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Southern Vietnamese Intellectuals in the Truong Dinh Uprising (1859-1864)

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Abstract

After five months of opening fire in Da Nang, the French colonialists shifted their military campaign to Southern Vietnam (Nam Ky), beginning the process of conquering the region. From the moment the Citadel of Gia Dinh was occupied by the French in February 1859, even without a call to arms from the imperial court, the local people and scholar-gentry spontaneously rose up in armed resistance against the invaders. In the early days of resistance against French colonial aggression, the Go Cong resistance center emerged under the leadership of the national hero Truong Dinh. In the uprising led by Truong Dinh, alongside the main forces of plantation soldiers and volunteer peasants, contemporary Confucian intellectuals fought shoulder to shoulder with the insurgents. Their participation contributed greatly to the uprising's scale and lasting impact, making it worthy of being regarded as the leading banner of the anti-French resistance movement in Southern Vietnam during the latter half of the nineteenth century.

Keywords: Go Cong, Southern Vietnam, uprising, Truong Dinh, intellectuals

1. Introduction

From the moment the French colonialists captured the Citadel of Gia Dinh in February 1859, many scholars and intellectuals, including Truong Dinh, gathered forces and coordinated military action with the imperial army to resist the invaders. The uprising under Truong Dinh's leadership was considered the largest armed rebellion in Southern Vietnam at that time. Particularly after the Treaty of 1862, the uprising led by Truong Dinh, together with the active participation of numerous scholar-gentry, local notables, and intellectuals, spread widely throughout Southern Vietnam. While the Hue court gradually surrendered to the colonial invaders and increasingly abandoned its leadership role in the anti-French resistance, Southern Vietnamese patriotic Confucian scholars courageously assumed responsibility for leading the people in armed struggle against foreign aggression and defending national independence. Commenting on the attitude and role of Southern patriotic intellectuals during the French colonial invasion, historian Tran Huy Lieu wrote: "Those who raised the banner of 'Binh Tay' at that time were none other than patriotic intellectuals. Although these patriotic intellectuals still carried a feudal ideological framework, they stood from a nationalist standpoint in resisting foreign aggression." (UNESCO Center for the Dissemination of Cultural and Educational Knowledge & the Vietnam Historical Science Association, 2006, p. 25).

The uprising led by Truong Dinh inflicted significant losses on the French colonial forces, prompting General Bonard to admit the condition of the invading army in Southern Vietnam: their "forces were gradually diminishing... wearing down day by day" and they "could not continue fighting in this manner indefinitely" (Le Huu Phuoc & Nguyen Phan Quang, 1989, p. 8). This was an uprising remarkable for its organizational scale, its extensive base areas, and the enthusiastic support it received from the people. Many degree-holding scholars, local dignitaries, and intellectuals in Go Cong and neighboring regions actively participated, causing the movement to spread ever more widely.

Although the uprising ultimately failed, it created numerous difficulties for the French in their efforts to expand their conquest and pacify Southern Vietnam. At the same time, it helped nurture the spirit of resistance against French colonial aggression among the people.

So why did so many patriotic Confucian scholars place their faith in the Truong Dinh uprising? Even though Truong Dinh himself admitted that he was not a degree-holder and had “become a general because of the times,” why did he possess enough prestige to rally such a large force of Confucian intellectuals to join the rebellion? This article seeks, in part, to explain those questions.

2. Content

2.1. An Overview of the Truong Dinh Uprising

On September 1, 1858, the French-Spanish allied forces attacked the Son Tra Peninsula (Da Nang), marking the beginning of the invasion of Dai Nam. After more than five months of failing to achieve a quick victory, the allied forces shifted their attack toward Gia Dinh.

In February 1859, the French colonialists moved from Da Nang to attack Gia Dinh. Truong Dinh brought the military forces from his plantation in Go Cong (Gia Dinh) to join the imperial army in resisting the invaders. At that time, the imperial troops under the command of Ton That Cap were constructing the Sai Gon–Cho Lon defensive line, centered around the Chi Hoa Fortress. The fortress was divided into two sectors: the Central Fort and the Rear Fort. Truong Dinh commanded a military unit at the Central Fort (Thuan Kieu Fort) to protect the Rear Fort, which served as the headquarters of Imperial Commissioner Nguyen Tri Phuong (Le Huu Phuoc & Nguyen Phan Quang, 1989, p. 62). Here, he led plantation militias in achieving many military successes, most notably the ambush that killed marine captain Barbé at Khai Tuong Pagoda on December 7, 1860. This attack caused great anxiety among the French forces, who came to regard Truong Dinh as their most formidable opponent.

While the enemy was occupied with conflicts in various areas and concentrating on the capture of Bien Hoa and Vinh Long, Truong Dinh, on one hand, severely punished collaborators and informants, and on the other hand, rapidly expanded his forces by recruiting more soldiers, stockpiling provisions, forging weapons, and launching numerous attacks. From an initially modest force of about 500 men cooperating with imperial troops, by 1861 the Truong Dinh insurgent army had grown to 6,000 soldiers (Le Huu Phuoc & Nguyen Phan Quang, 1989, p. 73). As a result, he was promoted by the imperial court from Quan Co to Deputy Military Commander of Gia Dinh Province.

The insurgents’ area of operations extended not only across Go Cong, Tan An, and My Tho, but also included Cho Lon and Gia Dinh, spreading along both branches of the Vam Co River from the East Sea to the Cambodian border (Dinh Xuan Lam, 2000, p. 24). The strength of the Go Cong insurgent forces increased steadily thanks to close coordination with other uprisings, such as those led by Nguyen Trung Truc in Tan An; Do Trinh Thoai in Go Cong; Nguyen Huu Huan, Tran Xuan Hoa, and Nguyen Duy Duong in Ba Giang; and Phan Van Dat in Tan Thanh. Among the early examples of cooperation were the joint attack by Truong Dinh’s forces and Do Trinh Thoai’s troops on the Quy Son base during the night of 21–22, 1861, as well as the successful collaboration with the insurgent group led by Nguyen Trung Truc in burning and sinking the French ship *Espérance* on the Nhat Tao River on December 10, 1861.

Under the command of Truong Dinh, the resistance movement surged throughout the region during 1862, resembling a general uprising. By March 1862, French troops

had been forced to withdraw from many military posts for fear of surprise attacks by insurgent forces. Most districts and important towns in Gia Dinh and Dinh Tuong Provinces, including Go Cong, Tan An, Rach Gam, Cai Lay, Cho Gao, and Ben Luc, were liberated.

In June 1862, after the Nguyen Dynasty signed the Nham Tuat Treaty ceding the three eastern provinces of Southern Vietnam (Gia Dinh, Dinh Tuong, and Bien Hoa) along with Con Lon Island to France, Phan Thanh Gian was sent south to administer the remaining provinces. He immediately ordered insurgent forces everywhere to lay down their arms and surrender their weapons to the French, but no one complied. As for Truong Dinh’s insurgent forces, the imperial court simultaneously ordered the disbandment of his army while appointing him to the position of Military Commander in An Giang and later Phu Yen. Faced with this situation, Truong Dinh chose to stand with the people. He was compelled to act in the king’s name by forging a secret royal decree and issuing a proclamation calling on the people to continue the struggle.

Thus, after the Treaty of 1862, Truong Dinh’s insurgent army had to confront an enemy vastly superior in equipment and weaponry on its own. The treaty also provided the French colonialists with a legal basis for intensifying repression against the insurgents, while many officers and soldiers became confused and demoralized by the imperial court’s order to cease fighting.

Clearly recognizing the long-term and arduous nature of the resistance, Truong Dinh worked tirelessly to reinforce his forces, strengthen defensive systems, and consolidate resistance bases. In accordance with the wishes of both the insurgents and the people, Truong Dinh proclaimed himself “Binh Tay Dai Nguyen Soai” (“Grand Marshal of Binh Tay”) and continued leading the resistance under the slogan: “Phan and Lam sold the nation; the imperial court abandoned the people.” (Referring to Phan Thanh Gian and Lam Duy Hiep) From the Go Cong base, Truong Dinh directed insurgent attacks against the enemy across many regions, achieving major victories. One of the most notable was the large-scale offensive launched in December 1862, beginning with an attack on French warships along the Vam Co River (Trang Bang, Tay Ninh) on December 6, 1862. Ten days later, Truong Dinh’s insurgent forces launched a sudden and coordinated general offensive that continued until the end of the year. Major battles included:

The attack on Rach Tra Fort, located 15 kilometers from Sai Gon on the road to Tay Ninh, on December 17, 1862.

The raid on boats at Ben Luc and the siege of Phuoc Hoa Fort, also on December 17, 1862. This battle involved coordination with the forces of Nguyen Trung Truc.

The assault on Long Thanh Fort (Bien Hoa) during the night of December 17–18, 1862.

The surprise attack on the French gunboat *Alarme* in the Go Cong area during the night of December 17–18, 1862.

The attack on Thuoc Nhieu Fort, located 20 kilometers from My Tho and guarding the junction of the My Tho–Tan An and My Tho–Tan Hoa routes, on the morning of December 18, during which the insurgents burned the enemy warship *Lorcha No. 10*.

The attack on Rach Kien Fort on December 18.

The insurgents’ general offensive, which continued for more than ten days in December 1862, threw the French forces into confusion and forced them to request additional reinforcements to confront the uprising.

By January 1863, the struggle led by Truong Dinh was marked by a series of battles resisting French sweep operations, including the ambush of Battalion Commander Coquet's troops on January 1, 1863; the successful defense against enemy raids into Gia Thanh on January 5, 6, and 7, 1863; and the repulsion of a French attack on the Go Cong base in early January 1863. At the same time, under Truong Dinh's command, the insurgents coordinated with local people to sabotage transportation routes between Sai Gon and My Tho and cut enemy telegraph lines connecting Sai Gon with Vung Tau and Bien Hoa with Ba Ria. This situation compelled Admiral Bonard, commander of the French expeditionary forces in Southern Vietnam, to admit: "Southern Vietnam is writhing in a state of chaos," and to lament: "Our forces are gradually diminishing because of death and disease... wearing down day by day. Clearly, it is impossible to continue a war like this for another six months..." (Le Huu Phuoc & Nguyen Phan Quang, 1989, pp. 141–142)

Faced with this situation, in early February 1863 the French colonialists mobilized a powerful force to attack the Go Cong base. Bonard personally traveled to Go Cong to devise the campaign and directly command the suppression effort, stating: "I must admit that he (Truong Dinh) is a dangerous enemy to us — a determined and bold man, yet highly intelligent, with great ambitions. As long as he lives, we will continue to face difficulties..." (Mac Chau & Phuong Lam, 1977, p. 59) ^[5]. The admiral even offered a reward of 10,000 francs to anyone who could kill Truong Dinh (Nguyen Phuc Nghiep, 2022). Determined to fight to the very end, Truong Dinh calmly and skillfully directed his insurgent forces in resisting enemy assaults, inflicting heavy casualties on the French while secretly withdrawing from the base in order to preserve his forces. On February 28, 1863, the enemy captured the Tan Hoa base.

After withdrawing all of his forces from Go Cong, Truong Dinh established a new headquarters at Ly Nhon, a location situated amid fertile alluvial land and concealed by dense nipa palm forests (now part of Can Gio Commune, Ho Chi Minh City). There, he divided the insurgent army into smaller units and dispersed them across multiple areas in order to launch mobile attacks against the enemy, disrupt French plans to spread their forces thinly in order to hold occupied territory, and address the problem of food supplies for the insurgents. Through these activities, he also promoted public support for the resistance movement while preserving and rebuilding his forces.

At this stage, the operational area of Truong Dinh's insurgent army expanded from Bien Hoa and Tay Ninh to Sai Gon, Trang Bang, and Dong Thap Muoi. With his reorganized forces, the insurgents carried out small ambushes, eliminated patrol and reconnaissance units, punished collaborators, and seized enemy food supplies. The French colonialists remained deeply uneasy as they observed that "Quan Dinh continued sabotaging and rebuilding his uprising as he had done in Go Cong", and consequently, after replacing Bonard, Major General De Lagrandière declared: "All property belonging to Quan Dinh shall be awarded to anyone who captures and delivers the rebel, dead or alive, to the French authorities." (Le Huu Phuoc & Nguyen Phan Quang, 1989, pp. 158–159)

On September 25, 1863, acting on information provided by informants, French troops launched a surprise attack on the Ly Nhon base. The insurgents broke through the encirclement

and returned to the Go Cong region, choosing a strategic area on the right bank of the Soai Rap River, between the villages of Tan Phuoc and Kieng Phuoc (commonly known by locals as the "Dark Leaf Thicket"), as their new refuge and operational base. There, Truong Dinh organized self-sufficient food production, concentrated his forces for surprise attacks against the enemy, and then dispersed them again to conduct propaganda and mobilize support among the people. Clearly, Truong Dinh's role and influence within the uprising were immense, leading the French to admit that: "Quan Dinh is the soul of every movement," and that "after the fall of Go Cong, he seemed to wield even greater influence." (Le Huu Phuoc & Nguyen Phan Quang, 1989, pp. 160–161)

In order to crush the uprising, the French colonialists deployed spies extensively to monitor all insurgent activities. On August 20, 1864, the collaborator Huynh Cong Tan guided French troops to Truong Dinh's residence in Tan Phuoc. Truong Dinh and his insurgents fought heroically, but he was unfortunately struck by gunfire that shattered his spine. Refusing to be captured alive, Truong Dinh drew his sword and took his own life to preserve his honor and integrity. Continuing his father's cause, Truong Dinh's son, Truong Quyen, led a group of insurgents to Tay Ninh, where they cooperated with Khmer and Thuong communities to establish resistance bases across a vast area stretching from Sai Gon to the Cambodian capital.

2.2. Southern Vietnamese Intellectuals in the Truong Dinh Uprising

From the moment the French colonialists opened fire and occupied Gia Dinh, Confucian scholars from Southern Vietnam, along with scholars originating from many other regions of the country, gathered in Southern Vietnam to stand alongside the people in defending the nation through various means: armed resistance, composing literary works condemning the crimes of the French colonialists and their collaborators, withdrawing from occupied territories, refusing cooperation, and declining to work for the French administration...

While the Hue court gradually surrendered to the colonial invaders and increasingly abandoned its leadership role in the resistance against France, the patriotic Confucian scholars of Southern Vietnam courageously stood with the people, participating in or directly leading movements of resistance against foreign aggression in defense of national independence.

After the Treaty of 1862, the uprising led by Truong Dinh spread widely with the active participation of large numbers of scholars, local notables, and intellectuals. Truong Dinh's insurgent forces grew increasingly large and diverse. In addition to the plantation soldiers and volunteer peasants who formed the majority, the movement also included degree-holding intellectuals from Go Cong and neighboring regions, such as the bachelors Bui Tan, Cu Khac Kiem, Ly Duy Phien, and Ha Mau Duc; licentiates Nguyen Duy Than, Mai Phuong My, and Nguyen Van Trung; scholars such as Ho Huan Nghiep; and former imperial officials including Do Quang, Luu Tan Thien, Nguyen Tanh Thien, Le Quang Quyen, the Eighth-Rank Official Le Quang Binh, and Nguyen Thong. This was recorded by Nguyen Thong, who wrote: "When Truong Dinh stationed himself at Tan Hoa and gathered people to discuss strategy... heroes and men of talent came like storm clouds." (Le Huu Phuoc & Nguyen Phan Quang,

1989, p. 66).

After assuming the title “Binh Tay Dai Nguyen Soai” (“Grand Marshal of Binh Tay”), Truong Dinh appointed Le Quang Quyen as military advisor and Tran Tuan (also known as Phan Chanh) as Deputy Grand Marshal of Binh Tay. From this point onward, the command structure of the Truong Dinh uprising was formally established.

Across localities in Gia Dinh and Dinh Tuong Provinces, Truong Dinh assigned scholars, local dignitaries, and intellectuals to oversee specific territories and manage troop mobilization and food supplies for the insurgent forces:

Bachelors Bui Tan and Cu Khac Kiem were placed in charge of Tan Thanh District, Tan An Prefecture, Gia Dinh Province. Bachelors Ly Duy Phien and Ha Mau Duc, along with licentiate Nguyen Van Trung, oversaw Tan An Prefecture and Cuu An District.

Licentiate Hoang Van Dat and Bui Van Ly were assigned to Tan Long District, Tan Binh Prefecture, Gia Dinh Province, whose administrative center was Cho Lon (now part of Districts 5, 6, and 11 of Ho Chi Minh City).

District Magistrate Dang Van Duy was responsible for Tay Ninh Prefecture and Quang Hoa District (now stretching from Hoc Mon to Tay Ninh).

Eighth-Rank Official Le Quang Binh and bachelor Nguyen Tanh Thien oversaw Tan Hoa District, Tan An Prefecture, Gia Dinh Province (present-day Go Cong Dong and Go Cong Tay Districts of Tien Giang Province).

Scholar Ho Huan Nghiep, along with licentiates Mai Phuong My and Nguyen Duy Than, were responsible for Tan Binh and Binh Duong districts and maintained communications with Bien Hoa and Dinh Tuong.

Thus, Truong Dinh organized the insurgent movement as a genuine resistance government, replacing the corrupt and weak Nguyen imperial administration, which had become ineffective and powerless (Le Huu Phuoc & Nguyen Phan Quang, 1989, pp. 119–120).

Truong Dinh described himself merely as “an uneducated soldier who became a general because of the times.” Yet through his sincere desire to “find capable advisors” in order to “destroy the nation-stealing invaders,” he succeeded in winning over Confucian scholars - a class traditionally shaped by the mentality of “valuing literary learning over military affairs” - through his humility, unwavering determination to resist the enemy, and exceptional strategic talent. Among these scholars, one of the most notable was Nguyen Dinh Chieu, a major intellectual figure in Southern Vietnam. During his time in Can Giuoc, Nguyen Dinh Chieu “maintained regular contact with Truong Dinh.” Truong Dinh “regarded him as a military advisor and often consulted him on strategic matters,” and “while leading the resistance against the French, Truong Dinh frequently sent people to seek Nguyen Dinh Chieu’s advice on plans for saving the nation. On one occasion, Truong Dinh even brought him to Go Cong to serve as a strategist for the insurgent forces” (Le Huu Phuoc & Nguyen Phan Quang, 1989, pp. 76–77). This represented a beautiful collaboration between two heroic figures: one wielding the sword, the other wielding the pen, united in a life-and-death struggle against the enemies of the nation.

The fact that degree-holding intellectuals, scholars, and even some former officials sought out and willingly accepted the leadership of Truong Dinh demonstrated the uprising’s powerful ability to attract support and further highlighted

Truong Dinh’s remarkable prestige and leadership in mobilizing forces against the invaders.

As mentioned earlier, the uprising led by Truong Dinh in Go Cong attracted many scholars, among whom Ho Huan Nghiep and Do Trinh Thoai were especially prominent.

Ho Huan Nghiep (1829–1864) was a teacher who, when the nation was invaded, actively joined and made significant contributions to the anti-French resistance movement. Regarding Truong Dinh’s decision to raise an armed uprising, Ho Huan Nghiep declared: “Mr. Truong Dinh acts for righteousness without regard for success or failure. If success comes, he acts; if failure comes, he still acts - because this is a matter of great justice” (Quach Thu Nguyet, 2006, p. 117) ^[8].

After the fall of the Chi Hoa Fortress, Truong Dinh retreated to Tan Hoa (Go Cong), where he issued a call to scholars and local elites to formulate plans for the uprising. Ho Huan Nghiep accepted the position of Prefect of Tan Binh under the resistance government and took responsibility for mobilizing troops and supplying provisions for the insurgency.

Together with the scholar Ho Huan Nghiep, the licentiates Mai Phuong My and Nguyen Duy Than were also assigned by Truong Dinh to oversee Tan Binh Prefecture and Binh Duong District while maintaining connections with insurgent forces in Bien Hoa and Dinh Tuong.

From the moment he assumed the office of Prefect of Tan Binh, Ho Huan Nghiep traveled throughout nearly every village in the prefecture. During that period of more than a year (approximately from early 1861 to late 1862), he narrowly escaped capture by the French on numerous occasions, as colonial forces relentlessly pursued him everywhere. The French authorities even offered monetary rewards and official titles to anyone who could capture him (Mac Chau & Phuong Lam, 1977, p. 74) ^[5].

In February 1863, when the French colonialists attacked and destroyed the Tan Hoa base, forcing Truong Dinh to evade intense enemy pursuit, Ho Huan Nghiep worked tirelessly to ensure adequate food supplies for insurgent groups scattered across the prefecture and neighboring regions. Not only did he guarantee provisions for the insurgents, but he also organized their delivery with utmost secrecy and efficiency in order to avoid detection by collaborators and spies. At the same time, he personally recruited additional insurgents for the resistance movement. On April 7, 1864, Ho Huan Nghiep was captured by the French colonial authorities and executed. Among the scholars who actively participated in the Truong Dinh uprising, besides Ho Huan Nghiep, special mention must also be given to Bachelor Do Trinh Thoai (?–1861).

Like Ho Huan Nghiep, who accepted the office of Prefect of Tan Binh, Do Trinh Thoai courageously accepted the position of District Magistrate of Tan Hoa (Go Cong) under the resistance government (Various Authors, 1998, p. 106). There, he directed insurgent forces in organizing numerous bold raids against positions occupied by the French expeditionary army, inflicting significant losses upon them. Do Trinh Thoai was killed during the assault on Quy Son Fort in June 1861.

After the death of Truong Dinh in late 1864, although the sounds of anti-colonial gunfire no longer rang out as fiercely and the uprisings no longer possessed the same scale and strength as before, armed resistance movements - including many under the leadership of intellectuals - continued across various parts of Southern Vietnam.

2.3. Some Explanations for the Participation of Southern Vietnamese Intellectuals in the Truong Dinh Uprising

The Truong Dinh uprising succeeded in rallying a large number of patriotic Confucian scholars due to several factors: *First*, Truong Dinh's close bond with the people. Although Truong Dinh was born in Binh Son District, Quang Ngai Province, his life and career became deeply connected with the land and people of Go Cong. In 1854, responding to Nguyen Tri Phuong's plantation policy, Truong Dinh recruited poor peasants to reclaim uncultivated land and establish the Gia Thuan plantation. This effort not only contributed to production and the stabilization of local livelihoods, but also included military training for plantation militias. Through his concern for both national welfare and the people's well-being, Truong Dinh earned the wholehearted admiration and trust of the people of Go Cong. It was this land and its people that nurtured within him a profound patriotism and an unshakable determination to join the people in resisting foreign invasion and defending national independence.

Second, there was Truong Dinh's political awareness and ideology. Born and raised in a military official's family, and later serving as a deputy military commander receiving royal stipends, Truong Dinh had naturally been influenced by feudal ideology. Nevertheless, his thinking and worldview went beyond the rigid Confucian concept of "moral duty and hierarchy," instead placing patriotism and compassion for the people at the center of all action. This was the defining feature of Truong Dinh's thought, fully expressing the principle of "loving the nation and caring for the people." This conviction determined his steadfast commitment to the path of national resistance. Faced with two choices - obeying the emperor's order to disband his forces and assume a new official post, or continuing to fight alongside the people against foreign invasion - Truong Dinh courageously chose the latter. He "refused the emperor's decree," accepted the stigma of being branded a "rebel official," and, "following the will of the people, accepted the commander's seal" in order to "shoulder the burden of a commander out in the field" (Bao Dinh Giang & Ca Van Thinh, 1976, pp. 58–60) ^[1]. Above all, his actions sprang from "hatred toward foreign aggressors as well as loyalty to the righteous cause of Annam" (Cao Huy Thuan, 2014, p. 90) ^[2]. This represented a remarkable ideological breakthrough not only for Truong Dinh himself but also for Southern Vietnamese Confucian scholars more broadly. Loyalty to the monarch could only be justified when it was inseparably tied to the interests of the people and the survival of the nation.

Third, among the factors contributing to Truong Dinh's immense stature and influence were not only his talent and moral character as a resistance leader closely connected to the people, but also his humility, his deep respect for patriots, and his profound hatred for collaborators serving the enemy. In response to the noble character and sacrifice of the intellectual-hero Truong Dinh, Nguyen Dinh Chieu expressed deep sorrow upon his death: "*While the General still lived, bandits everywhere trembled in fear/Once the General was gone, resistance fighters everywhere wept in grief.*" (Le Huu Phuoc & Nguyen Phan Quang, 1989, p. 175)

Fourth, the uprising attracted the active participation of large numbers of ordinary people, especially Confucian scholars, thanks to Truong Dinh's strategic brilliance and organizational and military leadership, as well as the vast operational territory of the movement, stretching from Bien

Hoa and Tay Ninh to Sai Gon, My Tho, Trang Bang, and the Plain of Reeds. General Bonard himself stated: "I must admit that he (Truong Dinh) is a dangerous enemy to us — a determined and bold man, yet highly intelligent, with great ambitions. As long as he lives, we will continue to face difficulties..." (Mac Chau & Phuong Lam, p. 59)

Although the uprising ultimately failed for many reasons, Truong Dinh's patriotism and contributions have remained forever luminous, spreading powerful influence among all social classes. His example helped ignite hatred toward foreign aggressors, inspire a spirit of resistance, and strengthen the determination to fight French colonialism and reclaim national independence.

3. Conclusion

Faced with the French colonial invasion and the cowardly attitude of the Nguyen imperial court, Southern Vietnamese patriotic intellectuals - troubled and anguished as the country sank into a condition of "national ruined and families destroyed" - boldly broke free from the constraints of Confucian ideology and blind loyalty to the monarchy. They courageously defied imperial orders and stood shoulder to shoulder with the people, following the path of anti-colonial struggle to the very end in defense of national independence. The Truong Dinh uprising is regarded as the largest armed uprising in Southern Vietnam during the latter half of the nineteenth century. With strategic brilliance, intelligence, and courage - qualities praised by Nguyen Dinh Chieu in the lines "after a hundred battles against the French, his military arts were fully proven" - Truong Dinh succeeded in gathering around him a large body of Confucian scholars who played essential roles in the uprising's leadership. Truong Dinh's unyielding spirit and heroic sacrifice became a shining symbol of unity and patriotism among the people of Southern Vietnam. The lessons drawn from his uprising - particularly the importance of mobilizing popular support and building a people-centered resistance - continue to retain their full value in the ongoing mission of building and defending the Socialist Republic of Vietnam today.

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