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## **Nguyen Phu Trong Is Vietnam's Last Communist**

Nguyen Phu Trong, General Secretary of the Communist Party of Vietnam, passed away on the afternoon of July 19, 2024. Having held the highest positions in Communist Vietnam, Trong bears the greatest responsibility for the systemic repression of activists and religious and ethnic groups.

Under his rule, Nguyen Phu Trong often disregarded his party's charter and the country's constitution. He was not only dogmatically conservative, but his steadfast adherence to Marxism-Leninism also stifled Vietnam's development and integration.

People remember Nguyen Phu Trong through his "blazing furnace" campaigns, but it was this fight against corruption that helped expose the nature of a one-party dictatorship. Too many communist officials sought to exploit public resources and plunder the people's property. Not surprisingly, the burning furnace campaigns failed. After many years of rule, the Communist Party of Vietnam has made corruption endemic.

Nguyen Phu Trong also leaned toward Beijing for political solidarity. His regime compromised Vietnam's security and economic prospects through the unequal cooperation agreements between the communist parties of Vietnam and China — and the unwillingness to truly re-orient and modernize Vietnam's foreign policy.

Looking ahead, the end of Nguyen Phu Trong's reign and seizure of power by General To Lam and the police faction represents a new disaster. Vietnam is descending into a police state. Civil society which already faces severe restrictions will now be even more tightly controlled. Gen. To Lam's consolidation of power has implications on Vietnam's economy and the country's ability to contribute to a free and open Indo-Pacific.

Ultimately, a one-party dictatorship is not the answer for Vietnam and its people. The Communist Party is rotting from within. More than ever, Vietnam is in need of comprehensive change.