

ADDRESS BY MADAME NGO DINH NHU AT THE
OPENING CEREMONY OF THE FIRST COURSE FOR THE
TRAINING OF CADRES FOR WOMEN PARA-MILITARY
SERVICE ON NOVEMBER 29TH, 1961

My Dear Sisters :

Confronted with special local needs, several provinces of Viet Nam, began military training for women long before the capital.

So, while this occasion does not represent anything particularly new, it is nevertheless a great day for Vietnamese women. For it is the first occasion in our history that military training is to be given to women on a national scale.

In the preamble of my resolution "For a Stronger National Force," as well as in my recent open letter addressed to the women of Viet Nam, I said that "after claiming and obtaining our rights, if we now claim the honour to serve our country, arms in hand, it is not a question of pride or principle, but simply because we are fully aware of the necessities of the present."

I also said that during these critical times when true values reveal themselves, it is the duty of the Vietnamese woman for so long a time considered as useless for the defence of the country, to show composure and indomitable determination.

I know that you all approve what I said on the behalf of the Vietnamese women, because I know that through your own personal experience each one of you knows that wherever there is a woman capable of resisting to the end, unshaken by any pressure or intimidation, there can be no defeat. And even what might appear as defeat, is not so in the long run of history.

It is no less true that the great honour of translating these words into action, no longer on the individual but on the national scale, no longer only on the moral but also on the practical level, falls first on you, students of the first class of cadres for the women's para-military service.

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ADDRESS BY MADAME NGO DINH NHU ... (2)

The enthusiasm with which you have responded to the appeal of the Nation shows that you are fully aware of this honour.

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Because of its natural impetuosity, youth tends to welcome novelty, especially when it brings challenges and risks, as an exciting adventure for which the interest wears off together with the novelty.

In order not to fail, be on your guard that you do not see only novelty in this honour. Keep in mind what it will demand of you in technical competence, moral strength and perseverance in order that you may become worthy cadres of the new women's army. Remember that what you will learn is not only for your own betterment and satisfaction; but most important of all, it is to teach others and this requires a far more conscientious training. Do not ever overlook this.

For the best chance of success, remember also that from today on, by your own choice you will be founding a kind of feminine order of knighthood, and for this reason you can no longer tolerate -- either in yourselves or in your ranks -- any of those usual women's faults which it is not necessary for me to recite since, being women you know them as well as we all do.

Also, be aware that the training programme which is designed to give you a sense of command, to teach you group maneuvers and the handling of weapons, first aid and psychological warfare, is a particularly rational programme which could become a model of its kind if you give it your best efforts and cooperation.

This program, well understood and well applied, can help you to effectively promote a feminine force which, even without being integrated into any organized establishment, can bring an invaluable contribution to the Nation.

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ADDRESS BY MADAME NGO DINH NHU ... (3)

But it is also well for you to know -- and it distresses me to have to tell you this -- that the Communists and their cohorts are already seeking to create division within our ranks by trying to arouse stupid and sordid jealousies over the matter of the allowances which the Government had decided to grant you on passage of the final examination when you complete this course and graduate as cadres. Remember that even though you have the required degree, which in your case is the Brevet, you will be considered as cadres only if you pass the final examination of this course.

As cadres, you will be in certain respects the first women officers of a woman's army. You will train, in groups of four each, 40 women every hour, which totals 320 women per day. Thus, only after having toiled for years to obtain your general education degree, then for months to obtain the Certificate of Technical Proficiency as an officer-instructor, and finally after an exhausting daily training programme, that you will receive the allowances to permit you to pay your own living expenses with no other remuneration kind.

It will be by your own efforts that within a little more than a year 360,000 women will be trained to serve the country in the same way that the militia and civil guards do now, or at least to defend themselves and their families in case of necessity. The contribution which these women will bring to the country will, however, be gratuitous. Indeed, the women of Viet Nam will never seek financial remuneration for the defense of themselves, of their families and of the national territory. They know the limitations of our national budget and they well understand the meaning of the blood tax which each citizen must pay for the survival of the nation. They will never sell their patriotism, you may be sure.

I will not at this point venture any comparisons. For if a man in the same position counts on financial remuneration, I believe it is not because he is a citizen defending his country that he is entitled to it, but it is because he is the family provider and deserves assistance from the community, whose duty it is to share somehow the burden he bears.

ADDRESS BY MADAME NGO DINH NHU ... (4)

However, I find it inadmissible to allow a delinquent ignorance to continue longer which could prejudice the prestige of the women of Viet Nam -- a prejudice which would not only seriously antagonize but deeply discourage them in their patient efforts to demonstrate reason and common sense each time they take on a new responsibility. Therefore, my dear sisters, warned of the truth and of the importance of your position, do not allow yourselves to be disturbed by the discordant noises of the stupid who will never understand anything and the traitors from whom you may expect anything.

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Be satisfied to prepare yourselves by intensive and thorough study to be worthy of the important role which will come to you if you merit it. Do not deceive the great trust which your sisters, the women of Viet Nam, place in you. They have already fixed their eyes upon you. They are following you step by step, ready to help and counting on you to always hold high the spiritual torch you have inherited from the Trung Sisters -- a torch which has been kept burning from generation to generation.

To all of you, from the depths of my heart I wish the most brilliant success.

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