

Whether the British remain or not, it is our duty always to wipe out our unemployment, to bridge the gulf between the rich and the poor, to banish communal strife, to exorcise the demon of untouchability, to reform the Dacoits [armed bandits] and save the people from them. If scores of people do not take a living interest in this nation-building work, freedom must remain a dream and unattainable by either non-violence or violence.

Foreign soldiers: The committee is of the opinion that it is harmful to India's interests, and dangerous to the cause of India's freedom, to introduce foreign soldiers in India. It therefore

appeals to the British Government to remove these foreign legions, and henceforth stop further introduction. It is a crying shame to bring foreign troops in, in spite of India's inexhaustible manpower, and it is proof of the immorality that British imperialism is.

Study Question

1. If Britain had removed all foreign soldiers in India, as Gandhi's version of the proposal demanded, how might this have impacted the Indian independence movement?

HO CHI MINH

President Ho Chi Minh¹ (1890–1969) read the following declaration of independence on 2 September 1945 at a meeting of half a million people in Ba Dinh Square in Hanoi. Though defeated Japanese troops remained in Vietnam and French imperialists were attempting to regain control over the region, Ho Chi

Minh, who had fought against the Japanese alongside the Vietminh, believed that Vietnam would finally be able to secure its independence. He was reassured by repeated anti-imperialist proclamations by the United States, believing that the United States would not allow the French to reclaim their Indochinese territories.

DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE OF THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF VIET NAM

All men are created equal. They are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights; among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.'

This immortal statement appeared in the Declaration of Independence of the United States of America in 1776. In a broader sense, it means: All the peoples on the earth are equal from birth, all the peoples have a right to live and to be happy and free.

The Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen, made at the time of the French Revolution, in 1791, also states: 'All men are born free and with equal rights, and must always remain free and have equal rights.'

Those are undeniable truths.

Nevertheless, for more than eighty years, the French imperialists, abusing the standard of Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity, have violated our Fatherland and oppressed our fellow-citizens. They have acted contrary to the ideals of humanity and justice.

Politically, they have deprived our people of every democratic liberty.

They have enforced inhuman laws; they have set up three different political regimes in the North, the Centre, and the South of Viet Nam in order to wreck our country's oneness and prevent our people from being united.

They have built more prisons than schools. They



Ho Chi Minh in 1954, after the defeat of French forces in the battle of Dienbienphu. New York World Telegram and the Sun Newspaper Photograph Collection. Courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division (LC-USZ62-119630).

have mercilessly massacred our patriots. They have drowned our uprisings in seas of blood.

They have lettered public opinion and practised obscurantism.

They have weakened our race with opium and alcohol. In the field of economics, they have sucked us dry, driven our people to destitution, and devastated our land.

They have robbed us of our ricefields, our mines, our forests, and our natural resources. They have monopolized the issue of bank-notes and the import and export trade.

They have invented numerous unjustifiable taxes and reduced our people, especially our peasantry, to extreme poverty. They have made it

impossible for our national bourgeoisie to prosper; they have mercilessly exploited our workers.

In the autumn of 1940, when the Japanese fascists invaded Indochina to establish new bases against the Allies, the French colonialists went down on their bended knees and opened the door of our country to welcome the Japanese in.

Thus, from that date, our people were subjected to the double yoke of the French and the Japanese. Their sufferings and miseries increased. The result was that towards the end of last year and the beginning of this year, from Quang Tri province to the North more than two million of our fellow-citizens died from starvation.

On the 9th of March this year, the French troops were disarmed by the Japanese. The French colonialists either fled or surrendered, showing that not only were they incapable of 'protecting' us, but that, in a period of five years, they had twice sold our country to the Japanese.

Before the 9th of March, how often the Viet Minh had urged the French to ally themselves with it against the Japanese! But instead of this proposal, the French colonialists only intensified their terrorist activities against the Viet Minh. After their defeat and before fleeing, they massacred the political prisoners detained at Yen Bai and Cao Bang.

In spite of all this, our fellow-citizens have always manifested a lenient and humane attitude towards the French. After the Japanese putsch of 9 March 1945, the Viet Minh helped many Frenchmen to cross the frontier, rescued others from Japanese jails, and protected French lives and property. In fact, since the autumn of 1940, our country had ceased to be a French colony and had become a Japanese possession.

When the Japanese surrendered to the Allies, our entire people rose to gain power and founded the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam.

The truth is that we have wrested our independence from the Japanese, not from the French.

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The French have fled, the Japanese have capitulated, Emperor Bao Dai has abdicated. Our people have broken the chains which have fettered them for nearly a century and have won independence for Viet Nam. At the same time they have overthrown the centuries-old monarchic regime and established a democratic republican regime.

We, the Provisional Government of the new Viet Nam, republic representing the entire Vietnamese people, hereby declare that from now on we break off all relations of a colonial character with France; cancel all treaties signed by France on Viet Nam, and abolish all privileges held by France in our country.

The entire Vietnamese people are of one mind in their determination to oppose all wicked schemes by the French colonialists.

We are convinced that the Allies, which at the Teheran and San Francisco Conferences uphold the principle of equality among the nations, cannot fail to recognize the right of the Vietnamese people to independence.

A people who have courageously opposed French enslavement for more than eighty years, a people who have resolutely sided with the Allies

against the fascists during these last years, such a people must be free, such a people must be independent.

For these reasons, we, the Provisional Government of the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam, solemnly make this declaration to the world:

Viet Nam has the right to enjoy freedom and independence and in fact has become a free and independent country. The entire Vietnamese people are determined to mobilize all their physical and mental strength, to sacrifice their lives and property in order to safeguard their freedom and independence.

Note

1. Ho Chi Minh was a pseudonym meaning 'the Enlightener'; he was born Nguyen Sinh Cung and also used the name Nguyen Ai Quoc (Nguyen the Patriot).

Study Question

1. Based only upon the Declaration of Independence how would you characterize Ho Chi Minh's ideology?

ANGLO-AMERICAN COMMITTEE OF INQUIRY

Faced with growing public awareness of the events of the Holocaust, on 13 November 1945 British Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin and American President Harry Truman announced the creation of the 'Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry Regarding the Problems of European Jewry & Palestine'. The Committee was to investigate the situation of the remaining Jews of Europe, as well as the current circumstances in

Palestine, and to make recommendations to the local British administration. After a series of hearings in April 1946 the Committee recommended that 100,000 Jews be admitted immediately to Palestine, but that the region should become neither an Arab nor a Jewish state. The following excerpts describe the reaction of the Palestinian population, as well as the argument put forth by Chaim Weizmann.