

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF VIET-NAM



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TWO YEARS' ACHIEVEMENT
OF THE VIET-NAM
NATIONALIST GOVERNEMENT

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TWO YEARS' ACHIEVEMENT
OF THE VIET-NAM
NATIONALIST GOVERNMENT

This is a speech delivered on the 2nd Anniversary of the Viet-Nam Democratic Republic in Paris on September 2nd, 1947, by M. Tran-Ngoc-Danh, President of the Viet-Nam Delegation in France.

TWO YEARS' ACHIEVEMENT OF THE VIET-NAM NATIONALIST GOVERNMENT

INDEPENDENCE RECOVERED AND DEMOCRACY INSTITUTED

On September 2nd, 1945, for the first time in 80 years of subjection, Power in Viet-Nam was restored to the Vietnamese. For the first time in 4,000 years of history, Power in Viet-Nam was conquered by the Viet-Nam people. Independence was declared from foreign overlords, Democracy replaced Monarchy, and Mandarinate was abolished. The motto "By the people and for the people" became the nation's watchword and a Government with a wide popular basis was formed, in which took part representatives of every class of Viet-Nam society.

INTERNAL SITUATION : POLITICAL UNITY DEMOCRACY CONSOLIDATED (1)

Adverse circumstances prevented the liberation of the South, which fell back, unfortunately, under colonial rule. But throughout the country, the same feeling prevailed : Unity

(1) Cf. « Le peuple vietnamien et le président Ho », Viet-Nam Information Service, August 1947 (Paris Bureau).



*With the compliments
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Information Service.*

among all the classes to safeguard Freedom. With the Nambo (Cochinchina) reoccupied by the French, unity became a matter of life and death. Not only did we survive, but we have even consolidated the people's power in the foreign-dominated area. Everywhere, catholics, intellectuals, ethnic minorities, religious sects, buddhists, political parties, trade unions and democratic organizations, land owners of Cochinchina, students, and soldiers, have remained strongly united in the common struggle for survival. The war is still going on throughout our country, but our people always believe in the triumph of their cause, which is the cause of justice; and the Government carry on the resistance side by side with social reforms and reconstruction. General elections were held in January 1946 to choose a National Assembly of 400 representatives. People's Committees also were chosen by universal adult suffrage. A constitution has been worked out by the Assembly (1), which ensures every citizen all democratic rights, including private property and freedom of creed, and which safeguards the rights of national minorities. The poll tax has been abolished, and a more equitable taxation system promulgated (2). Territorial reforms have been undertaken and villages gathered into economic units, which have reduced their number to 1/4 in the delta, and to 1/2 in the highlands. To maintain law and order, the police forces have been reorganized and rigorous measures taken against piracy. Prostitution and gambling have been banned, and prohibition has been decreed against opium and alcohol, although their taxation yielded a considerable income.

Judiciary power has been modernized and tribunals of different degrees have been set up. Juries now include wider representation from the ordinary people.

The Nationalist leaders' devotion, the people's enthusiasm and whole-hearted co-operation with the Government have helped to make good a lack of administrative experience and to cope with a critical economic situation, resulting from many years of colonialism, foreign occupations, and war.

(1) Cf. "Viet-Nam, a new stage in her history". Viet-Nam News, June 1947, Bangkok.

(2) Cf. "One year of Revolutionary achievement". Viet-Nam News, October 1946, Bangkok.

FOREIGN RELATIONS. — TREATY WITH FRANCE. — ENCROACHMENTS BY FRENCH REPRESENTATIVES. — SYMPATHETIC ATTITUDE OF ASIATIC NATIONS

We have regained our nationhood, we have proudly resumed the ancient name Viet-Nam, as a symbol of our Unity and Independence. Despite what happened afterwards, the Preliminary Convention of March 6th which we signed with France did recognize Viet-Nam as a free state. Despite the colonialists' ill-faith and reluctance to abide by the arrangements, we have scored a considerable gain in the international field. The Dalat Conference in April 1946, the Fontainebleau conversations in July 1946 failed, as you know. For the French colonialists were playing for time, and had not the slightest desire to come to terms with us. Nevertheless, President Ho-Chi-Minh concluded with France an accord which, if it had been loyally carried out, would have brought the two parties closer instead of embittering the conflict between them.

A series of encroachments on the Modus Vivendi of September 14th 1946 and the Convention of March 6th brought the crisis to a head on December 19th, 1946, and it deteriorated into a devastating guerrilla war.

Although the French representatives in Viet-Nam have done their best to make out that it was the Vietnamese who started the fighting, it is obvious that we were not in a position to do so. The world is aware of this, and much sympathy has been paid to Viet-Nam in every country. No diplomatic recognition has been made by the Big Powers, but their relations with our country remain friendly and sympathetic. Our intercourse with the Asiatic countries and those who are still under colonial rule is, understandably enough, pervaded with the most hearty esteem and solidarity. The tremendous welcome given to the Viet-Nam delegation in New Delhi during the InterAsian Conference even commanded the attention of foreign observers and brought home to them that from now on, no country in self-conscious Asia will be isolated in its fight for freedom. The struggle of Viet-Nam is no more the concern of Viet-Nam alone; it is only one issue in the whole Asian struggle for freedom and national survival.

INDEPENDENCE SAFEGUARDED : AN ARMY CREATED, GUERRILLAS BETTER ORGANIZED

Asia is well aware of that, and so are our people. This deep consciousness must be regarded as one of the main factors which, in a few months, brought into being a people's army in Viet-Nam. (1)

Before December 19th, 1946, there existed in the North a well organized army which was inferior to that of the occupants only in small details. A rigorous training kept them in shape, and a military school was opened to form fresh officers. In the South, our compatriots, having gone through a terrible ordeal, were at the outset rather disorganized. Lack of preparedness and political education, lack of officers, lack of experience, equipment, and even of troops soon caused them to give up their early tactics and to acquire a better knowledge of guerilla warfare and scorched earth tactics. The results were that out of 21 provinces, 20 remained under our control.

Since December 19th, 1946, our armies in the South have become better organized and have been able to give full scope to their ability. At a great cost of lives and equipment, the French troops have gained control only of the big cities, while nearly all the country is still in our hands. And even in the French-controlled towns, security does not exist. To go out of town, without escort, to take a walk at night in the cities' streets is a very perilous adventure. Ambushes and surprise attacks ceaselessly threaten French patrols and detachments. The Northern Front did relieve the Southern, and at the same time the Cochinchinese stamina was strengthened by the tough resistance of their compatriots of Tonkin and Annam. There, after 6 months of fierce fighting, the same situation evolved for the French as in the Nambo. No security anywhere, they even had to pull out of Ninh Binh, Thai Binh, Hung Yen, Fu Ly, Hoa Binh. In the Centre, only Hué, Quang Tri, Đà Nang, Faifo, Tourane have fallen to our adversaries. In defending Hanoi, Haiphong, Haiduong, Kien An, Namdinh and Thanhhoa, our youth have written glorious pages of Viet-Nam history with their blood. (1). Their enthusiasm and

(1) See "One year of Revolutionary achievement". Viet-Nam News, October 1946, Bangkok.

devotion have filled our adversaries with admiration. It is not rare to find that in their orders of the day, French commanders quote the courage of our troops as examples for their own. Our youth have responded warmly to the nation's call for "cadres" and two classes of instructors already graduated from the Military School for Progressive Youth, on February 1st and 27th, 1947. Our army is a people's army. It sprang from the depths of the masses. Its members are well aware that the reason of its existence is to safeguard the Viet-Nam people's independence and their very life, which are also every soldier's independence and every soldier's life. The co-operation of such an army and the people is so thorough that the French military authorities in Viet-Nam profess their inability to discriminate a peasant from a guerillero. Such a solidarity considerably heightens our army's efficiency, not only in its defence tasks, but in its assistance to the evicuees, to the campaign for production and the drive against illiteracy.

FRENCH TROOPS CHECKED

The colonialists did not reckon with our people's deep consciousness, their will to survive and their endurance. The effect of such a surprise has been very beneficial for us. It has certainly not been the least of the French troubles in Viet-Nam. It has undoubtedly disheartened the soldiers of the French Expeditionary Corps. For many of them thought the war against Viet-Nam was a matter of weeks; some of them believed they were to fight the Japanese instead of a freedom-loving people. It is why a good many of them deserted to our ranks and why the Malgash, Moroccan and Senegalese troops demonstrated against the war in our country. Their enlightened French comrades also distributed leaflets urging the cessation of hostilities and their own repatriation.

Their dejection, caused by the climate, diseases and nostalgia, is aggravated by the heavy casualties they have sustained. Twenty months of fighting in the South and six in the North have cost the French more than 16,000 lives. Such losses are alarmingly high and deplorable at a time when manpower is direly needed for France's economic recovery.

(1) See « 6 mois d'opérations militaires au Viet-Nam ». Viet-Nam Information Service, July 1947 (Paris Bureau).

EFFECTS OF WAR ON ECONOMY (1)

It is clear that the present conflict not only hampers French economy but also that it puts a brake on our own. Cochinchina's annual rice surplus in peace time was more than 1,500,000 tons for export. Its pre-war rubber output amounted to 75,000 tons. Since 1945, some 150,000 tons of rice and 15,000 tons of rubber are now available for foreign trade. This year, most of the rice surplus is kept for home consumption. In Tonkin, production of coal ran to 2,600,000 tons a year, 1,720,000 of which were exported. Only 250,000 tons have been extracted in 1946. Most of the mines are now derelict, though the French colonialists are using forceful methods to recruit man power. The fierce fighting and savage reprisals expected in such a bloody war are certainly not conditions in which the ploughman can work efficiently. Nevertheless, great efforts have been made to feed the combatants and the people who used to suffer from malnutrition even in peace time. We do not want to see the recurrence of the frightful famine of 1944-45, which cost the lives of 2,000,000 of our compatriots. Floods and rice requisitions by the Japanese and the French colonialists were the causes of such a catastrophe.

CARE OF DYKES

Special attention must be given to the care of dykes, which required no less than 1,500,000 working days from December 1945 to April 1946. One hundred and fifty breaches have been filled, 661,000 yards of dykes in 12 northern provinces and the River Day dam repaired. In all, 13,000,000 piastres were expended, 1,900,000 cubic metres of soil excavated. As for communications, the railroad has been reopened. 15 railroad bridges out of the 17 demolished through bombing have been repaired, as well as 24 sections of the 2,000 kilometre National Road, the mileage of which amounted to 250 and on which there were 45 bridges.

(1) Cf. "Viet-Nam's Campaign for Production". Viet-Nam Information Service, July 1947 (Paris Bureau).

A new programme has been carried out in regard to the dykes. 15 miles of new dykes were built just after the Red River basin floods; 3,000,000 working days were needed to remove 2,000,000 cubic metres of soil. With the advance of the French troops causing as much concern as the steadily rising water mark of the Red River, every village must look after its own section of dykes, in co-operation with the Nationalist troops.

INCREASED PRODUCTION

Until the general fighting of December 1946, some remarkable results were obtained by the operation of the plan for increased production. In under one year of effort, the acreage under rice expanded 1.5 times, that under sweet potato 3 times, and the acreage under maize 5 times. The sweet potato crop was quintupled and the maize production quadrupled. Producers' and consumers' co-operatives have been set up throughout the country, particularly in the Trung Bo. A Bank of Commerce and Industry has been functioning for the benefit of handicrafts and home industries.

Since the conflict extended, conditions have undergone a great change. Economic problems have become more complex because of the new situation, which has claimed more effort and expenditure: the evacuation of 3,000,000 refugees, the parcelling out of production zones where they can help most. An appropriation of 1,000,000 piastres has been voted for the clearing of derelict and uncultivated lands. A credit of 30,000,000 piastres has been lent to agriculturists and craftsmen. By a decree dated March 2nd 1947, the density of the overpopulated areas must be reduced by 50 %, and the acreage under grain increased. It allotted 3 hectares of state-owned fallow lands to every citizen over 18 years of age, provided he makes appropriate use of it; this land will become his property after a period of two years. As a result of this measure, rice is now being cultivated even in the highlands of Tonkin. The yield of the secondary foodstuffs has been maintained at its former level; the production of manioc has doubled.

FINANCIAL SITUATION

Such expenditures, together with those for the war, have made a heavy drain on our finances which are very low. When the Government took office, the Treasury deficit amounted to 185,000,000 piastres, and the national debt to 564,000,000 piastres. There was only 1,230,000 piastres, left, in currency, including 586,000 piastres in unusable notes. The tax-collecting period had already passed, and trade stoppage deprived the budget of a main source of revenue which used to make up 3/4 of the yearly income of all Indochina. The suppression of the poll tax, the ban on opium and spirits entailed a loss of 3/4 of the previous direct general revenues and 60,000,000 piastres respectively. The bank note circulation had increased from 25 millions in 1944 to 2,500 millions in 1945. What made the situation worse was the existence of Chinese currency notes in our country and the repudiation by the Bank of Indochina of the 500 piastres note which it had itself issued. To meet the crisis, the Government have done what they can to cut their expenses by appealing to the spirit of self-denial of the troops and functionaries. A more equitable taxation has been enforced, and the system of "Exceptional Voluntary Contribution to National Defence" and of public subscriptions has proved to be quite efficient. Tribute must be paid to the people's self-sacrifice and endurance, to the Government officials of all ranks who often work without salaries.

DRIVE AGAINST ILLITERACY (1)

The ghost of famine has been conjured away. But much remains to be done to wipe out illiteracy, a sore left behind by colonialism. It was obvious that no workable democracy could be instituted in a country with so high a percentage of illiterates as ours, where in the conjuncture of that moment and the present circumstances, knowledge of the issues at stake, and information on developments, are indispensable in order to maintain and heighten the people's spirit of resistance. The Government have had to overcome many obstacles of all kinds:

(1) See "Viet-Nam's Struggle against Illiteracy". Viet-Nam Information Service, July 1947 (Paris Bureau).

shortage of school materials, lack of teachers and, worst of all, financial difficulties. 750,000 teachers were needed, whereas no more than 300,000 were available. 180,000,000 piastres was the estimate of the required expenditure for the application of the programme. It represented a burden impossible for our treasury to bear. However, the number of people who received education from 1945 to 1947, in 60,000 courses run by 80,000 voluntary teachers, totalled 2,000,000. The scheme has been carried out even after December 1946. From January 1947 to April 1947, in 18 cities of the four fighting zones in the Bac Bo, 57 training courses have formed 2,055 teachers. They and their 17,823 elder colleagues have taken over 13,512 public courses and 1,520 home schools. 315,610 pupils, mainly adults, passed their exit examinations successfully.

In the Nambo, there are in every zone about 600 teachers working day and night teaching our compatriots how to read and write. Every literate youth is in charge of 5 illiterate families. From December 1946 to January 1947, that is, in two months' time, more than 46,000 people have been clementarily educated, even in the French-controlled provinces. A cultural front has been created in our all-out fight against colonialism. To this effect, a Cultural Institute of the Resistance came into being in the South, under the leadership of a Vietnamese writer well known in Paris literary circles.

In the North, literary contests enjoy an immense popularity and from our young poets flowed in enthusiastic entries which mainly extolled the inspiring spirit of resistance of our people and the courage of our combatants.

SOCIAL REFORMS

Not enough social reforms, unfortunately, have been brought about, because of the war. Nevertheless, our workers as well as our women and children, are, from now on, protected by fair legislation. Allowances to the poor have been granted, though the State Treasury finds itself in a very bad condition. The care for the veterans and the wounded is no easy task, but so far the Government have done their utmost to discharge it successfully.

TREMENDOUS TASK AHEAD

In the present circumstances, we must say, sad though it is, our tasks are overwhelmingly many, while ways and means to fulfill them are few and small. In no way, however, is it a reason to despair. We have tided over many and many difficulties at the same time that we have had to defend our freedom against an adversary far superior in strength and equipment.

There is no reason whatsoever why we shall not attain, once peace has been restored, our final aims of : *Independence, Freedom, Happiness.*



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