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TRANSLATION OF THE MESSAGE
OF
PRESIDENT NGO DINH DIEM
TO THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY
(Opening Session, October 5, 1959)

Dean Luong-Trong-Hoi
Honorable Deputies,

As we begin the annual session of the National Assembly and inaugurate the business of the Second Legislature, let us all solemnly pledge our fidelity to the Constitution which the country has of its own choice adopted and let us pledge our determination to maintain and consolidate the democratic tradition of our young Republic.

The trust which your electors have placed in you -- and for which I heartily congratulate you -- makes it your duty, Honorable Deputies, to invigorate the spirit of this democratic tradition and to hasten its maturity so that it will improve daily in its adaptation to the living reality of our country, and to the evolution of the Asian and African nations to which we are bound by a community of destiny.

For Democracy is not solidified once and for all into a collection of formulas and regulations conceived in other times, under other skies. Old Western nations, richer and more experienced than we, have been obliged to recast the very structure of their traditional parliamentary formula. More than one newly independent country has experienced immobility and disorder because it has adopted this formula; more than one nation is trying to free its democratic regime of what has killed it after having helped to bring it into existence.

The history of the profound political upheavals which have taken place in many countries of Asia and Africa since 1955, that is since the birth of our Republic, points to a constant evolution toward a new democratic cycle, more adapted to the aspirations of under-developed countries, without, at the same time, breaking with the essential community features of their traditions.

Indeed the inner logic of the technically and socially backward countries, Viet-Nam being one of them, demands of them an accelerated march which can be accomplished only at the cost of a strict community discipline and of the sacrifice of short-term interests. Such is the heavy price we have to pay to move quickly forward, for it is only at this pace that we can preserve our independence and solve our social problems, the result of an accumulation of many centuries. This accelerated march would not be possible without the will to break down the obstacles placed in our way by the anarchist and communist reactionaries. Thus we are witnessing a general regression of communist influence in the countries of Asia and Africa and also its violent reactions against an evolution which is no longer working to its advantage.

It is in the stern realities of our conditions, both present and future, that the Constitution has been elaborated. It is in anticipation of the immense difficulties which await the underdeveloped countries in the effort required of them to work out a balanced technical organization for their march forward while preserving individual freedom, that our Constitution has been set up on the basis of the respect for the Human Being, the establishment of the Common Good and Collective Progress.

Thanks to the wisdom and the discipline of all, we have spared our country what the leader of a great Asian nation has recently admitted publicly to his people: fifteen years of liberal government have led the country to political division and economic chaos. At the same time, with the help of our friends of the Free World, we have been able to achieve important and rapid progress which have attracted the attention and sympathy of sincere competent and impartial observers.

Internally, the Government's efforts are continually directed at the erection of a democratic substructure, especially at the level of the villages, through economic and social progress.

In the economic sphere, we have sought to develop the main natural resources and to create new ones in order to economise the foreign exchange for industrialisation while raising at the same time the standard of living of the masses.

In order to promote social justice and also to ensure an absolute minimum for a population living in a zone of great instability, as well as to increase the purchasing power of the rural masses, we have directed our main effort towards the agricultural sector.

Thanks to a sustained effort against communist internal subversion and thanks to technical and social measures favoring small ownership and farming on a rational and community basis, we have successfully extended the cultivated area and improved productivity.

In spite of drought, the increase of rice production has made 250,000 tons available for export.

The land reform in its first stage has enabled 112,000 farm families to succeed 1,200 former big owners; in spite of the opposition of the reactionaries and of communist sabotage.

The creation of land development centers has, for its part, wrested 48,000 hectares from the forests and waste lands for the benefit of over 25,000 landless families.

Thanks to the Rural Credit system which has enabled the farmers to borrow more than 1,200 million piastres from the beginning of 1958 to the end of September 1959, the small farmers can consolidate their ownership and improve the yield of their crops through the use of chemical fertilizers and mechanical equipment. At present, Viet-Nam possesses one of the largest stock of farm equipment in all South East Asia. The Department of Agriculture, for its part, has resold the peasants over 50,000 tons of chemical fertilizers at low prices.

The steady repayment of the loans has reached the highest percentage recorded in any underdeveloped country, thus ensuring the success and continuity of the scheme, in spite of communist opposition. Parallel to the effort of the Rural Credit, Community Development and the System of Farmers' Associations contribute to the improvement or the establishment of the rural substructure (canals, local roads, small dams...) and the installment of new pumping stations, rice-mills, etc... and the rationalization and diversification of crops.

In the last instance, the Government has been concerned with the replanting of the rubber plantations which are too old or were damaged during the war. A new sum of 200 million piastres has been earmarked to encourage those who agree to replant at least 5% of their plantations. At the same time, a program of extension of the total rubber acreage by the technical service of the Land Development Commissariat has been drawn up. Together these projects aim both at increasing the rubber acreage and its yield.

In addition to rubber, other industrial crops such as kenaf and ramey have been strongly encouraged. The production of kenaf, which is used in the making of rice-bags, already reaches 3,000 tons and satisfies in a large measure our internal needs.

As regard ramey which is used in the making of fishing nets and which can be used in the future in the weaving of various fabrics in the proportion of 50%, its output reaches 600 tons this year as against 80 last year.

Cotton itself is being experimented with in the regions of Cheo Reo, Tuy An, Phan Thiet, and so far the results have been satisfactory.

Handicraft, which complements agriculture, has made remarkable progress both as to quality and quantity. The development of weaving on a handicraft basis has made it possible to reduce our textile imports from 48 million dollars in 1958 to 40 million in 1959. We expect to bring this figure further down to 25 million in 1960.

Thus the results achieved in the agricultural sector have made it possible to satisfy in a large measure the essential needs of an underdeveloped population and to furnish it with the basic human conditions indispensable to a strenuous and sustained effort in the domain of industrialization.

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In this domain, the difficulties inherent in an underdeveloped country, such as the shortage of capital and qualified personnel, to which should be added the national and social concern of preserving the economic independence of the country and of minimizing the sacrifices of the present generation, have been partly counterbalanced by the aid of the friendly countries and the effort of our technicians.

Like in the agricultural sector, the industrial program aims at exploiting our natural resources with a view to reducing our imports, economizing and earning foreign exchange to finance new industries and develop the substructure and the means of communications.

Thus, in regard to the textile industry, a spinning mill with 10,000 spindles is in production now. Another one with 20,000 spindles is under construction in Saigon, and still another with the same capacity is planned for Tourane. The execution of this program will enable us to meet 40% of our needs.

With respect to the sugar industry, the Hiep Hoa mill produces 9,000 tons this year, that is 1/7 of local consumption. It is expected to produce 15,000 tons in two years. Three other mills have been planned. Together these mills will satisfy all our needs and permit the saving of 4 million dollars per year.

Likewise, two paper-mills are planned with a capacity of 18,000 tons per year, or 70% of our needs, and with a saving of 2 million dollars per year.

With regard to wood, a saw-mill at Tan-Mai (Bien Hoa province) produces timber with a capacity of 2,000 cubic meters per month. To this mill will be attached a wall panel factory, using saw dust with a yearly capacity of 3,000 tons. The saving in foreign exchange will be of the order of 500,000 dollars per year.

As regards cement, the Long-Tho factory is equipped to produce 20,000 tons per year. We are planning to build another factory at Ha-Tien, with a capacity of 200,000 tons. The production of these factories will be sufficient to cover our needs and will result in an economy in foreign exchange of the order of 3 million dollars per year.

A glasswork is under construction, with a capacity of 15,000 tons per year; thus an exportable surplus will be available and will represent a saving in foreign exchange of approximately 2 million dollars per year.

All of the above is but a beginning. Yet, in addition to the immediate and direct benefits to our economy, those factories will have a "multiplier effect"; around them allied industries will grow.

As those factories come into operation, we shall be able to reduce the volume of our imports progressively and economize foreign exchange which we shall invest in other basic industrial undertakings and projects.

The recent restoration of the Vietnamese railway, the building of new main roads, such as the Saigon - Bienhoa highway and those which link up the Highlands and the coastal area of Central Viet-Nam, and especially the dense network of land and water cross-ways and secondary roads with the purpose of opening up vast areas of economic development and break the age-old isolation of the remote provinces, all these achievements and plans taken together demonstrate our determination to erect a solid foundation for our emerging national economy.

It is for the same purpose that we pursue the development of the Nong-Son coal mine to which we shall attach a power plant with a capacity of 33,000 KW. We hope that the Japan-Vietnamese reparations convention will at last permit the building of the very important Danhim hydro-electric complex.

Parallely to the economic effort, we have made remarkable social progress.

In the educational field, the campaign against illiteracy, launched in July 1956, is entering its final phase. The country had 2 million illiterates in 1956. 1,500,000 have now learned how to read and write. We can reasonably expect illiteracy to be completely wiped out in 1960.

Primary education counts 1,115,000 school-children, i.e., 25% more than in 1958; secondary schools have on their rolls 132,529 pupils, i.e., 20% more than last year. The Saigon and Hue Universities have provided higher education to 7,500 students, an increase of 68%. Lastly, technical education is being given to 3,900 students. 3,342 new classrooms have been built for primary and 188 for secondary schools, and 40 laboratories for secondary higher technical education, and for scientific research.

National education aims at restoring the importance of the traditional spiritual values, raising level of the scientific training, and developing the study of foreign languages. The recent recasting of the syllabus of the secondary schools is an evidence of this concern.

Our young men, who are members of some 15 public or private associations, take part voluntarily and actively in national reconstruction, in particular in Community Development and the maintenance of order in the countryside.

In the field of Labor, the introduction of the system of collective contracts has contributed to the improvement of relations between workers and employers. The number of social conflicts has decreased by one third compared with last year, and the number of work days lost as a result of strikes has fallen by one half. On the internal and private plane, the training of the trade union cadres is seriously pursued in several centers, thanks to the collaboration of the international labor organizations. An international seminar of the trade union cadres held in Saigon recently has proved by the choice of its location as well as that of the number and variety of the participant countries and the subjects of the talks, the esteem in which Viet-Nam is held internationally and the progress achieved in this field in Viet-Nam.

With regard to Health, the equipment of our hospitals has been increased and modernized. The struggle against epidemics, and such diseases as tuberculosis, leprosy and cancer, has yielded notable results. I would like to stress especially the anti-malaria campaign. The campaign against this disease extends over 7 years, from 1957 to 1963, with the collaboration of USOM. A great effort has been made in the training of medical aid personnel.

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The overall results which I have just outlined have been obtained only thanks to a great intellectual and moral effort of our people. Our courage, our sense of discipline as well as the methods adapted to our situation -- that of an underdeveloped country -- have earned Viet-Nam many expressions of interest and confidence, and also an important measure of success on the international plane.

We have signed a war reparations agreement with Japan, which has refused to have any dealings with the communists.

We have concluded a treaty of friendship with the Republic of the Philippines.

We have concluded with Laos a series of agreements which establish our relations on a basis of mutual confidence and friendship.

While tightening our existing diplomatic bonds with our friends of the Free World, we have extended our international relations in the Middle East, in Africa, and South America. It is thus that we have just exchanged diplomatic missions with Tunisia, Brazil and Argentina.

The success obtained recently by the delegation of the National Assembly at the Conference of the Interparliamentary Union at Warsaw against communist Vietnam's candidacy for membership is a significant fact.

As I have said earlier, for the last few years we are witnessing a general regression of the communist positions in Asia and Africa. This regression has been accelerated by the armed intervention on the part of Communism, particularly in Asia, along a line running from Tibet to Sannoua and beyond, inside the non-communist countries, under the form of intensified subversion.

Like all the nations of Africa and Asia which are threatened by the Communist danger and invasion we must maintain armed forces capable of resisting the kind of war imposed upon us by red imperialism.

What matters here, as elsewhere, is less to groan the historical necessities than to seek a method applicable to the situation and to integrate our army in the economic effort of the nation. It is for this reason that we are endeavoring to organize our National Army in such a way as to combine its training with an active participation in the creation of the national economy of the country.

Likewise we must work out new methods to increase fiscal revenues while practising a policy of austerity, budgetary economy and encouragement to production.

Dean Luong-Trong-Hoi,
Honorable Deputies,

From the foregoing considerations it follows that your fundamental problem always remains that of an underdeveloped country, divided, and subject to communist attacks, and which must face its destiny with courage, intelligence, sense of discipline and sacrifice, through hard work and its capacity to develop methods appropriate to its situation.

It is on the basis of this hard and stern effort, both morally and intellectually, that our brothers of Asia, Africa and South America judge us, rather than on the basis of the more or less perfect manner in which we shall have imitated the way of living of the advanced nations of the East or the West. To accept the ways of living of these nations is to accept in advance the idea of a foreign protectorate.

No demagogic myth can relieve us of this painful and sustained effort.

The Government directs this effort, it does not invent it.

We must therefore clearly understand our situation in all its aspects, without being intellectually dependent or prisoners of it. It is the only way of influencing and transforming it.

This understanding of the national and international realities and of our responsibilities constitutes a fundamental duty for each citizen.

In this respect we could not congratulate enough the political, social and professional organizations for the important part they have voluntarily contributed to the civic education of their members as well as of the population. Without their spontaneous contribution, we could not have achieved so much progress.

Dean Luong-Trong-Hoi,
Honorable Deputies,

The electoral fever is over. We now find ourselves confronted with the common task which, if we want to fulfill it properly, will require a clear comprehension, new appropriate methods and a rapid pace. With the aid of our friends we shall maintain our rapid pace at the same time trying to minimize the human cost. It would be treason to try to slow down the accelerated march of our people toward progress and a free life.

May the Almighty help us.
