication of the throne to “become a commoner of an independent nation.” In other words, if the Viet Minh had not “seized power” on August 19, it is likely that the country would have eventually become an independent and democratic nation, as promised by Emperor Bao Dai to cede control to a new “democratic and republic” government.

-**Fact 8:** On September 2, 1945 when Ho Chi Minh read the “Declaration of Independence” in Hanoi, the country was still not fully “independent.” The Japanese army was still armed. South Viet Nam still retained its own government, which was once again dependent on France, after France and Britain disarmed Japan.

-**Fact 9:** According to “international law,” Viet Nam did not officially attain independence until 1948, when “Quoc Gia Viet Nam” was established, which included a “Quoc Truong” (Head of State) and a “government.” Regardless, Viet Nam only truly became “independent” after France withdrew its military forces in accordance with the Geneva Accord, signed in 1954.

On the other hand, many of the VC historians liked to refer to the 1945 upheaval as the “Autumn Revolution” or the “August Revolution.” This is incorrect for the following reasons:

-**Fact 10:** The “revolutionary” spirit was initiated by the Vietnamese Nationalist Party (VNQDD) in 1928, for the people and because of the people. It was not initiated by the Third Communist International. This “revolutionary” ideal was evidenced in the self-less and self-sacrificing death of the VNQDD’s leader Nguyen Thai Hoc in 1930. This ideal continued to be perpetuated by many other French-resistant groups throughout the 1930’s and the 1940’s.

-**Fact 11:** The “revolutionary” momentum was destroyed by the ICP. Only after a few months, France was allowed by the Allies to return to Viet Nam and began its campaign to reinvade South Viet Nam, gradually gaining grounds to Central and North Viet Nam. Faced with a much stronger French opposition, Ho Chi Minh asked to sign an agreement with France and agreed to be apart of the “French Alliance.” This action proved contradictory to Ho Chi Minh’s sworn statement in September 2, 1945 to “never negotiate or collaborate with France.” This is one of many examples indicating that the Communists always place the benefits of the Party above the integrity of the people.

IV. Conclusion

After examining the historical events surrounding the “national flags” of Viet Nam as well as various regimes in recent times, we realize the following: Vietnamese history belongs to all citizens of all eras, not to any one regime. What is created through malicious tactics and violence cannot be long-lasting, because those factors are far from the Vietnamese cultural character.

Over a half-century later, Vietnamese historians should look objectively at the political upheaval of August 1945, in order to agree that it displays external characteristics of a “revolution en masse” (people’s revolution) and has the form of “self-authority and independence”. However, due to venomous strategies before and after obtaining government power, with anti-people ideals and a one-party rule, the Indochinese Communist Party has lost the noble just cause of a “revolution to achieve true democracy”. From another standpoint, the “self-authoritative and independent” nature of the political upheaval was blurred by the ICP’s acts

lacking "people's solidarity" because the Party had initiated severe mass killings of innocent civilians and opposing political parties. The creation of the Red Flag had come from those "anti-people" tactics. Conversely, the Yellow Flag appearing over a hundred years earlier, reflects the people's wish to develop independence, freedom, and democracy. The Yellow Flag will garner Vietnamese prosperity's continuance to honor and respect it as the people's exclusive traditional artifact. As a result, the Yellow Flag will forever be the "National Flag" in the hearts of overseas Vietnamese and the "anti-communist" majority of domestic Vietnamese. Someday, the Yellow Flag will return to its official position of National Flag over our motherland of Viet Nam, as it has twice appeared in the past.

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