

Ho Chi Minh's Testament - Core Content and Background

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I. THE HISTORICAL TESTAMENT - CORE CONTENT

President Ho Chi Minh (1890-1969) was not only a person who sought the way, led the way, but also a source of encouragement and strong belief for the Vietnamese people to overcome the most difficult period on the development road. He put an end to the crisis, the deadlock on the way to save the country when choosing the proletarian revolution and placing the Vietnamese revolution in the common flow of the world revolution. President Ho Chi Minh is the most complete symbol of unity, convergence and clarity of thought, morality and lifelong style for the people and the country. He left the Party and the people of Vietnam an extremely precious legacy, including the historical Testament - a Document that not only crystallizes the value of thousands of years of cultural traditions and practices and the fierce struggle of the Communist Party and the people of Vietnam, but also reflects his extremely bright and great personality and precious instructions for a new period of development of the Vietnamese people.

With the viewpoint of serving the people and serving the Fatherland as the ideal, Ho Chi Minh devoted his whole life to the cause of struggle for liberation and independence and self-determination for the nation; freedom, prosperity, happiness for the Vietnamese people. As a person who had always mastered the difficult, complex and long-term nature of a revolutionary career, Ho Chi Minh not only worked on his own with the highest sense of responsibility to devote the most to the revolution, the Party and for the nation, but also paid great attention to caring and fostering the revolutionary generation for the next life. Recognizing the objective law "health worsens with age," Ho Chi Minh actively took the time to draft the Testament to instruct generations to continue the revolutionary career that he himself with the Party and the Vietnamese people have chosen.

On May 15th, 1965, President Ho Chi Minh began drafting the Testament, reviewed and supplemented in May each year but mainly in May 1968 and May 1969. The Testament not only expresses his heart, feelings, aspirations, and desires for the people of all strata, with the target the development path of the country, but also points out the problems, the most important things in the process of realizing the goal of national independence is associated with socialism in Vietnam.

Stemming from the reality of the Vietnamese revolution and imbued with Marxism-Leninism about the role of the Communist Party, Ho Chi Minh consistently identified that the leadership of the Communist Party of Vietnam is a decisive factor for all benefits of the Vietnamese revolution. He pointed out, "The first way of revolution must have a Party of

revolution ... The Party is strong, the new way is successful, as well as the rider is firm the boat will run."¹ Therefore, the first important task during the revolution was to build a genuine revolutionary party of the working class, the working people and the whole Vietnamese people. In addition, the Party must be regularly respected and well-done.

In fact, in the process of finding the way to save the country, Ho Chi Minh always placed top concern on the construction of the Party. In July 1920 in Paris, while being contacted with *Preliminary Draft of Theses on the National and Colonial Questions* of Lenin, Ho Chi Minh saw "the image of the Party in the picture of country". Thus, it is possible to approach Ho Chi Minh's revolutionary career from many different angles, including the approach from building and regulating the party - a prerequisite for the fight to eliminate all oppression, exploitation, injustice, and building a democratic, fair, equal society for the final victory. Having determined the right way to save the country and the most prerequisite to ensure the victory of the revolution, Ho Chi Minh embarked on the preparation for the birth of a true revolutionary party in Vietnam.

After the Communist Party of Vietnam was founded on February 3rd, 1930, Ho Chi Minh always paid attention to the work of regulating the Party, ensuring that the Party always maintained its pioneering and exemplary character, constantly improving its leadership capacity and fighting capacity on par with the requirements and revolutionary tasks in specific period. In the construction and regulating of the Party, Ho Chi Minh was most concerned about the issue of solidarity in the Party. Because, according to him, solidarity is the core element of the strength of a group or an organization, especially party organization - an organization whose sacrifice fights not for the sake of its own class, people but for all classes and strata in society. Before referring to the "reorganization of the Party" in the Testament, Ho Chi Minh wrote many important works, specializing in building and regulating the Party such as "Revolutionary Way - 1927"; "Modifying the way of working - 1947"; "Revolutionary morality - 1955"; "Criticism and self-criticism - 1957"; "Revolutionary morality - 1958" ... Thought in these works is not only the goal of striving for each cadre, party member, but also the ideological and theoretical basis for the Communist Party of Vietnam to carry out the work and adjusting the party since its inception.

II. BACKGROUND OF THE TESTAMENT

The sacred Testament of President Ho Chi Minh he spent time, enthusiasm to consider each and every word, and added

¹ *Ho Chi Minh toàn tập (All about Ho Chi Minh)*, National Political Publishing House, Hanoi, 2011, vol. 2, p.289.

the issues to be solved due to the practical Resistance War Against America. In fact, from the end of 1964 to the beginning of 1965, before the successive and comprehensive victories of the Vietnamese army and people on the battlefield of the South, more than 50,000 puppet troops fell into decline with a series of continuous coups. This shows that, after a number of years of implementation, the "special war" of America went bankrupt. In order to save the henchmen government and maintain the new US colonial regime in South Vietnam, the US government then decided to switch to a "local war" strategy in South Vietnam and expand sabotage war with air force and navy to the North. Accordingly, on March 8th, 1965, 3,500 US Marines landed in Da Nang, opening the process of massively sending US expeditionary troops and vassals to the South, directly conducting war on Vietnam. By the end of 1965, the number of American troops in the South had reached 200,000 troops.

Recognizing the conspiracy of American imperialism, in late December 1965, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Vietnam met for the 12th meeting to discuss the situation and urgent tasks ahead and determine the anti-American way to save the country for both regions. After this Conference, the Communist Party of Vietnam decided to bring some soldiers of the regular army from the North to the South to deal with the escalation of American war. In his talk at the Conference of senior officials studying the Resolution of the 12th Party Central Committee Meeting, President Ho Chi Minh commented: "We see its strong point, its new weapons, its huge amount of money, but we also know its shortcomings that are big and basic defects. Now all the people are against it, the American people, the young people, the American intellectuals are also against it, strong against, there are young people burning themselves to oppose the US government's invasion policy. It has never been seen before ... Now that the US has 200 thousand troops in the South, it can add more to 300, 400, 500 thousand troops. I still won, I definitely won"². However, President Ho Chi Minh pointed out, "victory is not natural." Therefore, he reminded his comrades to attend the Conference to turn the Party's and Central's determination into the determination of each party member, every soldier and every citizen to fully implement this resolution.

Determined to defeat the American imperialist aggression, the entire Party, the entire people, the entire Vietnamese army was mobilized in the context of the sympathy and support of peace-loving people in the world, including the people of America. In particular, Vietnam's war against the US received great support and help from brother countries, especially the Soviet Union and China. However, in the Communist movement and among international workers, there was also a discord between the Soviet Union and China regarding the resistance against the American of the Vietnamese people. Because, right from the late 1950s, in the Soviet Union, the leadership at that time was pursuing the idea of peaceful coexistence and wanted to improve relations with the United States. Meanwhile, socialist countries including China wanted

to maintain international peace conditions to build the country. Therefore, in early 1965, after the Soviet Union had a new leadership and made a proposal, China coordinated with the Soviet Union to aid Vietnam against the US. China refused this proposal and said it will put China in a position to face the US directly. The discord between the Soviet Union and China had led to schism in the socialist system of the world and in the communist movement and among international workers. Taking advantage of this situation, the US imperialist forces took the risk to push up the war of aggression in the South and escalate the war to the North, expanding actions to intervene and invade in Laos and Cambodia. The above situation created for the whole Party, the entire people, the entire Vietnamese army, extremely complicated problems, requiring the Communist Party of Vietnam to promote the spirit of independence and autonomy, analyze and evaluate the situation properly in order to devise innovative ways and methods, to bring the resistance to overcome challenges and difficulties, to go to complete victory.

In that context, from the beginning of 1965, President Ho Chi Minh sensed a decline in health. Therefore, in addition to leading and directing the Party Central Committee with the Party Central Committee, he spent time, enthusiasm and mentality to prepare the Testament to summarize the reality of his entire revolutionary career, giving deep desires and instructions to the leadership of the Party for the new development period of the country after the resistance against the US victory, the country is reunited and transcends to socialism. In the Testament, written in 1965, he wrote, "I am 75 years old. The spirit is still clear, the body is still healthy. However, I was also a "rare old" person. Who guessed I would live and serve the Fatherland, serve the revolution for several years? So, I leave these words, just say a few things in brief "³... In it, He talked about the Party; on solidarity in the Party; about the Party's self-criticism and criticism; about how the officials and party members must instill revolutionary morality; about caring for youth union members and fostering the revolutionary generation for the next generation; on economic and cultural development to improve people's lives; about the world communist movement and about the funeral after he died so as to save, to avoid wasting people's time and money. He also encouraged our people to be determined to beat America to complete victory.

In May 1966, on the 15th and 16th, from 9 am to 10 am, President Ho Chi Minh reviewed the Testament but he did not add or repair. In the evening of May 16, 1966, Ho Chi Minh went to Noi Bai airport to go to China for a convalescence and treatment together until early June 1966. By 1967, President Ho Chi Minh's health was declining, this year he had no conditions to review the Testament. On April 14th, 1967, President Ho Chi Minh went to Guangzhou, China for medical treatment, the trip lasted on June 30th, 1967, at 20:30, he returned to Hanoi. After the 77th birthday, the Politburo and the Party Central Committee met to discuss health care for President Ho Chi Minh and the Government assigned Mr.

² *All about Ho Chi Minh*, National Political Publishing House, Hanoi, 2011, vol. 15, p.13-14.

³ *All about Ho Chi Minh*, National Political Publishing House, Hanoi, 2011, vol. 15, p.611.

Nguyen Luong Bang to closely monitor His health situation. At the same time, they sent a team of experts to Moscow to discuss the health situation of President Ho Chi Minh and learn how to preserve the body after a long time of death.

The resistance against American imperialism by the Vietnamese people is increasingly fierce. Under the leadership of the Party and President Ho Chi Minh, the South Vietnamese army and people completely foiled the first US counterattack in the dry season (1965-1966). After that defeat, the US continued to bring troops into the South and the second counterattack began in mid-September 1966. Facing the fighting spirit of the South Vietnamese army, the enemy's second counterattack was forced to end in the first half of 1967. Despite this, US President Johnson decided to bring more troops into South Vietnam, constructing plans for a third counterattack in the dry season (1967-1968). Facing that situation, at the end of December 1967, the Politburo of the Central Committee of the 3rd session met under the chairmanship of President Ho Chi Minh, analyzed the situation, decided to use the method of total offensive and general uprising in order to destroy and disintegrate the enemy, to win the entire government to the people. Accordingly, the General Offensive and rebellion of the South Vietnamese army broke out on the night of 30th, the dawn on January 31st, 1968. The General Offensive and Spring Offensive made the White House and the Pentagon frightened, the world was extremely surprised and in admiration.

On January 1st, 1968, at 16:00, President Ho Chi Minh left Hanoi for Chinese treatment until April 21st, 1968. Although health deteriorated due to age, President Ho Chi Minh always closely monitored and encouraged timely and fierce fighting of our army and people. In particular, he always gave the Southern people the most loving feelings. He regularly followed the news of victory in the South and wished to visit, motivate their fellow citizens and soldiers in the South. However, due to health reasons, his wish was not fulfilled, despite the revolutionary optimism, he always tried to practice and prepare for the trip.

In May 1968, on the 14th and 15th, from 9 am to 10 pm, President Ho Chi Minh read and continued to edit the Testament. In the 1968 supplement, he mentioned the healing of war wounds caused by the American empire and the settlement of policy work for the people of all strata, especially those who had merit for the revolution, those who did not regret losing blood and bones during the two great wars against France and the US, namely: for wounded soldiers; for martyrs; for fathers, mothers and children of war invalids and martyrs; with armed forces soldiers and youth volunteers; with women; with the victims of the old regime and with the entire population, especially farmers. Besides, he also mentioned the post-war reconstruction plan and the immediate work to improve the material and spiritual life of the people. Finally, he emphasized: "The above work is very big, heavy, and complicated, but also very glorious. This is a fight against old, corrupt things, to create new, fresh things. In order to win this huge battle, it is necessary to mobilize the

entire people, organize and educate the entire people, based on the great force of the entire people"⁴.

In 1969, during the days from May 10th to 20th, President Ho Chi Minh watched and edited the Testament. Day 20th from 9 am to 10 pm, he last reviewed and put it in the envelope. In the edit and supplement in 1969, he rewrote the entire opening of the Testament. In it, he wrote: "This year, I am 79 years old, has been a kind of "old and rare" but the spirit and mind are still very clear, although the health is poor compared to a few years ago. When people are over 70 years old, health generally deteriorates with age. It is also no wonder". After completing the Testament, President Ho Chi Minh's health became weaker and weaker, doctors decided to measure the heart rate regularly and quickly asked the Soviet and Chinese doctors for help. By mid-August 1969, President Ho Chi Minh's health deteriorated, his lungs were severely congested. On August 28th, 1969, his heart rate was no longer normal. On August 30th, 1969, despite suffering many pains, he still asked Mr. Pham Van Dong about the preparation work for the national day. At 9:47 pm on September 2nd, 1969, President Ho Chi Minh's heart stopped beating.

Thus, President Ho Chi Minh's Testament is not only a product of his planned, specific, meticulous working style, but also the profound awareness of the law of birth, disease, aging, death of human life. The Testament was born during the period of the resistance war against Americans of the Vietnamese people, which was extremely fierce, but also gained many important victories, opening up the trust of the whole Party, the people and the entire army. Each sentence, each word of the Testament shows the distillation, repression of emotions and the love, the attachment to nature, people and life. Although no longer in this world, President Ho Chi Minh still thinks of the people, takes care of the people, the country. He was well aware, that with his merits, a cult mentality could have been created. Therefore, he did not want his funeral to be organized as a priest, he did not want to have any luxury bronze statue on his grave. He wanted the feelings of the people and soldiers of the whole country for him to result in beneficial actions for the people themselves, that is, when visiting his grave, each person plants a tree to benefit the environment and ecology.

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- [3] Ho Chi Minh National Political Academy, *Ho Chi Minh's Biography*, Political Theory Publishing House, Hanoi, 2006.

⁴ *All about Ho Chi Minh*, National Political Publishing House, Hanoi, 2011, Episode 15, p.617.