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President NGO DINH DIEM

On DEMOCRACY **STORAGE**

(Addresses relative to the Constitution)







Mr. NGO DINH DIEM
President of the Republic of Viet Nam.

Photo HADI

PRESIDENT NGO DINH DIEM

ON

DEMOCRACY

(ADDRESSES RELATIVE TO THE CONSTITUTION)

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Presidency of the Republic of Viet-Nam

PRESS OFFICE

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The Cover : President Ngo Dinh Diem taking the oath as First President of the Republic of Viet Nam, on Constitution Promulgation Day (October 26, 1956).

INTRODUCTION

President NGO DINH DIEM assumed office on June 17, 1954, when the fate of Viet-Nam was being debated at Geneva.

Few thought that Viet-Nam could survive, after the Communist triumph on the battlefield at Dien Bien Phu, and in the Conference room at Geneva.

After the partition of Viet-Nam and the chaos that ensued, the prospects for freedom and democracy were dim in that part of the world. Nothing short of a miracle could save it. Such was the consensus of opinion inside as well as outside Vietnam's borders.

The miracle has happened.

Viet-Nam is at present not only out of immediate danger of total collapse, but is making great strides each day toward prosperity, freedom and democracy.

The principles which guide the Vietnamese Government and nation in this march forward are set forth in President NGO DINH DIEM's addresses to the Nation and the National Assembly which are herein collected.

STATEMENT OF JUNE 18, 1954

(Paris)

Nothing is lost yet. The Vietnamese people are seeking a new path to their ideals.

Several times in the past I have had to refuse to take office. This time I accept.

This is the hour of decision. I face a grave military situation which is in urgent need of correction. It is the logical result of a long series of misunderstandings and errors. A fruitful and durable peace, founded upon the independence of the nation and the liberty of the people, poses a crucial problem. Only a new political orientation can solve it, while continuation of the errors of the past will lead to a dead end and probably to an extension of the war, this war which has done us so much harm. Only the prospect of such military and political corrections can give impetus to the Geneva negotiations and reaffirm the opportunity for peace they represent.

The unwillingness to compromise which made me refuse office did not signify willful ignorance of unpleasant realities nor deliberate hostility toward the legitimate interests of a friendly country.

It stemmed from a sincere conviction, shared by the people, that as long as national ideals cannot be immediately and faithfully followed, all efforts exerted will, rather than profit the people, only deceive, divide and demoralize them and will render impossible the solution of a problem already difficult.

With regard to France, the feeling of our people was expressed on August 20, 1945, by His Majesty Bao-Dai in his message to the people of France: The Vietnamese people passionately desire their

independence and France will be able to safeguard her interests in Viet-Nam only if she will remain there as a privileged friend.

No one thought it necessary to pay attention to this wise warning. Military reverses, in spite of the valor and the heavy sacrifices of the fighting forces and of the people ; France's lone effort in the battle which was, however, for a common cause ; the lukewarm attitude of the Vietnamese people in a struggle which should have been their own ; the hostile neutrality of asiatic nations strategically and morally bound to Viet-Nam ; the relative ineffectiveness of American aid, though still important — all of these things which have momentarily overcome us, which could cost Viet-Nam her liberty, France her rank as a world power, the free world the key to Southeast Asia, have been caused only by persistence in turning aside or even defying the intangible reality that embodies the will of a people for independence.

The people of France have been sorely tried by recent military difficulties. Just as cruelly, the late diplomatic developments at Geneva have shown the Vietnamese people the willingness of false patriots to divide the country, to subordinate it to foreign interests and the danger of false remedies.

Now that the people have no illusions and that the masks have been removed, a radical change in policy has finally become possible.

Nothing is lost yet, because the gravity of the situation itself must bring about a lucid revision of a fatal policy. I believe in my people. I believe in their unsurmountable revulsion towards lies and oppression inherent in dictatorial regimes. I believe in their profound love of truth and liberty.

The Vietnamese people, long deceived, are seeking a new path which will lead to their ardently desired ideals. I am firmly determined to lead the way to this path, overcoming any and all obstacles.

France, which has just initialled the recent treaties of independence and association, will not stint in giving effective aid. This aid alone can make real both the true sovereignty of Viet-Nam and the territorial integrity whose mutual preservation constitutes the justification of the French Union.

I will not go forward alone on the path of a just and noble cause. With the peoples of France and Viet-Nam and of other free countries, we will close ranks. Together we will win the only desirable kind of Peace, a peace of free and proud men.

BROADCAST DECLARATION ON THE EVE OF THE NATIONAL REFERENDUM

(October 22, 1955)

*A decisive step on the road to order,
freedom and dignity.*

Compatriots,

Tomorrow, October 23rd, for the first time in our history, Men and Women of Viet-Nam, you will exercise one of the fundamental rights of all democratic countries : the right to vote.

In compliance with the unanimous wish that you have clearly expressed, you are called upon to exercise your sovereignty by deciding whether or not you agree to withdraw legally the title of Chief of State from a man whose overthrow you have demanded.

For ten years, our revolution has gone forward under the most bitter suffering. If your vote prohibits any backward motion, a decisive step will be made on the road to order, freedom and dignity.

Twenty-two years ago, when I was in power, I insisted on the installation of an elected Assembly. Since men and circumstances opposed it, I handed in my resignation.

Thus, the advent of a democratic regime is not due solely to circumstances. It corresponds with an ideal for which I have never ceased to struggle.

The first act that you will perform as citizens of a free nation will open the way to other consultations on the political life of the

country, especially to the holding of the coming general elections throughout Free Viet-Nam.

Dear Compatriots,

Together we have already overcome difficulties which were sometimes tragic.

Together, we will fight for the triumph of democratic ideals, against subjugation, direct or indirect, of totalitarian communism.

In all circumstances, I will continue to serve the country as in the past, with all my might. If, by approving the policy I have adopted since my return to Viet-Nam, you will entrust me with a new charge tomorrow, you will have voted for the building of a free and democratic Viet-Nam in which all of us will have equal rights in the handling of public affairs, social progress, and collective prosperity.

It depends only on you whether or not I will be put in a position to proclaim the Republic.

God bless Viet-Nam !

PROCLAMATION OF THE REPUBLIC

(October 26, 1955)

Democracy is not a group of texts and laws, but a way of living with the utmost respect for every human being.

Fellow Countrymen,

A year ago, with the anguish that was in our hearts, who among us could have foreseen that we would, in the not too distant future, finally extricate ourselves from an impossible and almost desperate situation ?

But in the darkest hours of our history, our people have always joined together and now, in a moment of supreme unity, we have broken the bands of iron and fire which encircled us, taking the path towards independence and liberty.

In the terrible battle which men and women, both military and civilian, have waged for more than a year against interior as well as exterior forces, this same unity of feeling has allowed us to liquidate an outdated regime. The focus of our national interest has been placed in the South, where hope for a better future for every human being was born. It is this new hope which drew a million refugees to us from the North, and their presence among us further reinforces our confidence in the righteousness of our cause.

Compatriots,

The October 23rd Plebiscite in which you took such an enthusiastic part constitutes an approval of the policies pursued thus far and at the same time augurs a whole new era for the future of our country.

The new responsibilities which you entrust to me today — to form a democracy in our beloved country — are heavy for my shoulders alone, however.

Democracy is not a group of texts and laws, to be read and applied. It is essentially a state of mind, a way of living with the utmost respect toward every human being, ourselves as well as our neighbors. It requires constant self-education, careful practice, flexible and patient attention, in order to achieve a harmonious balance between the desirable diverse conceptions of men and the inevitable complexity of reality. Democracy demands from each of us, then, infinitely more efforts, understanding and goodwill than any other form of government.

Confident in the unity which you proved during the difficult times we endured, confident in the moral strength of our people whose spirit has been enriched by elements from the oldest and most highly developed civilizations, I know that together we will be able to throw off all forms of oppression and to build the ideal political and economic state to which our people aspire with such fervor.

Compatriots,

It is in this spirit that the Constitution of our country will be written and the members of our National Assembly elected.

On the threshold of this new era which presages true democracy for Viet-Nam, let us ask for divine guidance for our country, and let us reverently remember all those who, long ago or only recently, made the supreme sacrifice in order that we might lead free and independent lives.

Let us express our gratitude towards those friendly countries which, even in the darkest hours of our struggle, had faith in us and in our eventual success.

United and determined, we shall see a unified, free and prosperous Viet-Nam emerge triumphantly.

With this conviction and following the desires you expressed by your vote of October 23, 1955, I solemnly proclaim that the State of Viet-Nam is a Republic.

Long live the Republic !

Long live the people of Viet-Nam !

**INAUGURATION OF THE FIRST SESSION
OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

(March 15, 1956)

*First stage in the establishment of a
democratic government.*

Mr. Senior Deputy,
Deputies,

I am happy to greet you as the members of the first National Assembly of the Viet-Nam Republic. This gives me all the more pleasure when you bear in mind that here is the realization of a dream for which I have battled for 25 years.

The National Assembly, having its solemn opening today, represents an essential stage in the unfolding of the National and Democratic Revolution.

It is of course precisely because of the true importance of these things that the enemies of the people formed their coalition for sabotaging the Elections of March 4th. Thanks to the peoples' enlightened patriotism and revolutionary conscience, they have succeeded in undoing these criminal manœuvres before the eyes of the observers of the Free World. From the cities to the most remote villages, the population courageously went forth to the polls to cast its vote according to the order of freedom for its Delegates to the National Assembly. At the same time as they gave a demonstration of their political maturity, the Vietnamese People showed as well how in decisive moments they can speak as unanimously as they did at Dien-Hong.

Mr. Senior Deputy,
Deputies,

At this moment, when you take over the important responsibilities with which popular suffrage has invested you, let us think with gratitude upon the efforts of all those, living and dead, who have sacrificed themselves in order that such a day as this might dawn on our Republic. And let us not forget our friends of the Free World, who have placed their confidence in us and have helped us with all their hearts.

May you be inspired in carrying out your duty by a sense of gratitude towards those who have given their lives for our country, and by the confidence the people have placed in you.

Deputies,

By the Referendum of October 23, 1955, the People have conferred upon me the responsibility of establishing a democratic government. Calling the National Assembly into session constitutes the first stage in the accomplishment of this mission.

The most urgent task before us is to organize political power in such a fashion as to make it manifest and appropriate for giving shape to long range general policy, and at the same time preserving the fundamental rights of the Nation and of the individual human personality. A few days hence, when the National Assembly will have finished drawing up its internal statutes and setting up its offices, I shall submit to you constitutional principles capable of balancing the requirements of ever-unifying power against the growing pressures and diversities of life.

For a country as exposed as ours is from within and without, the possibilities of realizing the democratic ideal are of necessity limited. But we would betray the people were we incapable of responding to their ardent desire for a government of true freedom.

The living and unconquerable faith which sustained us through the last two years of heavy trials, the watchful intelligence which kept us from giving in to despair and as a consequence turning to fascism, these must also furnish us with the resourcefulness and concentration to foster the growth of the permanent orientation of free men towards a democratic structure suited to the conditions and possibilities of the moment, but built out of a genuine respect for the dignity of the individual, from an ideal conception of community life where the common good takes precedence over the good of the individual, from a pluralism which does not represent either social conservatism or a collection of anarchical contradictions.

More than anywhere else in the world, our democracy is and shall be a continuing and virile creation, and our freedom a freedom which is living, struggled for, fashioned out of a persevering and untiring effort for human liberty.

Our destiny must and will work itself out within these contexts. Whatever the historical circumstances which impose their limitations on the action we take, there must be no mistake about the direction in which our democracy is going, and the focus of our struggle. Ours is the path of the flowering of human personality, which has primacy over all temporal societies, and the center of gravity of our concerns can be nowhere else but in the walk of life where human personality is most gravely violated, namely Labor.

However, ideas are nothing without the men who alone can give them life. Deputies, I am convinced that you will be able to find for this country a government which, ever mindful of the claims of the full range of human personality, will never ignore the immense current of history which carries mankind onward towards formulas for collective life and community discipline.



President NGO DINH DIEM casting his vote, March 4, 1956.

MESSAGE TO THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY ON THE FOUNDATIONS OF THE CONSTITUTION

(April 17, 1956)

*Full development of the individual,
harmonious and fruitful functioning
of the State.*

Mr. President,
Deputies,

By virtue of the mandate which the Nation vested in me by the referendum of October 23, 1955, and by the terms of the provisional Constitutional Act, I have the honour to transmit to the National Assembly my viewpoint on the constitutional problem.

Numerous constitutions have been drawn up and promulgated in the past with the intention of setting up Democracy. During the 18th and 19th centuries, constitutions were drawn up which established political regimes, later known as political democracies, in which individualism and economic liberalism were advocated as proper formulas to emancipate man and to lead mankind toward happiness.

While this system in its application brought relative freedom to a minority of its citizens, at the same time it lessened the effectiveness of the state, which became impotent to defend collective interests and to solve social problems.

The events preceding the two world wars revealed these weaknesses more than ever before, and, in certain States led to the birth of fascism, which aims at a concentration of powers and a personal dictatorship.

On the same pretext of organizing power effectively and achieve social justice, another reaction has been manifested in the form of communism and the so-called popular democracies. At the cost of heavy restrictions and the sacrifice of individual liberties, these systems have merely imposed party dictatorships.

Even in the regimes of political democracy which were faithful to the traditional concept of democracy, an important current of ideas has for a number of years led thinkers and jurists to revise the basic notions of modern democracies, as well as their methods and structures.

Most democratic states have endeavored, either by constitutional changes or by legislative enactment, to modify their political institutions in important respects. Although they have been diverse, these transformations of Public Law which aim at reconciling the demands of collective discipline and social justice with those of individual liberty reveal a personalistic tendency. In addition to the negative liberties of a political nature, it is recognized that the human person has positive freedoms, a number of freedoms of an economic and social nature. At the same time the state, organized on a more democratic basis, is given a wider, more stable and more effective grant of power to bring positive assistance to the citizen against the massive dangers of materialist civilization, and to guarantee to him the right to live and exercise his liberties.

Viet-Nam welcomes gladly the teaching born of the experience of these democratic states, all the more as it is consistent with the political humanism and the historical situation of Viet-Nam.

Placed by its geographical position at the outpost of the Free World, at the confluence of great currents of thought and on one of the great axes of human migration, Viet-Nam is continually exposed to multiple dangers which threaten its political stability. Thus the grave problems which we have to solve now are not transitory or accidental phenomena. The risks of relapsing into anarchy and servitude brought about by the internal feudalism or foreign imperialism that lies in wait for all newly emancipated peoples weigh more heavily on our country than on others, because of our geographic position. This is all the more true since the communism which has been established in the North constitutes a continuing latent menace for South Viet-Nam. Even after reunification, Viet-Nam, located at the nerve center between great demographic masses, will remain a sensitive zone subject to instability.

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These, Gentlemen, are the present tendencies of public law among free peoples and the constant geopolitical facts of Viet-Nam.

It is in the light of these experiences, of these realities, and of the tradition of Vietnamese humanism that I invite you to examine the problems of the future political regime of our country. In that which concerns us as Vietnamese, we must increase tenfold the dialectical efforts by which our elders in democracy have tried to smooth the conflict between social justice and liberty for the sake the human person.

Faced with the massive forces of material and political oppression which threaten us constantly, we feel more than other peoples the essential necessity of grounding our political life in a clear cut and solid basis, and to rigorously concentrate the successive stages of our action along the same line towards an increasingly great democratic progress.

Such a basis can only be a spiritualist one ; such a line, that which the human person follows in his innermost reality as in his community life, in his transcendent vocation as in his free pursuit of intellectual, moral and spiritual perfection.

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Thus we affirm our faith in the absolute value of the human person, whose dignity antedates society and whose destiny is greater than time.

We affirm that the sole legitimate end and object of the State is to protect the fundamental rights of the human person to existence and to the free development of his intellectual, moral and spiritual life.

We affirm that democracy is neither material happiness nor the supremacy of numbers. Democracy is essentially a permanent effort to find the right political means for assuring to all citizens the right of free development and of maximum initiative, responsibility, and spiritual life.

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In the name of these principles, we solemnly declare :

1) Viet-Nam is an independent Republic, one and indivisible,

2) Citizens are born free and equal before the law. The State should assure them equal conditions for the exercise of their rights and the accomplishment of their duties. It owes aid and protection to the family so that harmonious family life can develop. Citizens have the right to a secure and peaceful life, to justly remunerated work, to sufficient individual property to assure a dignified and free life, to democratic freedoms, and to the full development of their personalities.

They have the duty of developing the national heritage for the Common Good and for universal peace, of safeguarding freedom and democracy, of defending the Nation and the Republic against all those who seek to destroy the foundation of the common life and the Constitution.

3) Sovereignty belongs to the people.

The elected National Assembly is vested with legislative competence.

The President of the Republic, also elected by universal, direct and secret ballot is vested with executive competence. The family vote is admitted, and the voting rights and eligibility of women is recognized. The separation of powers should be clear and the responsibilities of the different organs of the State well defined, and their activities well coordinated to assure a maximum of stability and efficiency. A High Court of Justice will be established to decide cases of high treason.

4) The judiciary should be independent in order to make an efficacious contribution to the defence of the Republic, of order, of freedom and of Democracy.

5) A Supreme Court should be organised for the control of the constitutionality of laws.

6) Economic forces should associate in the exercise of power in the form of a National Economic Council composed of representatives of union and professional groups and which will present suggestions and opinions on bills of economic interest.

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Ladies and Gentlemen,

The constitutional principles which have just been outlined are intended to guarantee to the individual the full development of his capacities, and to the state a harmonious and fruitful functioning of its organs by means of the correct working of concerted actions and reciprocal control.

You are to decide upon a question of major interest to the Nation. On the solution that you will have chosen will depend the future and the prosperity of Viet-Nam. I am convinced that you will succeed in this historic mission.

**MESSAGE ON THE OCCASION OF THE
PROMULGATION OF THE CONSTITUTION**

(October 26, 1956)

*Democracy exists only where a concrete
democratic experience exists.*

My dear compatriots,

On this solemn occasion when in fellowship we worship our heroes with the joy of a great hope, we celebrate the anniversary of the Proclamation of the Republic and the Promulgation of the Constitution, I should like to invite you to look back upon the past in order to measure the road covered and thus to prepare the way for the future. For the democracy that we want to build must be a heroic and continuous effort and not a closed and impassive system.

By virtue of the mandate that the Nation has vested upon me with the Referendum of October 23, 1955, I was given the mission to assume the functions of Chief of State and to organize a democratic regime. As soon as the results of the Referendum were known, I proclaimed the Republic in the Declaration of October 26, 1955 and took the title of President.

Organized according to the provisions of the Ordinance of February 23, 1956, the general elections of March 4, 1956 designated the deputies to the National Constituent Assembly.

After six months of intensive work, the National Assembly has elaborated the Constitution that I have just had the high honour to promulgate.

While in other Asian countries, a period of several years was necessary to organize a republican regime, Viet-Nam, in a much more

critical situation, has taken only one year to lay the foundations for democratic institutions.

The pace with which we have organized Democracy in our country demonstrates at the same time the determination of our people and the heroic character of our destiny. It also indicates what is left to us to achieve in order to perfect the historical mission which has devolved upon our generation.

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It is a fundamental truth that laws do not cover all the aspects of life, and a Constitution does not create a democracy. Democratic institutions will prosper only when the spirit and will of the people supply the adequate precedent conditions. For Democracy is a moral system which will develop gradually as the concept of Common Good will become, day after day, broader and more profound in the mind of the citizen as well as of the governing.

Now for more than a century, abnormal political conditions have corrupted the sense of civic responsibility in many a mind. It behoves us now to restore the spirit of public service, the spirit of honour and of national dignity, moral and intellectual honesty, the spirit of sacrifice, the sense of discipline, and personal responsibility, courtesy in human relations which is simply the expression of respect for others as for oneself.

In other words, it is necessary to revive the honour for Vietnamese traditional civic virtues, « Thành » and « Tín ». « Thành », intellectual loyalty and noble morality, an acute consciousness and clear vision of the compass of one's duties toward the Creator, toward the country and toward oneself as well as toward one's fellowman. « Tín », sincere and courageous practice of all these duties, no matter how grievous. A profound and acute sense of the entirety of one's responsibilities, a constant and sincere practice of all one's obligations, which create the climate of social confidence necessary to the life and to the development of all democracy.

In fact, if the sense of civic duty derives its supreme justification from the ethical principles of the respect for the human person and for the common good, however, it thrives with vigour only in a political, administrative and economic climate which is alive and congenial. In addition to the institutions which allow him to take part

in the direction of public affairs and draw the attention of his leaders to his legitimate grievances, the citizen must be able to rely on just laws, on an equitable apportionment of social duties, on a courteous and effective administration as well as on the impartiality of the courts.

Even in a healthy environment, the sense of civic responsibility must further be nourished by a careful education of which the moulding of character, the sense of personal responsibility and discipline, honesty and the devotion to work and to public service must be the constant object, in the school as in the family, in political and social organizations, as at all echelons of the legislative, executive and judicial branches of Government.

My dear compatriots,

Democracy exists only where a concrete democratic experience exists. And democratic life is in short but the putting into practice, by all citizens and all the custodians of public power of the most perfect loyalty and of a mutual confidence which is thus total and justified.

It is in this sense that we ought to endeavour to complete the laws and to apply the Constitution.

It is in this sense that we will effectively work for the unification of the country. For it is only with a regime which elevates loyalty and confidence as supreme civic values that we will unify our ravaged fatherland.

It is in this sense that a moment ago I took the oath before the Almighty and before the people.

For therein is the import of the Human Person, the true meaning of Progress.

May the Almighty forever protect Viet-Nam !

OPENING OF THE FIRST LEGISLATIVE SESSION OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

(November 9, 1956)

Loyalty, Confidence, Fair-play.

Honourable Dean of the Assembly,
Honourable Deputies,

It is with a feeling of profound satisfaction that I attend today the solemn inauguration of the first legislative assembly of Viet-Nam.

Thus, in a record time, and in spite of difficulties of all kinds, we are taking a further essential step of the national and democratic revolution, that of applying the Constitution and, in your particular case, that of elaborating the laws.

A tremendous and arduous work, touching all branches of activity of the nation, awaits you. Your efforts will not be so limited, however. For, in addition to the institutions to be revised or created, there is the parliamentary life and tradition for which it is your duty henceforth to lay solid foundations in order to strengthen further, each day, the customs of our Assembly. May loyalty, confidence and fair play preside during your work.

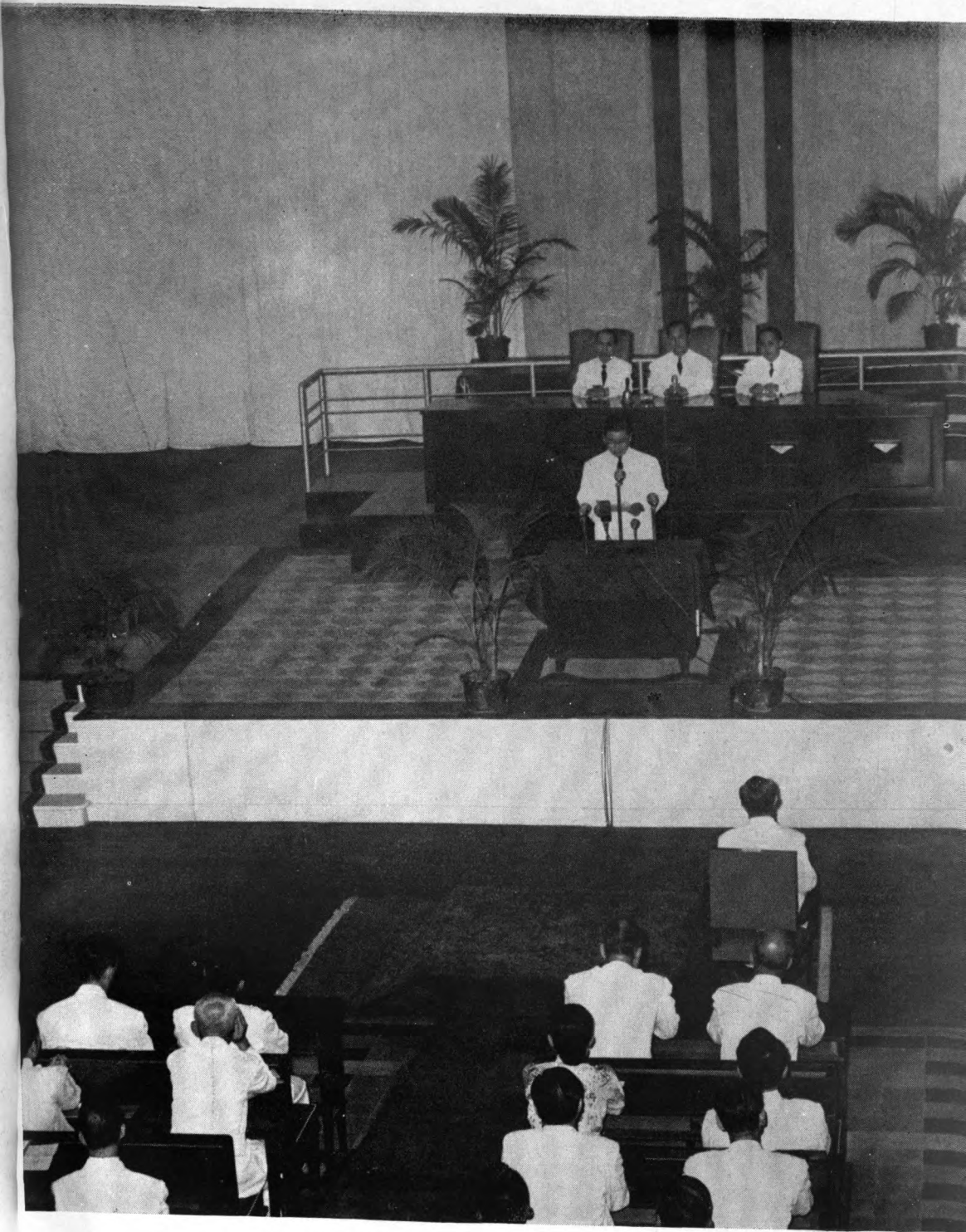
It is at this price that we will be able to safeguard our young Republic, and contribute to its growth during the difficult hours which lie ahead of us.

Members of the Assembly,

The grave events which are presently unfurling in other parts of the world, the tragic plight of the heroic Polish and Hungarian peoples so cowardly and cynically massacred by the most virulent form of modern colonialism which is communism, not only must unite all the Asian countries in common and courageous solidarity against all imperialism in all its forms, but also remind us Vietnamese of the compelling necessity of being particularly vigilant.

Honourable Deputies,

Confident in your experience and your wisdom, I am convinced that you will know how to conduct successfully the legislative work of the government, in a fashion conforming to the permanent vocation of free men, to the constant geopolitical determinants of the country, to the exigencies of this technological age par excellence, as well as to the genius of our race.



President NGO DINH DIEM delivering an address before the National Assembly.

**OPENING OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY,
OCTOBER SESSION**

(October 7, 1957)

*Searching and labouring for a strong and flexible
democracy based on the respect for the Human
Being and the interests of the Community.*

Mr. President,
Honourable deputies,

The three years which have followed the end of the hostilities have been years of search and labour, both intellectual and practical, to build on this land of Asia a strong and flexible democracy, capable of facing and solving the serious problems present in all newly independent countries.

You know, Gentlemen, how urgent and revolutionary these problems were for us, and how strong was the internal and external pressure which Viet-Nam has faced, and will have to face for many more years to come.

You therefore deemed it necessary, in drafting the Constitution, to take into consideration not only the permanent values of our traditions and the experience of our elders in democracy, but also the geopolitical factors which weigh heavily on the destiny of our people.

That tragic reality must however not be accepted as a determinism that would stop the forward advance of our people. By making the Human Being, as the living principle of liberty and creativity, the very foundation of its structures, the Constitution has laid the framework for the life of the Nation and has maintained it continuously open to progress, rejecting all preconceived and final judgment.

It is out of the desire to remain faithful to the spirit of the Constitution and to provide our people, within the limits of its means, with the basic conditions indispensable to its development at the same pace as the modern world that the Government has directed its main efforts less at superficial achievements or at prestige raising than at the democratic infrastructure in every field. It is on this moral and material structure that the country can solve, in independence and freedom, its great internal and external problems, especially those of industrialisation and unification.

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It is undeniable that the present world, psychologically and technically, is heading toward some form or another of community life.

Viet-Nam, which could not remain aloof from this general development, might be engulfed by the collectivist wave, if it did not have a correct vision of the scale of values.

The Constitution has fixed this scale of values, it has placed the Human Being at its summit. It has, at the same time, defined his responsibilities toward the community in which he lives and grows.

This doctrine of the Human Person and of the Community, both living in a definite milieu, subject to revolutionary tensions, is the basis of the moral rearmament of the Vietnamese citizen. It permits him to become conscious of his dignity and of his place in the world, and of his duty to free himself from all tyrannies, whatever their origin. It also helps recreate in our country the spiritual cohesion which, many times in history, has saved the Vietnamese race from complete destruction.

This doctrine finds a first application in the effort of the Government to provide each landless family, directly or indirectly, with a house and sufficient land for its subsistence. In the present state of civilisation, this basic property is a real guarantee of individual freedom.

To increase the value of this guarantee, the Government encourages bold projects in the villages in order to create, at this level, a zone of elementary economic prosperity.

Completed by an adequate formula of furtherance of the workers' interest which the Government is examining with the labor organiza-

tions and the Representatives of the International Labour Office, this policy of building a basic democratic structure is the subject of the Government's major concern.

Such is the aim of the Land Reform, of the Agricultural development of the High Plateaux, and of Community Development as well as the Committee for the study of Labor Organization. These operations of moral and material rearmament of the Vietnamese citizen provide him with a democratic basis for retrenching in case of crisis and depression, and at the same time with a starting point for reconstruction at the national level.

It is on this moral and material foundation, modest and realistic and which depends directly on the resources of the country, that the Government seeks to solve, in independence and freedom, the great national problems.

Army.

However, no achievement of whatever kind is possible without internal and external security.

That is why, as soon as the postcolonial period of anarchy was overcome, the Government immediately attacked the task of reorganizing the structures of the Army and of the Police.

The Army, whose mission was to defend the Republic, has become national in its command and its recruitment. Reduced to half its initial size, and reorganized according to a defensive and pacific policy, the Army pursues an intensive training in every field.

From this point of view, military service is an expression of the principle of equality for all citizens in the responsibility of defending the nation and constitutes at the same time a training school to develop a sense of civic responsibility.

Before the recrudescence of Communist subversive and destructive action in all South-East-Asia since last year the Government was obliged to take more effective measures to assure internal secu-

rity. Here is a balance sheet of the losses which Viet-Nam has suffered since the resolution of the last Congress of the Chinese Communist Party toward the end of 1956 : 43 troops, 23 civil guards, 40 Militiamen, 8 Social Cadres, 68 village notables, and 228 private persons. If we add to it the number of weapons recovered (735 rifles, 233 light machine guns, 19 submachineguns, 4 machineguns, 52 mortars and 281 revolvers), and if one takes into account the fact that most of the communist raids took place along the Cambodian border, one would have an idea of our difficulties and of our sacrifices in facing this form of cold war.

Thanks to a combined action of security agencies, Civil guard, village militia, social action and information, we have the situation under control and strengthen our security system each day.

Administration.

Together with the reforms of the Army and the Police, we have completed the installation of our Administration.

In order to attain a greater rationalisation of our Administrative work, steps were taken to suppress certain useless services, to create new agencies or to distribute specialities in a better fashion.

Among the 170 newly-set-up agencies the Directorate for Social Action of the High Plateaux for the study and solution of the special problems of that area should be pointed out. Special mention should also be made of the Commissariat for Agricultural Development, the Cinematographic Center, the Scientific Police Laboratory, the Directorate of Cooperatives, the Center for Industrial Development, the National Committee for Agriculture and Food, the Service of Agriculture Research, the provincial tribunals, and the offices of legal investigators at Saigon.

A material organisation, however perfect, is meaningless without the spirit which directs it. In this respect, the Government will redouble its efforts for the political and moral training of the Cadres at all echelons of the Administration. For that is an essential point in the program of national renovation.

Economy.

The political stability which made possible the reorganisation of the Army and of the Administration is equally a major condition of economic reconstruction.

As soon as political recovery was achieved, the Government sought to fulfill political independence by economic independence.

In the first stage, the government had endeavoured to deal with the most urgent tasks, the restoration of the means of communications and the maintenance of the existing living standard in spite of the necessity of converting a war economy to a peace economy.

It was urgent to rehabilitate the means of communications, of irrigation and other essential public works in the shortest time possible so as to allow the provinces which had lived more or less in isolation to resume their places in the circuit of the national economy.

In the space of three years 10,000 kilometers of road out of 13,000 and 300 kilometers of railways out of 1,200 have been hastily repaired ; 10,000,000 cubic meters of earth out of 50,000,000 dredged from the canals ; the most important systems of irrigation, such as those of Dong-Cam, of Tiep-Nhut, etc... rehabilitated.

These works would not have permitted the country to return to normal life had it not been for the enthusiasm of the officials which made up for their initial lack of experience and organisation and transformed them into an administrative apparatus capable of carrying out the decisions of the Government throughout the national territory.

Thanks to the goodwill of the officials the living standard was maintained and even improved even in the most remote parts of the country. The peasant class, which represents the major part of the population, has benefited from the advantages of a restored peace. Criticism directed at the officials would be fairer if we placed them against the background of those anxious days when the country was threatened with disintegration and anarchy.

At the end of 1955 and at the beginning of 1956 the economic and monetary situation was none too bright. The rise of prices which had begun during the war did not level off after the return of peace and continued to reduce the purchasing power of the working classes. To this steady rise were added occasional spurts of prices upwards, resulting from the unscrupulous speculations of a small number

of merchants who took advantage of shortages of goods due to an irregular supply of imported merchandise.

Vietnamese merchants endeavoured to relieve the foreigners and take the place they must occupy in an independent country. This hurried step had untoward consequences : the initial inexperience of our compatriots in the highly specialised import trade incompatible with a steady supply of the market.

Further, bank credit was largely in the hands of foreign banks and the National Bank had no effective means of controlling that source of credit.

The foregoing factors were therefore at the origin of the excessive rise of the price of rice at the end of 1955 and the beginning of 1956, in spite of the existence of a sufficient stock to fill the gap between two harvests and the certainty of a good crop.

The situation could have been aggravated suddenly and the purchasing power of our money might have deteriorated rapidly at the expense of the whole population.

Strong measures were necessary, and these were taken by the Government. The import trade had to be reorganised quickly by reducing the number of importers and by putting pressure on the remaining ones to group into large companies in which more capital would be available, and business experience pooled. Prices were controlled to prevent speculative rises.

At the same time measures were taken to reduce the monetary circulation and control bank credit. The war left us with a fiduciary volume of inflationary character amounting to 8 million piastres ; by contrast our foreign exchange reserves were uniquely in French Francs, and nearly negligible.

In addition, production was extremely low and foreign companies were only concerned with transferring all their profits and the maximum of their capital abroad, thus aggravating still more this inflationary pressure.

In spite of such a heavy legacy, the Vietnamese currency successfully weathered the trials imposed upon it in the course of 1956.

Early that year, Viet-Nam broke away from the Franc Zone, successfully set up locally an official foreign exchange market and

maintained its stability. Toward the middle of the same year, a free market was set up which lessened the pressure on the piastres awaiting transfer. A policy of foreign exchange saving was also introduced which strengthened the Vietnamese piastres and reduced the importance of the black market.

A number of taxes have been revised or increased for three purposes : to even out consumption, to extend the new burdens more equally to the privileged classes and to increase State revenues.

All these measures have now borne their fruit the rise of prices has been stopped, the money stabilised and credit controlled. We have left behind a war economy and are now entering a peace economy.

True, the stabilisation of the situation and the reconversion of the economy have brought about a number of difficulties to various categories of the population and have often hurt legitimate interests. But our merchants must understand that the high profits to which they are used can only exist with the artificial activities arising from the war. Now our country is pursuing a policy of peace. Our industrialists must equally make an effort at reorganisation to reduce cost and improve productivity in their enterprise ; the time is gone when one had only to produce in order to sell, and only to sell in order to make profits. The peasants may have been dissatisfied at the fall in the price of rice, but I would like to have them understand that high prices have benefited only the speculating middlemen, and that they themselves share but a little part in the proceeds. The fall in the price of rice is compensated by a fall in the price of the merchandise which they buy with the proceeds of the rice sold. On the contrary, with peace restored with the land reform and the aid from governmental technical services, they can increase their production and improve their living conditions in the end.

A certain slowing down of business may have been a cause of anxiety for all. This stagnation was due to the end of artificial activities. But our efforts in carrying out the program of economic development at an accelerated pace will soon compensate for that stagnation. It is true that the restarting of the economy will carry with it many problems pertaining to reconversion, but we must make the necessary effort at adaptation ; it is better to work hard for a stable future than to live in a climate of facile but artificial prosperity which may crumble overnight.

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Such is essentially what we have achieved together in the last three years. The results achieved have raised the prestige of free Viet-Nam in the world, and we have now acquired the certainty that we shall be able to progress each day toward a better future in peace, order and stability, for the benefit of the greater number.

However, we must not forget that we have only cleared one particular difficult stage on the road of national reconstruction ; other stages are awaiting us ; we must still make efforts to attain our aim. Let us not forget that we still have to perfect our economic independence.

We have so far enjoyed a substantial aid from friendly nations. Without such aid, our budget and our balance of payments would be strongly in deficit. If we are deeply grateful to our friends for their aid, we must now begin to think of living by our own means. The day when national production regains its pre-war level, taxes will find their way steadily to the national coffers, and we shall no longer need external aid in order to live ; the support from our friends will then only be used to equip our country.

We must also strive at renovating the structure of our national economy. It is true that our basic activity will be in the field of agriculture, but we must not be dependent on foreign industries : we must progressively establish national industry in order to provide our population with manufactured goods at reasonable prices. Why should we, for example, continue to import paper, crystal sugar, rubber goods, or glasswares, when we have plenty of wood and bamboo to make paper, sugar canes to make sugar, natural rubber and white sand which are exported annually ? No doubt our industries will have to compete with foreign products, but with redoubled efforts, they will win this competition. Indeed they will produce primarily for the local market and will be free from transport cost, insurance and custom duties.

We must constantly remember that the world economy is changing all the time. With the discoveries of the atomic age, the rythm of this evolution is still faster. To overcome the state of under-development in which we have been confined for many centuries, we must more than ever intensify our efforts. It is only at this price than we can catch up on our backwardness.

Certain people are used to relying entirely on the government : they think naively that it is sufficient to establish a well-conceived national economic plan to modify the situation completely. Such miracles cannot take place in the economic field. A national plan could succeed only if all the high-spirited forces of the nation were mobilised : these

forces should exist previously. Under the regime of freedom in which we are living at present, in principle like in practice, all initiative must come from private individuals. The government could provide guidance, control, support. But how could it replace private enterprise in all fields of activity ?

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I take this opportunity to draw the attention of the nation to a fundamental point for the economic life of our people : *national discipline*.

Each national plan is a forecast ; but it is also a set of directives. If each one wants to produce, trade, consume as he wishes during the execution of the plan, how could we carry out common programs ? Private initiative must therefore be coordinated and oriented within the framework of a national plan. To observe discipline is the fundamental condition of success.

We should not think that this discipline is necessary only in planned economies. Even in countries believing in liberalism, this discipline is indispensable, because in the present state of affairs, all economic activity is subject to the exigencies of technique which is imposed upon each of us and prevents him from acting too independently.

Besides, the characteristic of civilised nations is the establishment of a discipline by themselves which they observe freely and loyally. If the authorities must intervene each moment to watch the conduct of each one and punish the infringements of the rules... where would freedom be ? There is only one way of avoiding that intervention : each one must accept this discipline and see to it that his compatriots do the same.

All the measures of control I have spoken of earlier and which are necessary at a difficult time would lose their *raison d'être* if each of us would recognise the primacy of the national interest and if public disapproval were sufficient to ban those who were tempted to infringe the rules of common loyalty.

If to that sense of discipline we add a sense of sacrifice which makes us capable to put aside a part of the wealth produced each year for the purchase of new equipment, and to furnish his share in a

program of works of common interest, then I can assure you that although we are at present a backward country ruined by a prolonged war, we can occupy in a short time a good place among the Asian countries in the competition for economic development and for a better living standard.

Cultural and social problems.

I have dealt at length with economic questions because it is to this point of the program which the Government will devote its efforts this year.

Also because the solution of social problems depends upon economic prosperity.

However the increasingly important place occupied by economics in modern life must not make us forget man who is the origin as well as the end of this economy.

The effort at economic recovery is above all an intellectual, cultural effort to find solutions conforming to our national genius, to our own resources, and to the position of our country in the world.

For that reason, it is important to give a strong impulse to national education, and to the cultural revival of the people. Efforts have been made in this field. Numerous primary and secondary schools and classes have been created. A new university has been established in Hue. Authorization has been granted for the creation of a private University in Dalat. The government has decided the building of a new medical school and a veterinary college. In the field of technical education, three new Superior Schools have been set up, bringing the number of specialised centers to four.

On the other hand, the setting up of evening primary and high schools for the benefit of workers. In spite of their importance, these achievements are still insufficient both in quality and number.

The Government counts on the Community Development movement at the village and provincial levels to solve the basic questions pertaining to the social domain generally, and to the fields of primary and secondary education especially. Heartening results have been achieved under the sign of Community Development which reminds us of the traditional institution of *Huong Hoc* or Communal Contract.

In six months of Community Development work, group of villages have built 2,730 kilometers of road, 647 small bridges, 93 kilometers of canals, 138 kilometers of dikes, which has increased the economic prosperity of these regions and permitted the construction of 440 Communal Schools, 54 maternity houses, 145 first aid stations and 31 sports fields.

These works represent a value of 92 million piastres which the State did not have to take from its budget. It is in the same spirit of cooperation that 1,300 low-cost houses have been built in 10 centers distributed around the capital and that 1,825 others will be completed before the end of this year.

From the preceding, it is clear that intellectual and moral factors play a great part in our national recovery politically, economically and socially.

It is for this reason that the cultural question to which is bound the question of command must be foremost in the thoughts of the Government. Our leaders at all echelons must make greater efforts to raise the cultural level in order to find adequate solutions to our problems and to adopt a style of action more in conformity with the principles of the Constitution. They must also understand better the policy of democratic infrastructure of the government, such as I had the honour of expounding at the beginning of this message.

For on the success of this policy greatly depends the solution of our great problems.

Indeed, whatever the angle from which we wish to consider the problem of unification, all realise that one thing is certain : the influx toward the South of a new and much more important exodus of population than that of 1954 after Geneva. The multiplication of zones of basic economic prosperity at the village level, in the lowlands like in the Highlands, can be an effective factor for the rapid absorption of this human overflow.

Likewise, in the domain of industrialisation where the problem of investment is fundamental, the increase of family income thanks to the development of these zones of elementary prosperity can contribute to the increase of internal investments and consequently to reduce our needs for foreign capital.

It is through this human and realistic policy, thanks to which the people enjoys immediately each advance of democracy, that we can consolidate the union of all in the struggle against the communist lies about the earthly paradise.

Foreign relations.

In proving by facts the sincerity with which we pursue the building of independence, liberty and peace, we have gained the sympathy of the Free World, especially that of the peoples of Africa and Asia.

The choice of Saigon as the seat of the Ninth Colombo Plan Conference is not the result of accident.

The sympathy of the countries of the Free World is further expressed in the invitations of several Heads of State to me to visit them and discuss with them problems of common interest. Thus I visited the United States, Thailand, Australia and Korea, and soon will visit India and Burma.

Likewise we have developed our relations with the countries of the Middle-East, Africa and Asia such as Lebanon, Iraq, Morocco and Malaya.

Besides the normal diplomatic relations and official participation in all international Conferences, our country has seen its prestige heightened in several non governmental international Congresses, such as the Congress of Asian Writers, the Congress of Asian Socialists, the Pen Club, the Congress of the Free Trade Union's and the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

From this sympathy, we have derived, besides moral and diplomatic support which are important for our position in the world, financial aid which happily completes our resources devoted to the development of our country. This external aid comes mainly from the United States, France and the Colombo Plan Countries.

I take this solemn opportunity to thank, in the name of the Vietnamese people, these friendly peoples for the sacrifices they have accepted to alleviate our burden. Our gratitude is all the deeper as these peoples themselves encounter great difficulties at present.

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Such are, gentlemen, in broad outlines, the most significant achievements of the past year. Such are the principles which have inspired these achievements and the programs laid down in the budget for the coming year.

The country can be certain that all the measures taken by the Government reflect a constant preoccupation : that of building a real democracy through the organization of a prosperous economy without surrendering independence, by the achievement of the unification of the country without sacrificing the liberty of man.

ALF Collections Vault



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Presidency of the Republic of Vietnam
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