

ADDRESS BY  
HIS EXCELLENCY NGO DINH DIEM  
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF VIET-NAM  
AT LUNCHEON IN HIS HONOR  
BY THE MAYOR OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK  
WALDORF-ASTORIA HOTEL  
MAY 13, 1957

EMBASSY OF VIET-NAM  
2251 R Street, N. W.  
Washington, D. C.  
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Mr. Mayor, Ladies and Gentlemen:

I would like to thank you, from the bottom of my heart, Mr. Mayor, for this memorable reception in the great City of New York, which is not only the largest city in the world, but also the one which represents the most radiant, the most impressive image of economic dynamism and political idealism of America.

Indeed, the marvelous development of this City during the recent centuries, the mounting increase of its population, the unceasing activity of its harbor, its factories, its business quarters, are altogether the symbol of the intense, vibrating economic activity of your great country. The skyscrapers which form the horizon line of your City, concretize also, so to speak, the tenacious will of your people to rise up always higher by hard work and continuous efforts.

However, another feature which is even more interesting than the impressive view of your material achievements, is the fact that New York City has succeeded in uniting in a harmonious community, people coming from different parts of the world, to whom it has offered a haven of peace and prosperity. By this fortunate merger of races and nationalities, your City is also, in this regard, the symbol of America, and, I dare say, of human brotherhood. This feature has impressed me deeply when, six years ago, I came to New York for the first time, in my political exile.

At all events, in the eyes of all the people in the world, your City represents the beautiful and living symbol of Liberty. For millions of immigrants who come here in search of a new life in this country, as well as for visitors from far-away lands attracted by the good name of the United States, the Statue of Liberty which lights the entry of your harbor with its outstretched

torch, has become the symbol of democratic ideals, of which your country is today the champion, at the vanguard of the Free World.

In this perspective, it seems to me that, in certain respects, there exist some points of similitude between the history of the development of your City, and the present situation in Viet-Nam, although, of course, the scale of problems as well as the surrounding circumstances are not exactly the same.

Like the pilgrims and immigrants who, in the past centuries, landed on these shores in search for a better life in the framework of Freedom, recently in our Republic of Viet-Nam, almost one million of people left their homes and villages in the North to settle in the South, after the partition of our country, following the Geneva Conference. The motives which directed those two great movements of human exodus in history are the same: it is the love of freedom without which life is not worth living, and for which no sacrifice could be too great; beyond pure idealism, it is also the conviction that prosperity and progress can best be achieved in the framework of a free economy. These two aspects of the attachment to freedom which, with differences in emphasis, have successively motivated the first pilgrims and the immigrants of modern times coming in your harbor, form the simultaneous motives which determined hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese to abandon the places of their birth, so dear to the hearts of Asians, and face the risks of an odyssey across the bamboo curtain, as well as the uncertainties of life in a strange land.

Like the first immigrants on your shores, the refugees from North Viet-Nam have found in the Free Republic of Viet-Nam a newer and less populous land; they have already contributed to make it prosper in a short time. Indeed, the North-Vietnamese refugees, established in the Southern plains, have already begun to become an economic asset for our country devastated

by a long war. That resettlement of our Northern immigrants has its most concrete, and, I dare say, most impressive success in Cai San, where, with American help, 50,000 refugees have put in cultivation a zone of 270,000 acres within a little more than one year since their arrival in this previously abandoned area.

In a future which we hope not to be far away, these refugees will strengthen the labor force and the cadres of our nascent industry.

The magnitude of this human exodus could be fully conceived only in the framework of the size of our country and of our total population. In any circumstance, the displacement of a mass of one million people is already impressive by itself. For a population of eleven million inhabitants in South Viet-Nam, the arrival of almost one million immigrants require the resettlement of about one tenth of the total population, with all the problems which you can imagine.

Fortunately, in these difficult moments, we have received material aid, and, what is even more precious, moral support from the United States. This aid is the most vivid symbol of human brotherhood, and of the solidarity between free nations. Indeed, we could today apply more specifically to freedom the well-known words of John Donne who said that when the bell tolls for somebody in the world, it tolls for everyone of us. In other words, when the curtain falls on freedom in any part of the world, this is a tragedy which should afflict all those for whom liberty is dear, well beyond frontiers and oceans. That is more than natural sympathy: it is no less than a matter for common survival.

Indeed, today, more than ever, the defense of freedom is essentially a common task. With regard to security, the frontiers of the United States do not stop at the Atlantic and Pacific Coasts, but extend, in South East Asia,

to the Ben Hai river, which partitions Viet-Nam at the 17th parallel, and forms the threatened border of the Free World, which we all cherish. The present development of destructive weapons has stressed in the most acute manner international solidarity, which has become vital, and should not be ignored, nor neglected.

In this respect, we should not lose sight of the fact that in war as well as in peace -- I mean the absence of an armed conflict -- economic efforts are at least as important as military efforts. Indeed not only the former efforts condition the latter, but also economic achievements are one of the goals of human pursuit, and therefore form the testing ground for opposing political ideologies. We, Vietnamese, on the frontier of the Free World, could not afford underrating that important aspect of the present battle for the minds of men. However, like you, Mr. Mayor, and members of this distinguished group, we are convinced, in South Viet-Nam, that rapid economic progress is compatible with the respect for the individual, in the framework of a free economy. If an evidence is needed, the splendid development of your great City is the most striking example in support of that idea.

However, the economic development of a nation could not be fully successful without the participation of friendly countries, in the same way as military defense could not be efficient if it has to remain on the shoulders of a single country. It is the more so in the case of a nation, the economic development of which has been delayed by colonialism. This participation, in strengthening an allied nation, strengthens at the same time, as you know, the Free World as a whole. We should therefore pay tribute to the farsightedness of President Eisenhower when he insists that what is usually called "foreign aid" is actually "mutual aid" in the interest of all the parties involved:

The safeguarding of Greece and Turkey for the Free World, by a timely economic aid, and the enormous losses in properties and human lives which the Free World suffered in Korea by the absence of an adequate "aid," would suffice to support the viewpoint of your President, if indeed any evidence is necessary for those who remember the lessons of recent history.

Aside from direct aid between governments, economic interdependence today manifests itself also in the form of international movements of goods and capital. There is no need to point it out to you, Mr. Mayor, who has the direction of this City of New York, the greatest financial and commercial center in the world, and the largest international harbor for economic exchanges between the United States and the different parts of the world.

That is why, in Viet-Nam, at the present time, we keep our doors wide open to international commerce and investments. In so doing, we only apply an idea which has been familiar to you for a long time. If there is any innovation, it is in the exceptional privileges that my Government accords to foreign investments, which go as far as exemption of taxes and customs duties, as well as facilities for withdrawal of capital, granted to foreign enterprises which contribute to our economic development. These advantages are protected by our unequivocal guarantee against nationalization and expropriation without due compensation.

These measures deserve attention by their exceptional character, in comparison with more reserved policies in other Asian countries, deriving from an atmosphere of distrust, which remains as a vestige of the colonialist era still so recent in the memory of many men. However, we Vietnamese, through centuries have successfully resisted the expansion of the immense Chinese mass, and, in the 13th century, were the only ones to oppose victoriously the Mongol Armies of Genghis Khan, at that time masters of Asia

and Eastern Europe. More recently, we have reconquered our independence after a hard struggle. Thus we have enough confidence in ourselves not to have to take refuge behind economic autarchy, and to adopt clearly a policy of international economic cooperation.

Foreign capital and technicians are therefore welcome in Viet-Nam, and I am convinced that this cooperation will be in the best interests of the parties involved.

In the economic relations between our two countries, favorable signs have already appeared in the horizon. Since 1953, the volume of American importations into Viet-Nam has tripled, and the U. S. has become the leading exporter country to Viet-Nam, ahead of Japan and France.

It is a pleasure for me to be in New York City today and to conclude with this remark: At the same time as our community of democratic ideals, the intensification of economic exchanges, and a continuous broadening of cultural relations form already the foundation of a solid alliance and, I am sure, a long-lasting friendship between our two countries.

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