



PRIME MINISTER GRO HARLEM BRUNDTLAND

Dinner speech on the occasion of the official visit of His Excellency Mr. Vo Van Kiet, Prime Minister of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, to Norway.

Akershus Castle, 1 June 1995

Your Excellency, Prime Minister Vo Van Kiet,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great honour and pleasure to welcome the Prime Minister of Vietnam, Mrs. Cam, and the Members of his Delegation to Norway and to this official dinner.

Vietnam has again become a country of great hope and expectations. We in Norway are pleased to say that we want to take part in building your country. 50 years of wars and isolation have devastated Vietnam and delayed its development. Now, a more open economy, a more open Vietnam will hopefully fuel its rise to prosperity and allow it to take part in the dynamic growth which is the hallmark of South-East-Asia.

Diplomatic relations between us were established in 1971, when Vietnam was still at war. At that time, Vietnam was of great concern to a whole generation of people in the West, including Norway, and attitudes towards the Vietnam War played a pivotal role in Western political thinking. For many of the younger generation of the time, "the war" was the War in Vietnam, - not the Second World War of their parents. Now, twenty years later, is a time for healing, a time for reconciliation and for rebuilding.

The Prime Minister and I had a very rewarding exchange of views today on bilateral and international issues. I have assured the Prime Minister of our great interest in the present historic changes in Vietnam, and in the economic reform policy - ("Doi Moi"). The objective is to transform the economic system of Vietnam - from a centrally planned economy - into a market economy, - a policy that has already brought about significant results.

Mr, Prime Minister, let me underline again our wish to take part in building your country. Many Norwegian companies are showing a keen interest in establishing business contacts with Vietnamese partners. It is for us, the governments - to widen our dialogue on how we can expand both our political and economic cooperation.

I am pleased to announce here today that it is the intention of the Norwegian Government to establish a Norwegian Embassy in Hanoi next year, clearly emphasizing how important we believe that Vietnam is now, and, even more, how important it will be tomorrow.

We are pleased that you have brought a business delegation to Norway. During our own industrialization, some of our most important natural

resources: hydropower, oil and gas, - were developed with the help of foreign expertise and capital.

We were eager to adopt and develop further their technology.

But we were also anxious not to be dominated by our foreign partners.

Your present situation is thus familiar to us in Norway. We understand your ambitions and your cautions. But we also have experienced how a smaller country can prosper when it finds the proper balance in welcoming foreign companies and retaining sufficient national control. There are also other reasons why we are so compatible as partners.

Vietnam has natural resources similar to those of Norway: waterfalls, offshore oil and gas, rich fishing grounds and abundant forests. You have a similar need for infrastructure: roads, harbours, airports and telecommunications. Today, you have acquainted yourself with Norwegian enterprises with useful experience and expertise in these fields, who are eager to become your reliable partners in developing the resources, industry and infrastructure of Vietnam.

Mr. Prime Minister, we are looking forward to increased development cooperation with Vietnam. There is considerable scope for greater activity, in building institutions and democracy, in selected industries and in the humanitarian field.

However, our relations must be broadened, and we look forward to working politically with a more open, more assertive Vietnam - soon to become a member of ASEAN - and a partner in the expanded dialogue between East-Asia and Europe.

Once again I would like to welcome Your Excellency and your delegation to Norway. I hope that your stay in our country, although brief, will be both pleasant and interesting and mark the beginning of a new and deepened era in our bilateral relations.

In closing, I would like to propose a toast to the Prime Minister of Vietnam, To Mrs. Cam and the Vietnamese delegation, and to the friendship and cooperation between Norway and Vietnam