

VN FILE 11-57
DATE 10/48 SUB-CAT. V. Minh

Declaration of Independence of the Republic of Viet Nam

Issued at Hanoi, September 2, 1945, following establishment of the new republican regime. Text is translated from La République, Issue No. 1, Hanoi, October 1, 1945.

"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."

These immortal words are from the Declaration of Independence of the United States of America in 1776. Taken in a broader sense, these phrases mean: "All peoples on earth are born equal; all peoples have the right to live, to be free, to be happy."

The Declaration of the Rights of the Man and Citizen of the French Revolution of 1791 also proclaimed: "Men are born and remain free and with equal rights."

These are undeniable truths.

Nevertheless for more than eighty years the French imperialists, abusing their "liberty, equality, and fraternity,"

have violated the land of our ancestors and oppressed our countrymen. Their acts are contrary to the ideals of humanity and justice.

In the political domain, they have deprived us of all our liberties.

They have imposed upon us inhuman laws. They have established three different political regimes in the North, the Center, and the South of Viet Nam in order to destroy our historic and ethnic national unity.

They have built more prisons than schools. They have acted without mercy toward our patriots. They have drenched our revolutions in rivers of blood.

They have subjugated public opinion and practiced obscurantism on the broadest scale. They have imposed upon us the use of opium and alcohol to weaken our race.

In the economic domain, they have exploited us without respite, reduced our people to the blackest misery and pitilessly looted our country.

They have despoiled our ricelands, our mines, our forests, our raw materials. They have retained the privilege of issuing banknotes and a monopoly of foreign trade.

They have invented hundreds of unjustified taxes, condemning our countrymen, especially the peasants and small merchants, to extreme poverty.

They have prevented our capital from fructifying; they have exploited our workers in the most barbarous fashion.

In the autumn of 1940 when the Japanese Fascists, with a view to fighting the Allies, invaded Indochina to organize new war bases, the French imperialists, on their knees, surrendered our country.

Since then, under the double Japanese and French yokes, our people have literally bled. The result has been terrifying. From Quangtri to the North, two million of our countrymen died of famine in the first months of this year.

On March 9, 1945, the Japanese disarmed the French troops. Once again, the French either fled or unconditionally surrendered. Thus they have been totally incapable of "protecting" us; on the contrary, in the space of five years they have twice sold our country to the Japanese.

Before March 9, the League of Viet-Minh several times invited the French to join it in struggle against the Japanese. Instead of responding to this appeal, the French struck all the harder at the partisans of the Viet-Minh. They went as far as to murder a large number of the political prisoners at Yen Bay and Caobang during their rout.

Despite all this, our countrymen have continued to maintain a tolerant and human attitude toward the French. After the events of March 9, the League of Viet-Minh helped many Frenchmen to cross the frontier, saved others from Japanese prisons, and besides protected the lives and property of all Frenchmen.

In fact, since the autumn of 1940, our country has ceased to be a French colony and became a Japanese possession.

After the surrender of the Japanese, our entire people rose to regain their sovereignty and founded the democratic Republic of Viet Nam.

The truth is that we seized our independence from the hands of the Japanese and not from the hands of the French.

The French fleeing, the Japanese surrendering, Emperor Bao Dai abdicating, our people broke all the chains which have weighed upon us for nearly a hundred years and made our Viet Nam an independent country. Our people at the same time overthrew the monarchical regime established for tens of centuries and founded the Republic.

For these reasons we, members of the Provisional Government, representing the entire population of Viet Nam, declare that we shall henceforth have no relations with imperialist France, that we cancel all treaties which France has signed on the subject of Viet Nam, that we abolish all the privileges which the French have arrogated to themselves on our territory.

All the people of Viet Nam, inspired by the same will, are determined to fight to the end against any attempt at aggression by the French imperialists.

We are convinced that the Allies who have recognized the principles of equality of peoples at the Conferences of Teheran and San Francisco cannot but recognize the independence of Viet Nam.

A people which has obstinately opposed French domination for more than eighty years, a people who during these last years ranged themselves definitely on the side of the Allies to fight against Fascism, this people has the right to be free. This people must be independent.

For these reasons, we, members of the Provisional Government of the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam, solemnly proclaim to the entire world:

Viet Nam has the right to be free and independent and is, in fact, free and independent. All the people of Viet Nam are determined to mobilize all their spiritual and material strength, to sacrifice their lives and property, to safeguard their right to liberty and independence.

Hanoi, September 2, 1945

Signed: Ho Chi Minh, *President*.

Tran Huy Lieu, Vo Nguyen Giap, Chu Van Tan, Duong Duc Hien, Nguyen Van To, Nguyen Manh Ha, Cu Huy Can, Pham Ngoh Thach, Nguyen Van Xuan, Vu Trong Khanh, Pham Van Dong, Dao Trong Kim, Vu Din Hoc, Le Van Hien.