

**CATHOLICISM AND REVOLUTION (1945-1954):  
HISTORICAL LESSONS AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE**

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**Abstract:** *When discussing the relation between Catholicism and Revolution, Catholicism and Communism, or the relation between Catholicism and government of Democratic Republic of Vietnam, it found that Vietnamese Catholic community had to face challenges in stage 1945-1954. The writer; however, have not discussed this historical stage in detail. This article discusses two aspects of this problem. Firstly, the ideal change of Catholic dignitaries in the process of the war of resistance against the French colonialists and attitude of Vietnamese Catholic community towards national resistance. Secondly, the historical significant lessons have been drawn in resolving the relation between Catholicism and Revolution, Catholicism and Communism or the relation between Catholicism and Vietnamese state from this change and attitude. The writer deals with another problem that is Vietnamese Church found the model in which it could coexist with communist regime but be independent of French colonialism and church. In the end, the writer concludes that if Vietnamese Catholic Church has not been closely connected with the fate of nation which is national independence and socialism, it could not exist and develop.*

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**Introduction**

When speaking of the relation between Catholicism and Revolution, Catholicism and Communism or Catholicism and Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, we seemed to find that Vietnamese Catholicism had to face challenges and tragic elements in this stage. In this situation many of us often agreed with priest Trần Tam Tĩnh's remarks in his book: "Catholics are stuck in two poles, between the horns of a dilemma: whether they co-operate with Viet Minh communists (in fact, under the leadership of Communists) they will betray Church because at the time of Pope Pio VII, anti-communism was considered dogma; or they co-operate with

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French to betray their fatherland again. Many elements push them to make a choice because they want to devote to Church and Vietnamese country”<sup>(2)</sup>.

Similarly, when speaking of the situation of Vietnamese Catholicism after the August Revolution, Phạm Thế Hưng remarked that since September 2<sup>nd</sup> 1945 Hồ Chí Minh government held power, subjective and objective condition became complexly: “In Vietnamese Catholicism there were two aspects: one side was patriotic, and the other was anti-country. These sides conflicted with each other; they changed in the difficult war of resistance”<sup>(3)</sup>

In fact we have no time to discuss thoroughly this special historical stage. Recently, some books of foreign writers have estimations and explanations of the “Catholic tragedy” event. Many ideas make us think but some of them can not be accepted<sup>(4)</sup>.

Our article should deal with above problems on two aspects:

First, we should have comprehensive way of looking at inside and outside conditions of Vietnam Catholicism after the August Revolution. We are also interested in ideological tendencies of dignitaries and the change of these tendencies in the war of resistance against the French colonialists, and we should pay attention to two main problems: the attitude of Vietnamese Catholic Church toward the war of resistance against the French colonialists and the national resistance.

Second, we draw the important historical lessons in resolving the relation between Catholicism and nation, Catholicism and Communists as well as the relation between Catholicism and State.

In the stream of complex events Phạm Bá Trục is one of typical instances. We think highly of his sentiment and awareness. He was devoted to Catholic Church. He was the brave Catholic in difficult stage. He had right awareness on religion as well as the relation between Catholic Church and State. Now his awareness still has topical significance

We set forth some following problems:

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<sup>2</sup>. See: Trần Tam Tinh. *The Cross and the Sword*, Youth Publishing House, Hochiminh City, pp. 84-85.

<sup>3</sup>. Phạm Thế Hưng. *Understanding on Catholicism in Vietnam*, Religious Publishing House, p. 325.

<sup>4</sup>. Ph.D. Thesis of Trần Thị Liên. *Vietnamese Catholic Community in the Fight for Independence - the French Policy of Colonial Reoccupation and the Resistance of Vietminh*, Paris, 1997, 1170 pages in French. See: *Catholics and the Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (1945-1954)* in French. You can consult such works as: *Catholicism and Buddhism in Vietnam* in French by P. Ghedo, Paris, 1970; *Vietminh 1945-1954* in French by B. Fall, Paris, 1960; *The Excessive Free* in French by R. Girardet and P. Assouline, Paris, 1990.

## I. Vietnamese Catholic Church after the August Revolution 1945: the structure of force and tendencies

1- Although Vietnamese Catholic Church was not considered full local church in 1945, its national elements increased obviously. It had 1.6 million believers in 15 dioceses, actually 15 vicariates under the management of different foreign orders, among them there were 9 dioceses to be managed by French missionaries (Hà Nội, Vinh, Hưng Hóa, Huế, Quy Nhơn, Thanh Hóa, Sài Gòn, Kon Tum), one diocese (Lạng Sơn and Cao Bằng) was managed by clergies of French Dominican order. Three dioceses (Hải Phòng, Thái Bình, and Bắc Ninh) were under the management of Spanish Dominican order's clergies. Three dioceses (Bùi Chu, Phát Diệm and Vĩnh Long) were managed by Vietnamese clergies <sup>(5)</sup>.

In staff of clergies there were 330 foreign priests and 1,400 Vietnamese priests. In three dioceses under the management of Vietnamese bishops there were 285 Vietnamese priests. In the staff of teachers there were more Vietnamese teachers. Vietnamese Catholic Church had 5,000 Vietnamese nuns and 350 foreign nuns at that time <sup>(6)</sup>. Above numbers help us to find that autochthonic tendency grew stronger and stronger in Vietnamese Catholic Church. The dioceses under the management of Vietnamese bishops would become effervescent places after the Declaration of Independence was born on September 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1945. Even these dioceses became effervescent immediately after the French and Japanese coup d'état happened on March 9<sup>th</sup> 1945.

This problem had deep origin in the history of Vietnamese Catholic Church. On the one hand, Vietnamese Catholic Church was limited on theology before the Second Vatican Council; Church still maintained the united institutions on the theology as well as religious life. Holy See has not accepted the national values and characters existing to "Catholic character" (universal and unique). From the system of apostolic vicar was established in the second half of 17<sup>th</sup> century, native churches were taken care of by French and Western clergies. When the French colonialists invaded Vietnam, "the kind of colonialism within religion" appeared in the internal Church (Trần Tam Tinh, "*the Cross and the Sword*").

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<sup>5</sup>. Bishop Nguyễn Bá Tông (Phát Diệm), Bishop Hồ Ngọc Căn (Bùi Chu); Bishop Ngô Đình Thục (Vĩnh Long)

<sup>6</sup>. These datum are in *The problems of Preach*, in *Asia Review*, N<sup>o</sup>. 39, September and October, 1948 in French.

On the other hand, the development of national movements and the management of many native dioceses belonged to Vietnamese clergies (in 1946- 1954, 6 dioceses were under the management of the representatives of Vietnamese apostolic vicar, among them were two important dioceses, Hà Nội and Hải Phòng) national sentiment and nationalist dimension really rose up in Vietnamese Catholic Community.

2- Actually, the attraction of the August Revolution changed awareness and sentiment of Catholics. When speaking of the days and the months of South resistance, Professor Lý Tránh Chung wrote that “In the historical August, history liked tidal flow to bring us back to our nation, all the country rose and we witnessed that scenery... But now, wherever we live or whatever we do, we never forget that autumn”<sup>(7)</sup>. It is necessary to say that Vietnamese Catholics met many difficulties in expressing their patriotism before 1945, so the attraction of the August Revolution was a “cheery” event of nationalism that still hid in mind and hearts of true Catholics.

Furthermore, we must realize that many Catholics often felt inferiority complex before 1945. A small Catholic community was not only accused of following foreign religion against Confucianism, orthodox political system but also considered as cause of losing our country<sup>(8)</sup>.

At the very beginning of the August Revolution, the Catholic problem was an important one although Catholic community was small, it was social force. This community played an important role in the relation with the Western countries, in particular, with France. When analyzing this problem there were many opinions that: Although the small Catholic community was “outside” when facing the Government of Democratic Republic of Vietnam, it was a sacred community and it had an important political role”<sup>(9)</sup>.

Many important events demonstrated this problem. By means of Catholic newspapers, Vietnamese Catholics expressed their cheerful attitudes towards the August Revolution. These attitudes presented obviously in Đa Minh newspaper which was published in September and October, 1945. On September 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1945 the

<sup>7</sup>. Lý Chánh Trung. *How to Return Nation*, Trinh Bay Publishing House, Saigon, 1957, p. 43.

<sup>8</sup> In new article: “*Catholicism and globalization*” in *Religion and Nation* monthly review, October, 2009, once again Priest Thiện Cẩm recalls that “Church did not lay down to use the “cross and sword” tactics but it was at random. The aim of the true preachers were to enlarge Kingdom of God but not to build an empire”

<sup>9</sup>. See: Trần Thị Liên. *Catholics and the Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (1945-1954)*, *ibid*, p. 273.

Church's representatives appealed Christians in the world to support the independence of Vietnam, They sent a letter Pope Pius XII to beseech him to recognize the Government of Democratic Republic of Vietnam, regardless of the silence of apostolic delegate Drapier <sup>(10)</sup>.

The August Revolution succeeded in the special point of time of international situation: after fascism collapsed, the socialist camp was established, and then the confrontation between capitalist system and socialist one appeared, that time was called the cold war. The confrontation of these systems influenced religious level. Both Pope Pius XI (before the Second World War) and Pope Pius XII had opposed violently communism. The force of imperialist colonialism took advantage of two Popes' attitudes to oppose communism so violently. Many Catholic scholars remarked that "the anti- communists in Vietnam is the production of Christian dogma and French propagation".

Although Catholics supported the August Revolution, they were worried about the situation of country. Because they did not understand the nature of the August Revolution and they were influenced by political propagation of reactionaries, they thought that Viet Minh was communist and the independence which was attained was the start of communism in Vietnam so it was difficult for many Catholics to accept it. When analyzing the Democratic Republic of Vietnam from September, 1945 many Western scholars still have thought that Vietnam State was ambiguity between the strategy of national union and the orthodox direction of communism<sup>(11)</sup>. One of French, at that time, expedients tried to prove that although the Indochinese Communist Party proclaimed to break up in the end of November, 1945, the essence of Việt Minh Front was also atheistic communist. The French colonialists propagated such argument in order to draw Catholics who were vacillating.

When nationwide resistance broke out, they often emphasized two main tendencies in the internal Catholic differentiation to make "two opposite faces" which were analyzed above. The character of the conflict and the change of these two tendencies in Catholic circle were the patriotic Catholics from laity to clergy

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<sup>10</sup>. The above appeal of four bishops: Nguyễn Bá Tông, Hồ Ngọc Căn, Phan Đình Phùng and Ngô Đình Thục. Full of this appeal was inserted in Đa Minh newspaper N<sup>o</sup>. 159 (November 5<sup>th</sup>, 1945). Besides, Bishop Nguyễn Bá Tông in the name of Vietnamese clergymen sends the above letter to Pope Pius XII in same day. This letter was not replied by Apostolic Delegate in Hà Nội and Vatican, but this was significant event.

<sup>11</sup>. See: C. Gosch. *On the Diplomatic Policy of the Government of Democratic Republic of Vietnam*, Asian Approach review, N<sup>o</sup>. 18, 2003, pp. 19-53.

who devote to Catholic Church but they wanted to support revolution and oppose the French invasion.

When studying the tendency of Catholics in the war of resistance against the French colonialists carefully, we found that there were not only two sides in Catholic community. Roughly, we found three different tendencies:

The first tendency: many clergies and patriotic Catholics were connected with government in the war of resistance for defending the country.

The second tendency: many dignitaries and Catholics bended forward to the French colonialists in order “to oppose communism and to guard Catholicism”.

The third tendency: the parts of excellent Catholics, intellectuals and dignitaries created the tendency of “autonomous Catholicism” that might cooperate with Government, but it was independent of Government as well as the French colonialists.

Many researching works have dealt with the first and the second tendencies. Our article would like to speak more obviously about the third tendency. This tendency and its historical lesson still have current significance.

## **II. The change of political ideological tendency in Vietnamese Catholic community (1946 -1954)**

### *1- First of all we identify again and affirm the contributions of “resistance Catholics”*

It was said that Catholic community is the crowded and various one. Among Catholics there were some excellent Catholics, they really became “historical characters” in the resistance and they were also Catholic excellent intellectuals of Church.

We can not but talk about Doctor Vũ Đình Tụng, Minister of Public Health, Doctor Vũ Đình Thuyết, Vice Minister of Public Health, Vũ Đình Tụng’s younger brother, Professor, Doctor Nguyễn Tấn Gi Trọng, Director of Informative Department of Provisional Government, the member of Standing Committee of the National Assembly; Lawyer Thái Văn Lung in Sai gon, Lawyer Nguyễn Thành Vĩnh, Director of Finance Service in South, the president of Catholic National

Salvation Organization in South, Trần Công Chính, Secretary of Central Catholic National Salvation; Trader Ngô Tử Hạ, Minister of War Invalids....

The images of patriotic Catholics in the war of resistance against the French colonialists still have engraved upon North resistance bases; for example, Xuân Thủy guerrilla unit in Hải Hậu district, Nam Định province, in 1952-1953.

On the rank of dignitaries, first of all we have to mention priest Phạm Bá Trục; he was Doctor of Theology<sup>(12)</sup>, a member of Standing Committee of the National Assembly (11-1946), Vice President of Liên Việt Committee of (1951)<sup>(13)</sup>.

- Nguyễn Bá Luật was the priest of Huyện Sỹ church; he sacrificed in the war of resistance against the French colonialists.

- Gabriel Thọ was the priest in Hóc Môn, Sài Gòn. He also sacrificed in the war of resistance against the French colonialists.

- Vũ Xuân Kỳ was the President of the Liaison Committee of Patriotic Catholics of interzone III and the President of the Nationwide Liaison Committee of Patriotic Catholics.

- Nguyễn Tất Tiên was the Vice President of the Nationwide Liaison Committee of Patriotic Catholics.

- Hoàng Quang Tự was the Vice President of the Liaison Committee of Patriotic Catholics of Interzone III.

We have to mention the contributions of many patriotic priests.

Among strong hearted and indomitable priests, we never forget 5 priests who regrouped to North Vietnam in spite of the prohibition of superior. One priest came back South to take part in the war of resistance against the American imperialist. These priests were:

Trần Quang Nghiêm, the member of the Nationwide Liaison Committee of Patriotic Catholics. He came back South to take part in the war of resistance against the American imperialist.

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<sup>12</sup>. Some documents written that "After 9 years learning in Roma, he became Doctor of Philosophy, Laws and Divinity. When he came back Vietnam, he was appointed to keep many churches". See: *Priest Phạm Bá Trục who respects God and loves country, unites Catholics and non Catholics*. It was published by Liên Việt Committee, 1954.

<sup>13</sup>. See: *Priest Phạm Bá Trục...* ibid. p. 9. The other documents affirm that He was Deputy Chief of Standing Committee of the First National Assembly.

Hồ Thành Biên, the president of the Nationwide Liaison Committee of Patriotic Catholics.

Lương Minh Kỳ, the member of the Nationwide Liaison Committee of Patriotic Catholics.

Võ Thành Trinh, the President of Vietnam Committee for Solidarity of Vietnamese Patriotic Catholics.

Nguyễn Hiếu Lễ, the member of the Nationwide Liaison Committee of Patriotic Catholics<sup>(14)</sup>.

Phạm Ngọc Thuận was little known. After September, 1945 he became the Vice President of the South Administrative Resistance Committee. He was a rich Catholic and naturalized a French citizen. In 1943 he took part in patriotic movement and he was a member of Vanguard Youth's Organization. He became one of well-known leaders in South. His younger brother, Phạm Ngọc Thảo was also an original image of South Catholic in the war of resistance against the French colonialists.

The contributions of Catholics who followed this tendency were very important. In *Phạm Bá Trục's funeral oration, Deputy Chief of Standing Committee of the National Assembly*, in October, 1954 President Hồ Chí Minh said that "since our people have believed and elected you to become a member of the National Assembly and the National Assembly appointed you to be member of the Standing Committee, you helped government very actively in many important problems. In your duties you combined humanity following words of God with patriotic spirit of a true representative of Vietnamese people"<sup>(15)</sup>.

Vietnamese Catholics had many contributions to our national resistance although they were in capacity of individuals or of organizations as Catholic salvation organization in North and Central Vietnam, resistance Catholics organization in South Vietnam. Priest Trương Bá Cần, a Catholic historian, in Paris, in 1972 remarked that "because of historical changes, Vietnamese Catholics were driven into predicaments. They were wavering between following French and following the Nguyen dynasty. They were also wavering between following American imperialists and following atheistic communists.

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<sup>14</sup>. See: Phạm Thế Hưng. *Understanding on Vietnamese Catholicism*, ibid, pp. 327-328.

<sup>15</sup>. See: *Priest Phạm Bá Trục...* ibid, p. 12.

Because Vietnamese Catholics were in these predicaments so they were thought to not mix with the great national trends.

Actually, Vietnamese Catholics have been patriots so they took part in the war of resistance against the French colonialists, they surely resist American imperialists”<sup>(16)</sup>.

When speaking of the Catholics’ contributions we not only acknowledge their material contributions but also their spiritual ones. Many of them ignored threatening of church (especially after Apostolic Delegate proclaimed the Common Letter against Communists) and Archbishop Nguyễn Văn Bình was an example. When answering Pope Caissaigne’s question on the priests who took part in the resistance, Archbishop said: “they leave for their conscience sake so we have to respect their determination”, so he was victimized and expelled to be priest of remote parishes. We have to find that the disciplines of Catholic Church get priests into trouble “they wanted to take part in the resistance while keeping their religion”.

In other aspect, the spiritual contributions of Priest Phạm Bá Trục were great. In the *Appeal of Catholic Soldiers* on June 1<sup>st</sup>, 1951 he wrote: “You go to the front for helping the colonialists to damage our people, and our people will call down curses upon you because the French colonialists took advantage of religion to loot our country, now they hope again to take advantage of religions to invade our country once again. This time their scheme will be defeated.

Dear Catholic soldiers, we remember Saint Paul teachings that we have to serve our government, Hồ Chí Minh resistance government, we combine with our country to drive the aggressors out our country, our nation becomes independence and reunification, our religion will be free, and developing, our compatriots understand the Words of God “ Give to Caesar what is Caesar’s”<sup>(17)</sup>.

## ***2. On the tendency “to oppose communism and to guard Catholicism”***

This tendency was described by many images as “holy war”, “the cross against yellow starred red flag”. As we know the anti-communists of Vietnamese Catholics

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<sup>16</sup>. See: Lê Tiền Giang. *Catholics in the South Resistance 1945-1954*, memoirs, National Catholicism, Paris, 1972, p. 82.

<sup>17</sup>. See: *Priest Phạm Bá Trục*... ibid. p. 16.

at that time was Christian dogmatism and French propagation. After the August Revolution, some Catholics created theoretical way “Catholics opposed the colonialists while opposing communists” in order to guarantee the small Catholic Community to have political position. The first attitude of Lê Hữu Từ represented this tendency. They took advantage of the great position of revolution to develop “independent force” of Church. From 1947, on the one hand Lê Hữu Từ took advantage of Hồ Chí Minh Government “to concede the management of Phát Diệm district” and change this district into anti-government base. On the other hand he took advantage of the supports of bishop Chaize in Hà Bắc diocese, bishop Artaraz in Bắc Ninh diocese, bishop Gomes in Hải Phòng diocese... to arm his coreligionists.

After the success of Chinese revolution in 1949, the victory of *Biên giới Thu đông* (*Autumn-Winter border*) campaign, and the French colonialists began to carry out “Bảo Đại solution” the anti-communist tendency developed more and more. When the French soldiers parachuted in Phát Diệm district in 1949 the relation between Communists and Catholicism met many difficulties. The anti communist forces took advantage of this situation to lengthen their experiment on administrative and military aspects. Their dangerous attitudes were actuated by the Common Letter on September 11<sup>th</sup>, 1951<sup>(18)</sup>.

From 1950 many Catholic villages in North Delta were armed with weapons and under the leadership of French priests and officers. Phát Diệm Army had over 10.000 soldiers under the leadership of bishop Lê Hữu Từ. Bùi Chu army was leaded by bishop Phạm Ngọc Chi. In Nam Định, bishop Hoàng Quỳnh became commander in chief of Catholic army, and they made many difficulties for resistant force.

The victory of the war resistance against the French colonialist was affirmed. In 1952-1953 the strong attacks in the main battlefields obliterated the image of “parish and military post” in Phát Diệm, Bùi Chu, Thái Bình and Hải Phòng dioceses. After the victory of Điện Biên Phủ, this above political tendency came to the end. It was

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<sup>18</sup>. The Common Letter of Indochinese bishops on November 9<sup>th</sup> 1951 was signed by 9 French and Spanish Bishops, 5 Vietnamese Bishops. They were Ngô Đình Thục, Phạm Ngọc Chi, Lê Hữu Từ, Hoàng Văn Đoàn and Trịnh Như Khuê. Not that all Vietnamese bishops had the same political views when they signed this letter. Bishops Hoàng Văn Đoàn and Trịnh Như Khuê objected to force to move Catholics. They supported the patriotic organizations of Catholics after peace restored in our country. The important character of the Common Letter was Minister Doolley. Actually, We have not full of Common Letter.

different from the opinions of foreign researchers on the fate of bishop Lê Hữu Từ “was reduced to a nonplus of the cooperative policy with Vietnam”<sup>(19)</sup>.

***3- On the third tendency, looking for the model of “autonomous Catholicism” that might cooperate with the Communist system and State but it was independent of French colonialism and Church***

As we know the third tendency has reflected long standing national sentiment of Catholics as well as Vietnamese clergymen, then it has become national tendency of Vietnamese Catholics

The persons who represented this tendency were Phạm Ngọc Thuận and Nguyễn Mạnh Hà and the Federation of Vietnamese Catholics. Phạm Ngọc Thuận and Nguyễn Mạnh Hà had the special contributions to the resistance and revolution. They had the special positions in the relation between Hồ Chí Minh government with French Government and Holy See. At the beginning of revolution Nguyễn Mạnh Hà was not only a Minister of the Provisional Government but also was entrusted a special duty by Hồ Chí Minh. According to J. Lacouture, Uncle Ho amended his strategy by grand gesture with Holy See. In March, 1946 Nguyễn Mạnh Hà was sent to Huế by Hồ Chí Minh. He had a duty to research how to transport rice from South to North. At that time Holy See had Apostolic Delegate in Hue. Nguyễn Mạnh Hà was entrusted to hand Hồ Chí Minh’s letter over to Father Drapier. Hồ Chí Minh tried to know the idea of Pope’s representative before inviting him to visit Hà Nội and live in North”<sup>(20)</sup>.

The activities of persons like Nguyễn Mạnh Hà were much diversified. Nguyễn Mạnh Hà was a famous leader of *Công giáo Tiến hành* movement (Catholic action movement). He was one of founders who established the Federation of Vietnamese Catholics; later, this organization was lured into anti-communist way. This event was very complex, it needs to discuss more<sup>(21)</sup>.

The right and sensible ideas of this tendency corresponded objectively to the way of national unity and religions of our government and Hồ Chí Minh. There are not

<sup>19</sup>. See: C. Goscha and B. Treglode. *The Appearance of a State - Vietnamese Party in 1954*, Paris, 2004, in French, p. 265.

<sup>20</sup>. Jean Lacouture. *Hồ Chí Minh Ed du Seuil*, Paris, 1967, pp. 108-109, in French.

<sup>21</sup>. The attitude of Holy See and Mission Ministry towards Vietnamese Catholic Church was very complex. On the one hand Holy See, Holy See agreed autonomous right of Vietnamese Catholic Church and had cautious attitude with Hồ Chí Minh government. On the other hand Holy See accepted “Bao Dai government”... the Common Letter dated on May 31<sup>st</sup>, 1945 Mission Ministry supported the federation of Vietnamese Catholics while asking this organization to rely on Indochinese hierarchy in harmonizing patriotic responsibility and Catholic nature.

many documents to speak of the relation between Hồ Chí Minh and the key persons of this tendency, but we think that Hồ Chí Minh's idea on "the independent and autonomous church" related little to this special tendency<sup>(22)</sup>.

The third tendency was limited and it did not influence Catholics much so it had not durable vitality. When our resistance was in violent stage, Nguyễn Mạnh Hà constantly mobilized French political circles to hold talks with Hồ Chí Minh government. He was expelled from Vietnam by General De Lattre de Tassigny in 1951.

Some foreign researchers think that the other famous Catholics as Ngô Đình Diệm or Nguyễn Đệ were considered typical persons of this tendency, but we think that it was difficult to find common points between Ngô Đình Diệm and Nguyễn Mạnh Hà or Phạm Ngọc Thuần.

### III. Significance and historical lessons

**1- On the Catholics problem:** Although many aspects remain to be studied, we think that the period of resistance against the French Colonialist was the typical period because many aspects and the most basic problems of Vietnamese Catholicism showed obviously in this period. The great Catholic relations also showed in this period; for example, the relations between Catholicism and nation, Catholicism and country or Vietnamese Catholic Church and Holy See... In the great resistance there were persons and historical events that Catholics and non Catholics could be experienced and drew the necessary conclusions from them.

**2- On the special Catholics:** Priest Phạm Bá Trực was a typical person; he crossed off all past complex to follow revolution and resistance resolutely in order to create his religious position in national community as Hồ Chí Minh generalized "respect God and love country".

Priest Phạm Bá Trực had the definitive and significant choice of at the sensitive and resolute point of time when Catholic community was standing in the middle of two currents: The resistance of our people and the second war of French aggression. Priest Phạm Bá Trực's life was very short, so he could not witness and throw himself

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<sup>22</sup>. There were two Hồ Chí Minh articles on this problem in *National Salvation* newspaper at the end of 1945 and the beginning of 1946. When attending Phonten Conference in France, Hồ Chí Minh mobilized some famous Catholics to realize this idea, but this idea could be carried out. (see memoir *By historical line* of priest Cao Văn Luận).

in the more severe choice between the spiritual and the temporal, between faith and social ideal. However, his actions in politics, society and religion proved him to be one of model Catholics.

Not that all patriotic Catholics had right choice as Phạm Bá Trục. At that point of time some patriotic Catholics had other choices. They wanted to have autonomous church. This church remained national characters. On the political and religious aspects this church was independent of Vietnamese State as well as of French influence and church.

Although this choice had many sensible problems, this tendency could not exist. Our great resistance, the complex of the cold war and the violent reaction of the French colonialists reacted challenges that the above tendency could not pass over. Naturally, we never forget the tragedy was created by the tendency of “anti-communists for guarding religion” in our history.

In other words, Vietnamese Catholic Church can not exist and develop if it is not very *closely* connected with the national fate and with the selected way of the August Revolution: national independence is connected with socialism. This historical lesson still has current significance. /.