

Prof. Dr. VU DUC NGHIEU'S SPEECH
AT THE LAUNCHING CEREMONY OF
THE EU THROUGH THE EYES OF ASIA,
Volume II – New Cases, New Findings

December 7, 2009

Your Excellency Mr. Willy Vandenberghe, First Counsellor/Head of Cooperation Section, Delegation of the European Commission to Vietnam

Your Excellencies Ambassadors and Diplomatic Officials from member states of ASEM in Hanoi,

Dear Professor Martin Holland, Jean Monnet Chair ad personam, Director, National Center for Research on Europe, University of Canterbury

Dear Mr. Truong Trieu Duong, Board Governor to Vietnam, Asia-Europe Foundation

Dear Professors, Scholars, Colleagues and Students

Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all, on behalf of the Rector, professors, faculty, researchers, graduate and undergraduate students of the University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Vietnam National University, Hanoi, I would like to extend our warmest welcome and sincerest thanks to all of you for coming to our University at the launch of the book *The EU through the Eyes of Asia*. This is a rare chance and an honor to our University to receive so many special respectable guests at the same time who may not always be able to come together in great numbers.

The presence of the distinguished guests, international and Vietnamese researchers, professors and students here demonstrates our common interest in the recent publication of the research work *The EU through the Eyes of Asia* by the World Scientific Publisher in Singapore in October, 2009. This is the output of the effective cooperation among scholars of a diversity of nationalities, including the UK, Ukraine, Ireland, China, Indonesia, the Philippines and Vietnam, from various universities and institutes such as the University of Canterbury, Universitas Indonesia, Ateneo de Manila University, and our University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Vietnam National University, Hanoi, among others, with valuable and effective sponsorship of ASEF in Singapore. I highly appreciate the capacity and international cooperative spirit among scholars from

various cultures and civilizations, including Vietnam, thanks to which you have managed to overcome all pressure and temporal, spatial and linguistic obstacles to accomplish such a massive project. The success of the project, in my view, is indebted to your ‘teamwork’ approach, and I strongly believe that such a work will be duly welcomed.

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I understand that these are the outputs of Phase II of the larger Research Program initiated in 2006 entitled “European Studies in Asia” commissioned and presided over by ASEF and National Center for Research on Europe, University of Canterbury, New Zealand. The participation of Vietnamese researchers in Phase II of the project, together with those from Indonesia and the Philippines, has testified the common interest of all stakeholders in a seemingly-simple, yet not-easy-to-answer, question: How is the European Union perceived in the eyes of Asia? Put it another way, what is the reflection of the EU in the eyes of the Asian people?

Ladies and Gentlemen,

To Vietnam, the European Union is an entity with both familiarity and exoticism, proximity and distance, and tangible existence and invisibility. This could be explained by various historical, cultural, political, economic factors, even personal connections. Interestingly, no other people than the Europeans were the first to Romanize the script of the Vietnamese so that it is now used as the national official writing system. The relations between Vietnam and member states of the EU have undergone different ups and downs, ebbs and flows, throughout the colonial period to the Cold War, and the recent process of globalization and regionalization. For those reasons, the EU has been reflected in the lenses of the Vietnamese in a diversity of forms and shapes. Many Vietnamese, depending on their backgrounds and areas of work, have been familiar with typical figures in Europe from Victor Hugo to Vincent Van Gogh, from Ludwig van Beethoven to Charlie Chaplin, from Marco Polo to Marie Curie, from Isaac Newton to Claude Monet, from the Beatles to Albert Einstein, etc.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The University of Social Sciences and Humanities, VNU, is a leading prestigious center of excellence in education and training in Vietnam. In recent years, the University has gradually renovated herself so as to meet the demands of the country's industrialization, modernization and proactive international economic integration. In this context, the University is committed to opening up and encouraging cooperation programs with other universities in the region and the world over similar to this one. Through such cooperation, the University's faculty can learn new approaches, update their knowledge, improve their professional expertise, create new networking linkages and apply modern advances to training and research in Vietnam. Interestingly, in this research project, all the three Vietnamese researchers are very young and come from the two major training and research centers on either end of the country, namely Mr. Tran Bach Hieu of the Department of Political Science, University of Social Sciences and Humanities, VNU, who has successfully completed the graduate program and earned the Master degree in April 2009; and Mr. Bui Hai Dang of the Faculty of International Relations, VNU Ho Chi Minh City, who is doing his doctoral program.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In this exciting, highly festive atmosphere, on behalf of the leaders of the University, I would like to express our highest congratulations to the authors on their successful accomplishment of their research goals. I wish for stronger and stronger development of scholarly cooperation. I also would like to extend our sincerest gratitude to ASEF, universities in New Zealand, the Philippines and Indonesia for your collaboration and support so that our University of Social Sciences and Humanities, VNU has been able to join such a meaningful research project.

I wish all the distinguished guests, professors, scholars and students good health, happiness and success.

Thank you very much for your attention.