

Vietnamese Independence Delegation

Phan Chau Trinh

Members of the Vietnamese Independence Delegation,

Under French colonial rule, the Vietnamese people were systematically treated as second-class citizens, excluded from the economic and cultural benefits of the Western world. They were deprived of access to much of the wealth and capital that came from the region. The French forced the Vietnamese to export valuable resources such as rice, opium, salt, rubber, and rice alcohol, while the majority of their manufactured goods were produced solely in France. However, with the potential end of French occupation, Vietnam has an opportunity to reconstruct its social, political, and economic systems. Regardless of the differing opinions on the ideal form of government in a free Vietnam, the chance to extend rights to our citizens and redefine the freedoms of the people is a remarkable opportunity in itself. Though remnants of French colonial infrastructure remain dilapidated, these structures embody elements of Western society that could be adapted and revitalized to suit our needs once we achieve independence.

I am Phan Chau Trinh, a scholar and founder of the Duy Tan movement in Vietnam, which seeks to foster modernization, political reform, and the strengthening of Vietnamese national identity. I am firmly convinced that our path to freedom must be pursued through diplomacy and peaceful strategies. The Vietnamese people have the potential to create a free and prosperous Vietnam by negotiating a mutual agreement with France, one that allows us to modernize and update outdated aspects of our society. While it is crucial to maintain our Confucian traditions, we must also challenge outdated teachings that have led many Vietnamese to blindly follow authority without embracing new ideas. I have established small business

ventures and propaganda networks across the country to promote industrialization and modern education. Through my considerable following, I have worked diligently to encourage the French to adopt societal reforms that will benefit our nation.

To ensure Vietnam's successful path to full autonomy, it is essential that we first establish a strong economic and industrial foundation. Without these critical steps, our economy will be too fragile to support our ambitions for independence, and any attempt to stand on our own will likely fail. To achieve this, maintaining positive relations with the French, while avoiding alliances that oppose them militarily, is vital, as they currently control many of our resources. Rather than resorting to violence, our focus should be on rapid industrialization. In a five-year plan, we can transform our nation to a level where we can compete with Western powers in terms of industrial capacity. Alongside industrial progress, we must prioritize modernizing our education system, increasing access to education for all, and replacing the Mandarin-based civil service system with vocational training schools that specialize in skills relevant to the modern workforce. As we undergo this transformation, it is equally important to prioritize social justice in our call for independence. We must convey to Western nations that they have a moral duty to support Vietnam's freedom, given the violations of our rights by the French. Our goal is to create a democratic and equal society by abolishing the monarchy and granting voting rights to marginalized groups, such as women. Ultimately, adopting Western ideas not only offers a path to freedom but will also provide the framework needed to rebuild our economy.

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