

*Our Exodus, 4-30<sup>th</sup>, 1975 / 4-30<sup>th</sup>, 2015*  
*Letter to my beloved children and grandchildren*

*My dear children,*

*This month marks our 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary as Refugees in this great country. It's so hard to make this letter shorter, it has short stories and historic events, so please be patient and take your time to read it.*

*Your mother and I are both in our seventies now, longevity virtually unknown to the earlier generations. Over the years, we have had many occasions to talk to you about a number of important subjects, but you were often not all present at the same time to share the same conversations. Moreover, you may not have entirely retained our message. Hence, this letter summarizes the key points that your mother and I wish to impart to you. For your children who may or may not speak or read Vietnamese very well, we have attempted to write it in English, and we ask that you find the best way to relay our thoughts to them and offer them the necessary explanations. It is not enough to merely take note of what we put today in writing for you. Please make an effort to really grasp the fundamental meaning of our message.*

*1. - **Gratefulness** — My dear children, in fleeing the communist regime in search of freedom, we had to leave everything behind: our properties, our ancestral shrine, as well as our ancestors' final resting place. The government and the generous people of this country opened their arms and their hearts to help us rebuild our lives. Now that we are fairly well established, we should be grateful and show it by doing our best to make this nation even greater, stronger and more prosperous.*

*We, including your uncles and aunts who have served the former Republic of Vietnam (RVN), under the yellow and 3 red stripes flag, are grateful to the soldiers of our Army of RVN (ARVN or *Quân Lực Việt-Nam Cộng-Hòa* "QL-VNCH") and of our allied forces, who had sacrificed their lives on our land. This yellow flag is presently not representing a country, however, it is a **sacred symbol** of all the Vietnamese refugees.*

*In America now, many children of our compatriots have joined the Armed Forces; last year (2014), we got a first General in the Cavalry of the US Army, a first American-Vietnamese lady jet fighter (she is a Top Gun), and many others, including lawyers, doctors and scientists, who are serving in the US Navy and Air Forces. We are grateful and so proud of them. God Bless them and God Bless this country.*

*You, my children, are also contributing very well to this country, and your mom and I are also very proud of you.*

*2.- **The cause of our EXODUS** — You must be sure to explain clearly to your children the reasons which pushed our family as well as hundreds of thousands of others to choose a life of self-exiled immigrants in a foreign country: **We fled communism in search of freedom.** You and your children have the great fortune of growing up in a democratic society. Having known nothing but freedom, you all would never imagine the full extent of the duplicity and the cruelty exerted by the communists. You would find it difficult to believe the atrocities to which people can submit others. In due time, you may let them watch movies such as: *Journey from the Fall*, directed by Tran Ham, which premiered on April 30, 2005; "*Last Days in Vietnam*" nominated for an Oscar in 2015; or "*Ride the Thunder*" which just came out in 3-2015. The communists are cruel in action, but very cunning in words and especially skilled in covering up! Thus, there is the need to really explain things to your children to ensure they have a full understanding of our background, not to incite hatred in them, but so they can be aware of the truth. Just in case your children ask "where you come from or why you are here", this letter can provide you some fundamentals.*

**3.- Our native land** — Regardless of how busy you are, take the time to reflect on the history and the geography of VN in order to understand the origin of our people and the creation of our homeland. Learn about the vicissitudes that our people experienced, including the moments of glory and the times of humiliation. Appreciate the wisdom and accomplishments of our forefathers as well as their mistakes. These are all lessons that we should learn and communicate to our descendants. The pages of our history books are alternatively filled with glorious achievements and painful tears. There was a time when our country had to bear the humiliation of Chinese occupation -- we kicked them out but they came back again, on and off during a thousand years. Then, our heroic people rose to break the subversive bonds of domination and reclaimed our independence. Our past also included periods when we invaded and dominated other neighboring countries. The most recent incident was the destructive ten-year (1975-1985 by the Communists of Vietnam) occupation of Kampuchia, which incited the hatred of a neighboring country and created unwholesome karma, the fruits of which future generations will have to bear.

**4.- Recent historical events** — Our country became a French colony around the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In 1940, a World War erupted. In VN, on March 9, 1945, the Japanese overturned the French in a military coup. Emperor Bao Dai enacted the abolition of the treaty of protectorate concluded with France and entrusted to Mr. Tran Trong Kim the formation of the first government of the independent state of Viet Nam. On the global scene, the countries of the axis — Germany, Italy and Japan — were overcome by the Allies — England, France, the United States, the USSR and China. In our country, on August 19, 1945, the Viet Minh revolutionary forces seized the power held by the Tran Trong Kim government and proclaimed the creation of the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam. As France sought to restore its domination, on December 19, 1946, a war of national resistance was declared in view of defending our independence. At that time, the Viet Minh revealed its true communist nature and initiated a campaign to eliminate the nationalist groups. Faced with the danger of being gradually eradicated, the nationalist parties pulled back into special zones controlled by another non-communist government.

After the battle of Dien Bien Phu, the **Geneva Accord** of 1954 divided our country into two parts: the North became the Democratic Republic and the South became the Republic of VN. The North pledged open allegiance to the communist bloc and immediately launched the process of conquering the South by force, an act which dissimulated to the eyes of the world by operating behind an organization of its creation, called the Front of Liberation of the South. At that time, South VN accepted the support of the United States and the allied forces of the free world created to stop the expansion of communism. In the 1960s, as the invading forces from the North grew in numbers and strength, the United States started pouring their own troops into the South, and the war intensified.

In 1972, after the rupture of relations between the USSR and China, US President Nixon went to China and signed the Shanghai agreement. Consequently, no longer needing an “outpost in the fight against communism”, the United States dropped their support of the Republic of Viet Nam! [The book “Khi Dong Minh Thao Chay (When the Allies Ran Away)” by Dr. Nguyen Tien Hung reveals the disappointing truths about the betrayal of the Americans in their shameful flight.] According to the **Paris Agreement** signed in 1973, the United States was to withdraw their troops from South VN, **promised** to replace (continue funding) military supplies, and only leave in place a small number of military advisers while the North Vietnamese troops remained fully stationed in the South! The Communists of North VN were therefore free to continue their unabated invasion of the South with the considerable assistance of the international communist bloc, Russia (then USSR) and mainly the Red China. Despite the courage shown in its war of self-defense, because of the serious lack of ammunition and fuel, and also mainly because the US had not kept its promises (Speech “The Truth about VN War” of Prof. Bruce Herschensohn presented at Prager University), the US Congress (controlled by the Democrats) cancelled all replacements (stopped funding) of military means for the ARVN (Army of Republic of VN), and South VN was pushed into an untenable situation. On April 30, 1975, Saigon, the capital of the South, fell. In the months and years following that date, the world witnessed the **exodus** of the Vietnamese men, women and children

*fleeing communism, in search of freedom. Hundreds of thousands of “Boat People” have died in the South Pacific ocean, while hundreds of thousands of RVN soldiers and officials were sent to “remote big prisons” that the communist government called “re-education camps”. Thirty plus years later, these camps still hold prisoners and were recently added with dissidents or simple political suspects. You may find all said facts with the United Nation/Human Rights Council. Now you know why we are here.*

**5.- Historical data and information** — *We live in an era where we are indeed swamped by a glut of data about everything, especially via the internet. Much has been written about VN and the VN War, including photos and movies, but we found a serious shortage of books and films that are objective and truthful. There are of course a few authors who did try to provide an honest account of the war. Unfortunately, each of them only succeeded in relating one particular aspect of the truth in the manner of the blind men in the ancient fable who tried to describe an elephant by each touching a part of its body. Moreover, many authors knowingly bend the truth to fit their personal justification or neurosis about the war. Still others, including certain monastic figures, make up stories for the purpose of slandering.*

*From your parents’ perspective, the conflict that took place in our country from 1954 to 1975 was a war that opposed the North to the South -- a civil war; a war by proxy resulting from the confrontation between the communist bloc and the free world; and a war delivered with the weapons of the foreign countries and the blood of the Vietnamese people. For the South Vietnamese, it was a war of self-defense. Meanwhile, in the North, through propaganda and education of the masses, the communists portrayed it as a war delivered against the American puppet regime to reunify the country. This last decade, the communist government is trying to forget the words “American puppet” but turns around to embrace the new relationship for US dollars. Unifying the country is a good idea. Uniting the people is a great goal. But, the communist’s mind is to control all with dictatorship. We and hundreds of thousands of other parents predicted this and therefore we chose to flee.*

**6.- Visiting VN** — *Yes, your mom and I did. Some people have not returned to VN or or have been reluctant to return because of health or political reasons. Nevertheless, there are many who have returned to VN, each for their own personal reasons. Needless to say, we all long to be reunited with our homeland, but everyone has a personal view about the pros and cons of the matter! Valid reasons for returning include: returning to the country to care for one’s aging or sick parents, to help one’s family, to restore one’s ancestral tombs, to teach young students, and to visit one’s country. Returning to the country to bring solace to victims of natural disasters or to selflessly help compatriots in need are also commendable motives. But it is better to abstain from returning to merely enjoy sensual pleasures, to take advantage of cheap tourism, or to seek monetary gains and official distinctions.*

*Later, if the country has shown some real improvements, you may want to bring your children to visit our homeland. But we predict that they will not be particularly moved — one may not feel any emotion if there are no memories which associate one with something. Thus, in raising your children, please try to provide guidance and help them appreciate our native land, our people, and our compatriots, and make sure they do not behave as vulgar tourists. As for the probability of your returning to live in Viet Nam, we do not expect the prospects to be very positive, at least for now.*

**7.- The real situation in the country** — *If somebody tells you that the country has made progress — that the majority of the population are now able to eat rice with every meal compared to the mix of rice and oats of the post-1975 era, in 80’s national starvation; that motorbikes and cars have mostly replaced bicycles — know that in truth, such progress only reflects the normal evolution of any country (after all, it would be unthinkable that after 40 years without war, growth or progress were slowly achieved!). However, in terms of real democratic progress, if we compare Viet Nam to its neighbors, we cannot help feeling shame for the country’s failure in*

many aspects (even Kampuchea, eastern neighboring country, has an opposition party!). In Feb. 2015, the United Nations' Human Rights Council reported many serious violations committed by the VN government.

If you want to know the real Viet Nam beyond the tall buildings, the shiny cars, the luxurious five-star hotels, and the modern golf courses, then seek information from inside the country to see the extensive breakdown in many sectors (education, in particular), the excesses of "red capitalism", the plague of widespread corruption, and the waste of our nation's natural resources. And don't forget to visit our poor peasants on the highlands or fishermen of the coastal area. We need to look objectively at the actual situation without any make-up, that which is painted neither in pink nor in black.

For a clear view of the situation in our country, refer to a speech by Dr. Le Đang Doanh, former Director of the Central Institute of Research on Management in Ha-Noi, VN. In this speech, Dr. Doanh voiced the whole truth to the highest communist leaders (no wonder why he soon later became "**former**" Director). This document recently made its way abroad. In a presentation which is made of this text, one can read: "We should all pay attention to the numbers that point to the sad reality of the economic situation in Viet Nam. Mr. Doanh underlined the weaknesses of the economy and the antidemocratic nature of the communist regime in Viet Nam. He affirmed unequivocally that the political infrastructure is obsolete and should be changed. In April 2005, Mr. Doanh related the following story. An expert in international finances asked him the following question: "Clever as you claim to be, how come your country is still poor after such a long period? With your intelligence and your proud tradition, why do you beg all the time? Why don't you give yourself a goal in time after which you will resolve to stop asking for alms? Is this possible?" How humiliating for us all! Our country is not populated only by incompetents; our people are not lazy; why this utter misery? It is all due to the dictatorship of the Communist Party!

Again most recently, on 31<sup>st</sup> Oct., 2014 at the VN's Parliament, Congressman (YouTube search, in Vietnamese language) **Trương Trọng Nghĩa** spoke the truth about the ill economic policy, corruptions in the government, and the danger of the Republic of China.

**8.- Real Danger of the next Century – The Republic of China**, also called People's Republic of China "PRC", presently during this 20<sup>th</sup> century, fake name brands, defected and poisonous products Made in China have flooded in many countries (ref. book "Death by China" of Peter Navarro; also warnings from retired anchor of ABC-TV, Diane Sawyer); the PRC also is the principal suspect of stealing intellectual materials/titles or hacking US companies' computer system (Pentagon reports). We knew the PRC wanted to rule the world, or is planning to; here we are going to just focus about Vietnam. The VN Communist Party "VNCP" owed the PRC a big favor/debt during the last Vietnam war, which ended in 4-1975. Now is the time to repay the big debt. Additionally, the VNCP has considered the PRC its MASTER. The slaves must obey the Master. Taking advantage of this, the PRC has strategically leased the real estate up in the highland of VN and bringing ten thousands of their hungry laborers from China to develop it. Ten years later, how many thousand Chinese children will be born from these laborers? Eventually they can build a province or a state of China right in the heart of our motherland. There is an environmental danger in the Central Highland of VN as the PRC wants to start two **bauxite projects, and the extraction of alumina from the bauxite ore could poison underground water sources**. There are other dangers as the PRC controls lands along the far northern border of VN for their **drug smuggling** business. The PRC's Navy is also patrolling deep into VN water, chasing and threatening our fishermen and invading and trying to claim many islands that belong to Japan and Philippines, including Paracel and Spratly islands that never belong to the Chinese. These acts have been internationally denounced. Early this April, 2015, the US Senate has loudly raised the warning about the buildup of military bases on these islands. PRC is not just the real danger of our country, but also is for the world. Again, the future Vietnamese generations will have to bear it.

**9.- Having a political attitude.** *Our fellow expatriates are not the only ones who demand the abolition of the unique-party regime; some members of the Communist Party and progressive elements in the country are also clamoring for the same. Understand this: The fight against dictatorship (a single party regime), against corruption, and against the erroneous policies of the Communists, are not fights against VN; they are, quite to the contrary, an effort to move forward so that the country can improve and grow.*

**10.- Our family** — *Let's now talk about our family. Your mother and I belong to an older generation. We raised you in accordance with the standards of our generation, just like our grandparents raised us according to the standards of their time.*

*You must have at times found us too strict. We simply followed the norm of our times. We hope that you will **forgive and forget** any unhappiness that, unaware, we may have inflicted upon you. Know that we did not seek an extravagant lifestyle, that we were never wasteful and that we lived well within the ethical and moral guidelines of our culture. We worked hard and saved every penny to provide for our family so that you could have a relatively comfortable life, a good education and a warm happy home.*

*Because we had been despoiled of all our assets by the Communists, we experienced a rather difficult beginning on arrival in this country. Your mother and I had to accept very harsh working conditions. And you also, you had to work hard and diligently during your holidays in order to complete your studies. Today, everything seems to have fallen in place quite nicely. You should try never to be self-satisfied or to think of yourself as the best. Remember this: "When you look up, you will find that many other are better, when you look down, you will also see that many of them are not better than you." Your personal talent, if any, counts only to some extent, and the remainder results from the combination of favorable circumstances and the intangible benefits inherited from your ancestors and from your own actions in former lives and in this life. Always cultivate a virtuous life in order to improve your karma in the same manner as a motorist must recharge the battery of his car. One reaps what one sows. Such is the universal law of cause and effect which leaves no one untouched!*

*Regarding your small family unit, here is our advice: between husband and wife, it is important to respect one another, to share and to compromise. Frictions are inevitable; resolve problems with patience, calm and wisdom. Anger is bad council, avoid it at all cost.*

**With respect to your children,** *love them without spoiling them. Be sure to keep an eye on their social circles. Establish contacts with the parents of their friends in order to obtain a fuller and deeper understanding of who they are. In our society today, bad peer influence is such a widespread phenomenon! The time spent watching television, playing video games or "chatting" on the Internet should be limited. On the other hand, it is important to encourage the practice of some physical activities and sports. This also applies to you personally. Be sure to include physical exercise in your routine in order to balance your activities. Let your father's health condition be an inspiration to you. In my youth, I spent countless hours tied to my work. As a consequence, today, in my old age, my body "demands justice", and I am frequently ill.*

*In your daily life, be thrifty (but not miserly). Make an effort to protect the environment because the resources of the world are limited; we must think of the future generations of our descendants. Do not waste anything, not even the Kleenex that you use to clean your hands. From time to time, let your children view the photographs and the films showing little children who are suffering terribly from hunger and cold; this will help them learn that in this world, a great many still live in misery.*

**Between brothers and sisters,** *keep in mind the following Vietnamese proverbs: "Brothers and sisters should be linked like arms/hands and legs/feet"; "when an elder sister falls, the little sister must help her up"; "a drop of blood is more valuable than a pond of water"; "when a horse is sick, the whole stable stops feeding". The secret to maintaining good relationships between brothers and sisters may be found in one word: "forgiveness". Do not hold rigor with your brothers and sisters for their defects. Any discord between you would be extremely painful to us.*

*In this society, as everyone seems to be short of time and can barely take care of his own immediate family, the extended family is somewhat neglected, much to our regret. Please make an effort to emphasize the tight relationship and unity in the extended family. To our daughters and daughters-in-law, we have a special request: help your husbands to maintain good relations between your brothers and sisters, as well as with all relatives on both the paternal and the maternal sides of the family.*

### **11. Preserve Vietnamese Culture –**

*“A nation’s culture resides in the hearts and the soul of its people” (Mahatma Gandhi).*

*“Without culture, there would be no civilization, no society and no future.” My dear children, you need to preserve it no matter where you reside. However, you should not let some outdated standards become the hurdles of the progress.*

*Days for our ancestors, King Hùng Vương who built our nation, historic heroes like the “Two Trưng sisters” and King Trần Hưng Đạo” who defeated the Chinese invasions, this is in our history book. There are other holidays that we observe basing on lunar year; you want to encourage your children to participate and enjoy them.*

*About old rules and traditions for marriages, funerals, ancestor’s memorial days etc... let’s not be too strict about them. Be simple and thrifty -- save money to invest into your kids’ education, or give to charity, or to help the society and the country.*

**12.- Speaking Vietnamese is part of the culture—** Some points need to be mentioned here. Your children have grown up as citizens of our host country with all the related rights and duties. Their daily life at school and in society forces them to speak and to write English and/or French impeccably, or they would run the risk of not being able to fully integrate in their social environment, of being insulated or missing out on opportunities for success and growth. There are some colleges now that offer Vietnamese credit courses. But to really think about it, a child cannot be the fusion of two children (Vietnamese and Canadian, or Vietnamese and American/French.) If too much pressure is exerted, the children will not bear it. In addition, we have to make time for their other interests such as sports, music, etc. Therefore we must make intelligent choices and establish a proper balance to avoid transforming your children into “studying machines”. Your children will be making progressive achievements in this country. Help them be prepared and adapted to their environment in order to ensure a satisfactory quality of life.

**13.- The Western society —** We live in a society of excessive consumption. Don’t let yourself be caught by skilful marketing techniques which encourage you to consume without control.

*Surrounded by wants and needs, we become the easy preys of publicity; at the same time we are being conditioned and influenced by the banks and the insurance companies. Practice this motto: “Minimize your wants, be content with little.” Buy only what you need. This rule is also applicable to the houses and cars you buy; these should be well within your means and should provide the security and the basic functionality needed in your daily life. To be truly happy, one needs to be less selfish. One must think of fellow human beings and learn to share with others.*

**14.- Your old parents —** With old age comes illness, and then one day, the old and the sick must depart... for good! That’s the universal law of life! When this day arrives for us, please make sure that our funerals are solemn but simple. Burying us in a cemetery may pose some problems for you should you be required in the future to move away for your work. It would be difficult and impractical to take care of our tombs in this city. We prefer the cremation solution, which is more practical and does not require our bodies to be entombed. We believe future generations will need the land more than us. You could disperse our ashes on the mountain, in a

*river, or even in the ocean. We will return to dust, that's all! Instead of spending on a funeral reception, please save the money to contribute to some worthy causes of collective interest. Do not be concerned that you would be criticized for this untraditional funeral. In time, people will understand and will approve.*

*One more important point: if, by misfortune, we should be sick and require life support in a vegetative state, please have the courage to remove our artificial life support system. Why prolong such a state which can only be a major burden to everyone?*

**15.- The family shrine** — *Given today's limited living space, it is not very easy to install a family shrine at home. To keep the memory of your ancestors, of your grandparents, both paternal and maternal, and of your parents, you may display photographs in the most suitable place of your house to show your respect and to reaffirm your commitment to never dishonor your ancestral tradition. On the anniversary of our death, prepare a small table on which you will lay out a cup of water, some scented flowers, fresh fruits and an incense rod (an electric rod would do as well). Or a sincere simple prayer with your family would be sufficient. It is the expression of your love and that of your children that would be most meaningful and valuable to us on that day. We did mention "your children" to point out the need to make sure they understand the significance that we, as Vietnamese people, ascribe to the celebration of the anniversary of death of members of the family. During these special days, concentrate on good thoughts, do a few more acts of kindness compared to other regular days, give charity to the poor, or donate clothes or food to charitable organizations. On these occasions, it would be wonderful if all brothers and sisters get together to renew and strengthen our family bonds. Please make an effort to organize such family reunions.*

*My dear children, this letter is mainly to let you know and remember where you come from and why you became a citizen of this country. Be sure to pass this letter on to your children and future generations of our family.*

*We wish that you will read this letter carefully, that you will really think about it and that you will try to carry out our recommendations. We thank you all for having always taken good care of us for so many years, and to have done all that's required so that we can enjoy our old age in serenity and with dignity.*

***With much love to you all, our beloved children and grandchildren.***

*Your mom and dad.*

*April, 2015*

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*NOTES: This letter was put together, updated to 4-2015, by the effort of my friends and a very small part of my contribution. We care for the Future and concern of Democracy, Freedom and Peace for Vietnam and the World.*

*You may edit or re-address matters accordingly to your notion or personal circumstance.*

*For those who receive by email and want to use this format, you may EDIT (but must keep the integrity, tell the truth with back-up facts) & DELETE the portions that don't really or necessarily belong to your situation. The most important is to pass this on to future generations. THANK YOU.*

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