

REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM

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INAUGURAL ADDRESS

By

PRESIDENT NGUYEN VAN THIEU

October 31, 1967

*This is the text of the Inaugural Address
delivered by President Nguyen Van Thieu
on October 31, 1967*



PRESIDENT NGUYEN VAN THIEU

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PRESIDENT NGUYEN VAN THIEU

October 31, 1967

My fellow countrymen:

Three months ago, in order to continue to serve the ideals of freedom and democracy, and restore peace and prosperity to all of you, we stood for election, with a program consisting of three main objectives: To set up democratic institutions, to find a solution to the war and to improve social conditions.

On September 3rd, you placed your confidence in us through a free, democratic, fair, and honest election and gave us the great and heavy responsibility of leading the country at this extremely critical time.

Today in taking office, amidst this sacred atmosphere, in communion with our ancestors, and our heroes, before the entire nation I solemnly pledge:

- To safeguard the fatherland,
- To respect the constitution,
- To serve the interests of the nation and the people, and
- To do my utmost to fulfill the responsibilities of President of the Republic of Vietnam.

These pledges I consider as tenets which will strictly guide all of my thoughts and actions, and those of the entire executive machinery which you have entrusted to me.

Today, we are entering the fifth year since the 1963 revolution. During this time, the country has experienced many difficulties and changes, which have consumed a great deal of energy. Nevertheless, these four long years full of challenges in fighting and building, have been useful to us in choosing a path which we definitely must follow in order to move forward, and begin a new phase filled with greatness and promise. By greatness and promise, I mean the glories and the difficulties which await us. I think that today is not only the first day of an

ordinary executive term. Nor does it mark the victory by an individual or a group of individuals seeking to consolidate their political ambitions. To achieve this day, our armed forces and people have made many sacrifices, and our allies have contributed a great deal of efforts.

Thus, today must be a day commemorating the ideology of freedom. Today marks the fruits of the efforts towards democracy. It also symbolizes the solid alliance among allied countries working for common security and progress for the entire world.

My fellow countrymen:

Amidst these great and hallowed ideas to which I have just referred and on the basis of the mandate which you have given to me, may I voice the firm resolve of our entire nation to realize a national policy which includes the three following guidelines:

- Democracy building,
- Peace restoration,
- Social improvement.

With such a policy, we are determined to defeat these three enemies:

- Totalitarianism,
- War,
- Injustice and backwardness,

in order to make our country

- Democratic,
- Peaceful,
- and Progressive.

In the present heroic struggle for self-defense, our Republic of Vietnam has always shown itself to be a freedom and peace loving nation. Our policy is to be ready to have friendly relations on the basis of equality with every country which respects Vietnam's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

We are grateful to all nations which give us material and moral support in our difficult struggle for self-defense and in our efforts to rebuild the country.

Our policy toward our neighboring countries is to have a good relationship, to respect their sovereignty and territorial integrity and to solve every problem through understanding, reciprocal assistance and mutual respect.

We are ready to cooperate with all friendly nations so that the peace and security of every nation can be guaranteed. On the other hand, we are ready to contribute, according to our capabilities, to the well-being and prosperity of the world.

After more than twenty years of sufferings, mournings and destruction caused by war, our people—more than anyone else—long for an early restoration of peace.

To realize this legitimate aspiration, our government has always sincerely welcomed and responded favorably to all peace proposals regardless of their source. Moreover, we ourselves have put forth many proposals aimed at solving the Vietnamese problem in a peaceful manner.

Today, entrusted by the entire people with the important responsibility of leading the nation, I once again confirm that I will make a direct proposal to the North Vietnamese government to sit down at the conference table in order that the governments of the South and the North can directly seek together ways and means to end the war.

I will open wide the door of peace and leave it open to the North Vietnamese authorities in order to seek a peaceful solution to end the war which has caused sufferings to the entire Vietnamese people. This will only be achieved when the North Vietnamese government realizes that their aggressive war no longer pays off.

Many times we have made it clear that we want nothing more than the withdrawal of North Vietnam's aggressor troops and an end to their subversion and terrorism in South Vietnam. Peace will then be restored immediately.

As regards the "Front for the Liberation of the South" this should not be a preliminary condition to peace talks. As in the 1954 regroupment following the Geneva Conference, elements of the "Front" can now make a choice: Those who believe in Marxism can freely return to the North, and those who share our ideals of freedom and democracy can remain in the South and cooperate with us.

Up to now, we have welcomed more than seventy thousand returnees who have recognized that the present war is not a struggle for independence as alleged by the communists and who have decided to return to the national community so as to serve the people and rebuild the homeland. They have been treated as equals, and have been given positions suitable to their abilities. They also enjoy the same rights as any other citizen in the framework of the "National Reconciliation Policy," which we are carrying out and which will certainly succeed.

Thus far, peace has been only a frail and remote hope because the North Vietnamese regime has obstinately refused every peace settlement. In their aggressive ambition, they conceive that peace can only be realized by our surrender. For this reason, I want to make clear to the North Vietnamese government and its tools in the South that we are firmly determined to safeguard freedom and democracy. I want them to understand that they cannot use military strength to destroy these ideals and that they will not win this war.

I sincerely hope that I might meet them at a conference table in order to seek a common solution to end this war to terminate the sufferings and mournings of the peoples of both North and South Vietnam. These sufferings are due to the ambitions of those few North Vietnamese

communist leaders who obey a foreign ideology by implementing ruthless dictatorial measures.

We are not alone in our just struggle for self-defense. Nearly 40 friendly countries are actively helping us. At the same time as the American government and people are providing us their powerful assistance, the governments and peoples of the Republic of Korea, Australia, New Zealand, Thailand and the Philippines are also contributing their resources. The sacrifices of their servicemen, fighting side by side with the Vietnamese servicemen on the battlefields, have brought many important military successes, constantly improving the situation and dissipating the communists' aggressive ambitions.

Our government and people will always remain grateful to friendly countries which have helped us resist aggression, safeguard our freedom and reconstruct our country.

As for our armed forces, cadres and civil servants of every branch and level, they are also valiantly and efficiently fighting the enemy on the battlefield or in other areas of endeavor.

During the past two years, our armed forces have killed over 149,000 enemy by body count, captured more than 23,000 prisoners, and seized over 54,000 weapons of various types. In two years, 55,000 Viet-Cong have rallied to our government.

You have certainly heard of the glorious victories of the combined operations in the I Corps area, at Pleime in the II Corps area, at Phuoc-Qua in the III Corps area, and operations "Cuu-Long" and "Dan Chi" in the IV Corps area.

Concurrently with efforts to destroy the enemy, noteworthy efforts have been made in revolutionary development and rural reconstruction during the past two years: 1,978 hamlets have been built and consolidated, gathering 3,498,000 people. 4,777 classrooms, 46 maternities, 1,200 kilometers of roads, 169 bridges, 127 water-wells, 401 kilometers of canals, and 101 dikes, have been built in rural areas. Electricity has been installed in twenty localities and 42,000 peasants have been trained in farming and animal husbandry to increase production.

You have seen that our military administrative and civic cadres have made great efforts and sacrifices. Those undeniable sacrifices and efforts have made and are making history and have given us this day the promise of a better future.

Dear fellow countrymen:

The assistance of friendly countries is necessary and valuable, but we should not forget that the present struggle is above all our own struggle. Therefore, we must mobilize our entire people for the common struggle of the nation to safeguard freedom and national sovereignty.

In the present phase of the war, both the army and people must be conscious of the necessity for contributing their blood and sweat in

the common struggle. All of us must further increase our efforts in order to take initiative in the task of deciding the nation's future. We cannot depend entirely on outside assistance.

The increase of our entire people's efforts in this struggle will undoubtedly shorten the way to peace, a genuine lasting peace, that can ensure the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Vietnam in independence, freedom and democracy.

You would certainly agree with me that if the enemy is still strong it is because we are not yet stronger than he and peace cannot yet be attained for the same reason. A peace forced upon the weaker party is a surrender. I am determined not to accept a surrender. Therefore, to find a solution to the war, the first condition is to be strong in every respect. The goal of our war of self-defense and that of the communists' aggression cannot be reconciled unless we prove to the aggressors that they cannot realize their ambition.

Our all-out defense efforts do not mean that we like war and intend to destroy the population on the other side of the demarcation line. On the contrary, these efforts are made not only to restore peace in Vietnam but also to check the danger of communist aggression, maintain stability in Southeast Asia and build a durable peace for Asia and the world.

If I require from you greater efforts for defense, it is not because I advocate a military solution as the only way to defeat the communists, and overlook political, economic, cultural and social weapons. However, military strength is the preliminary condition for us to safeguard and strengthen all efforts in the above-mentioned fields in which we are striving and will succeed. Only by understanding the situation in this way will we be able to appreciate what we have to do in the future and the part that everyone has to contribute towards victory.

What I want to do is to settle the war which is the cause of sufferings and which has been ravaging our beloved country. At the same time, I will try to improve the democratic regime through the participation of the entire population in national affairs. I will also try to carry out social reforms aimed at liberating the human being and bringing the nation on the road to progress.

As I have said to you on an earlier occasion, we will have to push forward to the utmost every effort in the field of military and political activities. The entire population will thus have to accept more sacrifices and make additional efforts. Since this is a struggle for the existence of the nation, we cannot entirely rely on the assistance from friendly nations. We must first do our best in a spirit of national union. First, the armed forces must constantly be improved and reinforced. This improvement must be realized in both the morale of the troops and in their material lives in order to increase potential for defense, pacification and revolutionary development activities. This task has been intensively pushed forward since early this year and has already achieved much progress.

The reinforcement of the armed forces by the recent partial mobilization is only one of the measures intended to increase the strength of the armed forces, maintain the initiative in the battlefield, ensure security, intensify revolutionary development activities and destroy the enemy infrastructure more efficiently.

However, a strong and valiant army on the battlefield and in rural areas needs the moral support of the people and a strong popular organization in the rear and in the cities. I mean that in the rear, we must not only understand but also share the great sacrifices of the combatants and the conditions of rural people, so that they will not be grieved and feel that wartime hardships only prevail on the front and in rural areas.

I appeal to all those who are living in well-being and prosperity not to forget our war-torn country, to restrict their luxurious lives and contribute to the relief of suffering people.

A strong rear force must be organized to protect cities, relieve the heavy duties of the combatants and, at the same time, to adequately cope with the war time conditions.

In brief, to meet requirements of the war situation, to associate the rear and front lines in the efforts of a people engaged in a total war, to avoid the repetition of a shocking contrast between rural and urban areas, we cannot ask of the rural areas more hardships, greater sacrifices because the rural people are already sharing the heaviest war burden with regard to resources and manpower. This is the reason why people in the capital and other cities should make greater effort and sacrifices.

The firmer the situation in the rural area and the front-line, the more stable the situation will be in the cities and the rear. Thus, under different circumstances, the efforts and sacrifices of all people throughout the nation will be made on a fair and national basis.

In return for the efforts and the sacrifices which I ask from you, my fellow countrymen, I am determined to achieve what the government has the duty to do for the people so that we can progress from initial confidence and enthusiasm to a close cooperation between the people and the government, a voluntary acceptance of efforts and sacrifices, and complete participation in the national struggle. I believe that this is the indispensable condition to defeat the enemy, and we must honestly recognize that this has not been done sufficiently.

In the task of building democracy, although we have made great progress and established democratic institutions from the highest national level to the villages and hamlets, we have to make even greater efforts to complete the formation of the constitutional institutions as soon as possible.

As for reforming society, the establishment of a new order based on social justice—aimed at raising the standard of living as well as the educational level of the population—is the preliminary condition for the achievement of a progressive society and the raising of our country out

of its present underdeveloped state. The national policy of rural development, which is being carried out with vigor, and a plan for industrial development are the backbone of this vast undertaking.

These two tasks require both short-term and long-term plans the details of which will be presented when I introduce to you the new cabinet. However, right now, I think that a number of urgent measures to start the execution of national policy need to be taken immediately. I am referring to a number of tasks whose necessity has been recognized by all, and which a large number of our citizens of good will have mentioned, but which have not yet been accomplished.

1. On the *diplomatic* front, we will intensify our efforts to make our position clear to the world, and obtain the support of international public opinion for our cause.

2. In the *social* field, we must protect more efficiently the morals of our people. All forms of deprivation must be ended. Security and public utilities for city dwellers, especially for the population of the capital, must be guaranteed and improved.

3. In the *economic* field, we shall strive to protect the standard of living of the population, control inflation and regulate supplies. These tasks will not be easy because of communist subversion and sabotage and maneuvers of profiteers. But the government with the cooperation of the population will make every effort to obtain tangible results.

4. Nationwide *order and discipline* should be strengthened. The law should be strictly obeyed. At school, discipline should be enforced. Every citizen must understand the necessity of law and order and must do his best to cooperate with the government in this regard.

5. Together with a preparatory *military training* program, the government will create favorable conditions for students and civil servants so that they may participate efficiently in social works and devote all their capabilities to the service of the country.

6. An *austerity* program will be promoted to reduce glaring differences between the dangers and privations on the front line as well as in the countryside with blatant luxury in the cities.

7. Finally—as I have mentioned to you on an earlier occasion—in our broad aims to reform society, the major preoccupation of the government, having high priority in the first months, is the *eradication of corruption* in the governmental machinery and in the armed forces. This has to be carried out with justice, impartiality, and in broad daylight.

We have also to improve the workings of the governmental machinery, its organization, procedures, and spirit of service to the people.

The urgent measures which I have just mentioned to you must have your cooperation. Although they are only the first steps and relatively minor tasks in comparison with our overall program, they are the beginning of a journey towards a promising future.

Fellow countrymen:

From the moment I take the oath of office, I belong to you.

My preoccupations are your preoccupations. My determination to carry out my tasks should also have your determined support.

In leading the nation, I shall ask for advice from the men of talent and from the revolutionaries who have struggled for the country. I shall learn the good things from abroad without forgetting the essence of national wisdom.

At the helm of the executive, I shall accept the control of the people through the intermediary of the legislature. I shall welcome all contributions of ideas wherever they may come from. I shall also be ready to accept all responsible and constructive criticisms.

I shall not use demagoguery to lead the people into error and shall be close to the people to know the people's real aspirations.

I shall rely on your eyes to see more clearly and on your concerns to gain better knowledge.

In brief, I need the help of all the people and I consider national affairs to be the affairs of common concern of all the population, and the successes will be also those of the whole nation.

Fellow countrymen:

Today, at the dawn of a new era, a new page of history has just been opened. I earnestly hope and I have confidence that the forthcoming pages of history will inscribe the glorious achievements of our country.

History never belongs to one man or to a group of men; it belongs to the whole nation. Accordingly, historical achievements cannot be accomplished by one man or a group of men, but by all the nation.

I therefore invite you all to stand up and to contribute your share to the national struggle and reconstruction in a spirit of full cooperation between the government and the people.

Our future is decided by ourselves. Each of us has to show himself worthy of being a citizen of heroic and immortal Vietnam.

Differences always exist among men in society, but if we know how to harmonize ourselves, all our differences can be satisfactorily resolved.

If we know how to unite, to accept responsibilities and sacrifices, we will succeed in all our undertakings. I fervently ask all citizens to harmonize and unite.

Let all of us pray for peace and prosperity to come soon to our beloved Vietnam.

EMBASSY OF VIETNAM
Washington, D.C.
1968