

oppressed our fellow citizens. They have acted contrarily to the ideals of humanity and justice.

In the province of politics, they have deprived our people of every liberty.

They have enforced inhuman laws; to ruin our unity and national consciousness, they have carried out three different policies in the north, the center and the south of Viet-nam.

They have founded more prisons than schools. They have mercilessly slain our patriots; they have deluged our revolutionary areas with innocent blood. They have fettered public opinion; they have promoted illiteracy.

To weaken our race they have forced us to use their manufactured opium and alcohol.

In the province of economics, they have stripped our fellow citizens of everything they possessed, impoverishing the individual and devastating the land.

They have robbed us of our rice fields, our mines, our forests, our raw materials. They have monopolized the printing of banknotes, the import and export trade; they have invented numbers of unlawful taxes, reducing our people, especially our country folk, to a state of extreme poverty.

They have stood in the way of our businessmen and stifled all their undertakings; they have extorted our working classes in a most savage way.

In the autumn of the year 1940, when the Japanese fascists violated Indochina's territory to get one more foothold in their fight against the Allies, the French imperialists fell on their knees and surrendered, handing over our country to the Japanese, adding Japanese fetters to the French ones. From that day on, the Vietnamese people suffered hardships yet unknown in the history of mankind. The result of this double oppression was terrific: from Quangtri to the northern border two million people were starved to death in the early months of 1945.

On the 9th of March, 1945, the French troops were disarmed by the Japanese. Once more the French either fled, or surrendered unconditionally, showing thus that not only were they incapable of "protecting" us, but that they twice sold us to the Japanese.

Yet, many times before the month of March, the Viet-

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— Reading No. 19 —

DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE  
OF THE REPUBLIC OF  
VIETNAM, SEPTEMBER 2, 1945<sup>1</sup>

*In the turmoil which followed the surrender of Japan in Southeast Asia, new nations were born. In exuberance of spirit, one of those nations—Vietnam—declared itself free and independent of France. Its words and sentiments recall the American document of 1776, even though the signature on the Vietnamese declaration is that of "President Ho-Chi-Minh."*

"All men are created equal. They are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness."

This immortal statement was made in the Declaration of Independence of the United States of America in 1776. . . . The Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen of the French Revolution in 1791 also states: "All men are born free and with equal rights, and must always be free and have equal rights." . . .

Nevertheless for more than eighty years, the French imperialists deceitfully raising the standard of Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity, have violated our fatherland and

<sup>1</sup> Government of Democratic Republic of Vietnam, *Documents* (no specific place or date of publication). Quoted in Allan B. Cole, *Conflict in Indo-China and International Repercussions, A Documentary History, 1945-1955* (Ithica: Cornell University Press, 1956), pp. 19-21.

minh had urged the French to ally with them against the Japanese. The French colonists never answered. On the contrary, they intensified their terrorizing policy. Before taking to flight, they even killed a great number of our patriots who had been imprisoned at Yenbay and Cao-bang.

Nevertheless, towards the French people our fellow citizens have always manifested an attitude pervaded with toleration and humanity. Even after the Japanese putsch of March, 1945, the Vietminh have helped many Frenchmen to reach the frontier, have delivered some of them from Japanese jails, and never failed to protect their lives and properties. . . .

The whole population of Vietnam is united in common allegiance to the republican government and is linked by a common will, which is to annihilate the dark aims of the French imperialists.

We are convinced that the Allied nations which have acknowledged at Teheran and San Francisco the principles of self-determination and equality of status will not refuse to acknowledge the independence of Vietnam.

A people that has courageously opposed French domination for more than eighty years, a people that has fought by the Allies' side these last years against the fascists, such a people must be free, such a people must be independent.

For these reasons, we, members of the provisional government of Vietnam, declare to the world that Vietnam has the right to be free and independent, and has in fact become a free and independent country. We also declare that the Vietnamese people are determined to make the heaviest sacrifices to maintain its independence and its liberty.

world affairs. Rather, it is a positive concept. It is a positive policy of seeking peace and friendship with all countries. It is a policy of actively seeking to discover through negotiation and compromise and accommodation some acceptable basis on which the peace of the world can be secured. Of course we do not pretend to have ready answers to these baffling and stubborn problems. But we do have the will to work actively, in collaboration with all, in searching for the answers. In the last analysis, the best way for a nation to promote its own security is to promote the peace. And we could not even hope to help promote the peace if we became members of an armed bloc. As independents, perhaps we can, and in doing so we would of course be serving the cause of democracy and the cause of man himself.