

STATEMENT BY PREMIER NGO-DINH-DIEM
AT THE PRESS CONFERENCE ON THE ECONOMIC AGREEMENTS
CONCLUDED AT THE RECENT PARIS
QUADRIPARTITE ECONOMIC CONFERENCE

The object of this press-conference is to inform Vietnamese public opinion and the foreign press of the import of the agreements which have been signed recently by Vietnam at the Paris Conference.

For us Vietnamese, the signing of the agreements abrogating the Pau Conventions is an important event, that which consecrates the real independence of the country. The Pau Conventions not only alleviated the colonial pact, but did not put an end to it; their end means also the end of the old regime.

Until very recently, the economy of our country was not under our control; our import and export plans were set up as a part of the economies of other countries; they could not be modified according to our wishes.

To-day, our external trade is free: which means that we bring it into harmony with that of friendly countries like France, but on a footing of equality and reciprocal concessions.

Until a recent date, the Customs Union, such as it had been conceived, not only deprived us of an important part of our customs revenues; it also made it impossible for us to direct our imports, protect our products, and control our economy.

To-day, through carrying out the customs regulations, not only can we use our financial revenues fully, but we can above all direct our own economy ourselves. We can henceforward engage in bargaining in our import and export, and secure compensations for our own concessions. Vietnam can now bargain freely in her external trade.

Erstwhile, we could not dispose of our foreign earnings freely. Neither the exchange which we earned through our exports and our toil, nor that destined to us by foreign aid, were at our disposal. But the most obvious features of such a state of dependence are, firstly the non-existence of a national currency, and secondly the exclusion of our national control from the most important portion of our territory, the commercial Port of Saigon.

To-day, we can use freely our foreign exchange, from foreign aid as well as from our exports. This will greatly help in strengthening our external trade. We have recovered our kingly right, the true expression of our sovereignty, that of issuing our own currency and to give it an exchange rate that will be the most favourable to our economy and our finances. With the recovered right of control over our currency, and over the Port of Saigon, we thus hold in our all the instruments of our independence.

Independence does not mean xenophobia: we are independent but we do not want to stand alone in isolation or mistrust foreign countries.

On the contrary, we want to strengthen our relations with the friendly states, and above all, with our former partner, France, and our two neighbours, Cambodia and Laos. But these relations will henceforward be based on a footing of equality mutual respect and understanding. The closest friendships cannot withstand one-way exchanges: it is profitable these exchanges on the basis of mutual concessions. There is here a change of attitude, a change of state of mind which requires some adaptation on the part of those who have been used to easy ways, but which is indispensable to the understanding of events.

It is in such a spirit that we have established new conventions with our neighbours, Cambodia and Laos, in which provisions are made for the largest facilities of transit and use of the port of Saigon in favour of these countries, and the way is paved for a customs union based on the granting of mutual advantages. It is in the same spirit of understanding that as soon as the four-state system had come to an end, we signed with France a general economic and financial convention. The general tenor of that accord freely adhered to by our two countries lies in the financial aid which France concedes in support of our currency, aid which is compensated by the economic advantages which will in return be granted to French trade.

The President of the Vietnam Delegation at Paris, Mr. NGUYEN-VAN-THOAI has declared that Vietnam will not divert the commercial channels existing between France and Vietnam. I have the pleasure of confirming to-day that the assurance which has been given will not be disproved in reality. The gesture of friendship which we have made towards France is naturally not a reason for coming back to whatever regime of facility, unhealthy for us: it means reciprocal aid which we grant with a view to strengthening the economies of our countries.

To conclude, there is no reason for mutual reproach or alarm: the independence of Vietnam does not aim at dividing nations, it will contribute to strengthen the friendship between free people.

NGO-DINH-DIEM

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