2. **Royal Edict on Resistance (1885)**

By Emperor Ham Nghi

Ham Nghi, twelve years old when he assumed the throne in 1884, signed the Patenotre treaty which, until 1946, governed relations between France and Vietnam. In 1885, in conjunction with high officials determined to resist the French conquest, the King issued his proclamation calling for all groups in society to resist in accordance with their station and means. The royalist movement he called forth, the Can Vuong, was able to survive even after Ham Nghi himself was captured and exiled to Algeria in 1888.

My virtue is as gossamer; now that I am confronted with these changes, I am unable to take the lead. The capital has been lost. The Imperial carriage has departed. I am responsible for all this, and I feel an infinite shame. However, since we are still bound by moral obligations, none of you—mandarins, ministers, literati, high or low—shall abandon me. Those with intelligence shall contribute ideas; those with strength shall lend their force. The rich shall give money to buy military supplies. The peasants and villagers shall not refuse hardship or evade danger. It is right that this should be so.

To uphold the weak, to support the faltering, to confront difficulties and reduce danger, none shall spare their efforts. Perhaps with Heaven’s assistance, we shall be able to turn chaos into order, danger into peace, and finally retrieve our entire territory. Under these circumstances, the fate of the nation must be the fate of the people. Together we shall work out our destiny and together we shall rest. Is this not the best solution?

On the contrary, should you fear death more than you feel loyalty to your King, should your domestic worries override your concern for the affairs of state, should officials flee danger on every occasion and soldiers desert their ranks to hide; again, should the people withhold righteous assistance to the State in this time of danger; and scholars shun prominent positions for obscurity, would they not then be superfluous in this world? You might wear robes and headdresses, but your attitude would be that of animals. Who can accept such behavior?

The court has always had its tradition of generous rewards and heavy penalties. Act to avoid remorse in the future.

End of the edict.

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