

50 years after PM Pham Van Dong recognizes Chinese claims to Spratly and Paracel Islands: Buddhist leader Thich Quang Do calls on Hanoi to reject “anti-Vietnamese” pact and defend territorial integrity

PARIS, 15 September 2008 (IBIB) - On the 50th Anniversary of a diplomatic note by North Vietnamese Prime Minister Pham Van Dong accepting China's claims of sovereignty over the Paracel and Spratly Islands, the new leader of the Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam (UBCV), Patriarch **Thich Quang Do** has called upon Hanoi to stand up against foreign encroachment and take concrete measures to defend the disputed territories. Sent clandestinely from the Thanh Minh Zen Monastery in Saigon, the Declaration was received by the **International Buddhist Information Bureau** in Paris today.

Describing Pham Van Dong's diplomatic note as *“totally anti-Vietnamese”*, prompted by an *“imported ideology fundamentally opposed to the Vietnamese people's ancient culture and thinking”*, Buddhist leader and prominent dissident Thich Quang Do said the note had *“no value whatsoever, for it violates both international and domestic law, and betrays the will of the Vietnamese people”*. It was merely part of an *“unlawful deal between the Communist parties of China and Vietnam”*, he said. He urged Hanoi's leadership to write an official letter to the Chinese government denouncing the 1958 diplomatic note and affirming Vietnam's sovereignty over the Spratly and Paracel archipelagos.

Thich Quang Do also called for the immediate release of several dissidents arrested last week for allegedly planning demonstrations outside the Chinese Embassy in Hanoi to mark this *“50th anniversary of this day of national shame”*. Faced with growing protests by young Vietnamese and students over its submissive attitude and lack of diplomatic action, the government has intensified police controls against suspected critics. On the contrary, said Thich Quang Do, Hanoi should guarantee the constitutional rights of freedom of expression and peaceful demonstration. By allowing the people to express their concerns, the government would *“encourage [them] to develop an awareness of their national heritage and identity, and awaken their sentiments of justice towards all humankind”*. He also called on Vietnam to abolish Article 4 of the Constitution on the mastery of the Communist Party to enable citizens from all the political and religious families to participate in protecting the homeland. *(See full text below)*.

DECLARATION
by the Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam
on Hanoi's "Anti-Vietnamese" Diplomatic Note of 14 September 1958

Fifty years ago today, North Vietnamese Prime Minister Pham Van Dong sent a diplomatic note to Prime Minister Zhou Enlai formally recognizing China's claims on the Spratly and Paracel Islands. This act followed the dictates of an imported ideology fundamentally opposed to the Vietnamese people's ancient culture and thinking. Following the stateless, one-Party Communist doctrine under the leadership of Ho Chi Minh, the Vietnamese Communist Party relinquished sovereignty of our territories, erased the sea-borders traced by our ancestors, and surrendered our lands and waters as offerings to China.

The Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam hereby declares:

- The diplomatic note issued by Pham Van Dong on 14.9.1958 is totally anti-Vietnamese. It disavows the achievements and sacrifices of our forefathers, who shed their blood throughout our 2,000-year history to build and defend the Vietnamese nation;
- The diplomatic note issued by Pham Van Dong on 14.9.1958 is only valid for a minority of Communist Party members, and does not represent the people's will. Indeed, the North Vietnamese people were never consulted by popular referendum on the contents of this quisling agreement, and it was not even debated in the National Assembly of the Democratic Republic of (North) Vietnam, which in any case did not include non-communist members, just like Vietnam's National Assembly today;
- The diplomatic note issued by Pham Van Dong on 14.9.1958 is nul and void under international law, for it violated the sovereignty of the Republic of (South) Vietnam. The Paracel Islands were administrative districts of Quang Nam-Danang province, and the Spratly Islands were districts of Khanh Hoa. Both these provinces belonged to the Republic of Vietnam, a sovereign nation recognized by the 1954 Geneva Accords and diplomatically recognized by most nations of the world;
- Article 17 of the 1992 Vietnamese Constitution guarantees that *"the land, forests, rivers and lakes, water supplies, wealth lying underground or coming from the sea, the continental shelf and the air space... come under ownership of the entire people"*;
- Consequently, the diplomatic note issued by Pham Van Dong on 14.9.1958 has no value whatsoever, for it violates both international and domestic law, and betrays the will of the Vietnamese people. It was simply part of an unlawful deal between the

Communist Parties of China and Vietnam.

The Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam therefore calls upon the Hanoi authorities to:

- 1). Address an official letter to the government of the People's Republic of China withdrawing the diplomatic note of 14.9.1958 issued by Pham Van Dong, and clearly affirming Vietnam's sovereignty over the Spratley and Paracel Archipelagos, which were under Vietnamese possession from at least the 15th century AD, and occupied by Vietnam from the 17th Century. Whereas the annals of Chinese history simply record the existence of the islands in maps drawn by navigators in the South China sea;
- 2). Immediately release all citizens, including many students and young people, arrested over the past few days simply for denouncing the anti-Vietnamese diplomatic note of 14.9.1958, or for demonstrating peacefully in support of Vietnamese sovereignty on the 50th Anniversary of this day of national shame, when Vietnamese territories were illegally conceded to foreign powers;
- 3). Respect and protect the people's right of freedom of expression and peaceful assembly as guaranteed in the Vietnamese Constitution (Article 69). All Vietnamese should be entitled to express the people's historical determination to defend their homeland from foreign aggression and [to protest the government's failure] to protect the lands and waters that our Forefathers gave their lives to defend. By guaranteeing these rights, the government would encourage the people to develop an awareness of their national heritage and identity, and awaken their sentiments of justice towards all humankind.
- 4). Abrogate Article 4 of the Vietnamese Constitution [on the political monopoly of the Communist Party] so that all sectors of the Vietnamese population, including all religious and political families, may freely and fully participate in the process of national salvation, and
 - 4.1). recognize that three million Communist Party members and a half-million-strong army have not enough authority or power to defend the homeland by military means, nor sufficient prestige and courage to expand political and diplomatic efforts or mobilize international support in our defense. To succeed, they need the participation of the 85 million Vietnamese population and the support of the 3-million Vietnamese Diaspora worldwide;
 - 4.2). As Vietnamese history has repeatedly proved, only the force and determination of our whole people can defend our national integrity. Those who try to curry favour with one foreign power after the other and rely on outsiders to protect the interests of an

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elite minority are doomed to failure. Not only will they lose themselves, but they will lose our whole nation, and sell the Vietnamese people into slavery.

Thanh Minh Zen Monastery, Saigon, 14.9.2008
Patriarch of the Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam

(signature and seal)

Sramana Thich Quang Do