

**PROCLAMATION OF INDEPENDENCE OF THE DEMOCRATIC  
REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM (SEPTEMBER 2, 1945)**

**Introduction**

After the Việt Minh uprising had succeeded in almost all provinces, the Standing Committee of the Indochinese Communist Party met in Hanoi for the first time under the chairmanship Hồ Chí Minh (1890-1969) and decided to promulgate the Provisional Government of Independence. Hồ drafted the entire Declaration himself during the five days preceding its public presentation by Hồ at a mass meeting in Hanoi on September 2, 1945.

**Selected Document Excerpt with Questions** (Longer selection follows this section)

From *Vietnam: The Definitive Documentation of Human Decisions*, edited by Gareth Porter (Stanfordville, NY: E. M. Coleman Enterprises, 1979), Document No. 34.

**Proclamation of Independence  
of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (September 2, 1945)**

“We hold truths that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.”

This immortal statement is extracted from the Declaration of Independence of the United States of America in 1776. Understood in the broader sense, this means: “All peoples on the earth are born equal; every person has the right to live to be happy and free.”

The Declaration of Human and civic Rights proclaimed by the French Revolution in 1791 likewise propounds: “Every man is born equal and enjoys free and equal rights.”

These are undeniable truths.

Yet, during and throughout the last eighty years, the French imperialists, abusing the principles of “Freedom, equality and fraternity,” have violated the integrity of our ancestral land and oppressed our countrymen. Their deeds run counter to the ideals of humanity and justice.

**Questions:**

1. Why did Hồ Chí Minh include foreign statements in this Vietnamese document?
2. What international goal did Hồ Chí Minh have in mind by using such statements?
3. What was Hồ Chí Minh telling his fellow Vietnamese?

**Primary Source Document with Questions (DBQs) on  
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In the political field, they have denied us every freedom. They have enforced upon us inhuman laws. They have set up three different political regimes in Northern, Central and Southern Viet Nam (Tonkin, Annam, and Cochin-china) in an attempt to disrupt our national, historical and ethnical unity.

They have built more prisons than schools. They have callously ill-treated our fellow-compatriots. They have drowned our revolutions in blood.

They have sought to stifle public opinion and pursued a policy of obscurantism on the largest scale; they have forced upon us alcohol and opium in order to weaken our race.

In the economic field, they have shamelessly exploited our people, driven them into the worst misery and mercilessly plundered our country.

They have ruthlessly appropriated our rice fields, mines, forests and raw materials. They have arrogated to themselves the privilege of issuing banknotes, and monopolized all our external commerce. They have imposed hundreds of unjustifiable taxes, and reduced our countrymen, especially the peasants and petty tradesmen, to extreme poverty.

They have prevented the development of native capital enterprises; they have exploited our workers in the most barbarous manner.

In the autumn of 1940, when the Japanese fascists, in order to fight the Allies, invaded Indochina and set up new bases of war, the French imperialist surrendered on bended knees and handed over our country to the invaders.

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Subsequently under the joint French and Japanese yoke, our people were literally bled white. The consequences were dire in the extreme. From Quang Tri up to the North, two millions of our countrymen died from starvation during the first months of this year.

On March 9<sup>th</sup>, 1945, the Japanese disarmed the French troops. Again the French either fled or surrendered unconditionally. Thus, in no way have they proved capable of “protecting” us; on the contrary, within five years they have twice sold our country to the Japanese.

Before March 9<sup>th</sup>, many a time did the Viet Minh League invite the French to join in the fight against the Japanese. Instead of accepting this offer, the French, on the contrary, let loose a wild reign of terror with rigor worse than ever before against Viet Minh’s partisans. They even slaughtered a great number of our “*condamnés politiques*” imprisoned at Yen Bay and Cao Bang.

Despite all that, our countrymen went on maintaining, vis-à-vis the French, a human and even indulgent attitude. After the events of March 9<sup>th</sup>, the Viet Minh League helped many French to cross the borders, rescued others from Japanese prisons and, in general, protected the lives and properties of all the French in their territory.

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

After the Japanese surrender, our people, as a whole, rose up and proclaimed their sovereignty and founded the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam.

The truth is that we have wrung back our independence from Japanese hands and not from the French.

The French fled, the Japanese surrendered. Emperor Bao Dai abdicated, our people smashed the yoke which pressed hard upon us for nearly one hundred years, and finally made our Việt Nam an independent country. Our people at the same time overthrew the monarchical regime established tens of centuries ago, and founded the Republic.

For these reasons, we, the members of the Provisional Government representing the entire people of Việt Nam, declare that we shall from now on have no more connections with imperialist France; we consider null and void all the treaties France has signed concerning Việt Nam, and we hereby cancel all the privileges that the French arrogated to themselves on our territory.

The Vietnamese people, animated by the same common resolve, are determined to fight to the death against all attempts 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 Tehran and San Francisco cannot but recognize the Independence of Việt Nam.

A people which has so stubbornly opposed the French domination for more than 80 years, a people who, during these last years, so doggedly ranged itself and fought on the Allied side against Fascism, such a people has the right to be free, such a people must be independent.

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

“Viet Nam has the right to be free and independent and, in fact, has become free and independent. The people of Viet Nam decide to mobilize all their spiritual and material forces and to sacrifice their lives and property in order to safeguard their right of Liberty and Independence.”

**Questions:**

1. What were the colonial activities that Hồ Chí Minh objected to?
2. How did nationalism and the past play roles in this document?
3. What circumstances led Hồ Chí Minh to declare independence?