Two days later, on 2 September, before a crowd of over half a million assembled at the Ba Dinh square in Hanoi, President Ho Chi Minh introduced the Provisional Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) and read the Declaration of Independence, which states in part:

The French have fled, the Japanese have capitulated, Emperor Bao Dai has abdicated. Our people have broken the chains which for nearly a century have fettered us and have won independence for the Fatherland. . . .

The whole Vietnamese people, animated by a common purpose, are determined to fight to the bitter end against any attempt by the French colonialists to reconquer our country.

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

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 independence and freedom.

2. First Appeal to the United States (June 18, 1919)*

By Ho Chi Minh

During the Versailles Peace Conference in Paris, where a treaty was signed on June 28, 1919 between the Allies and Germany to end World War I, Ho Chi Minh wrote this polite appeal to the principles of Wilsonian self-determination. He avoids insisting on immediate independence for Vietnam but instead claims legal and political rights for which France presumably stands. At the same time, he is careful to hold full independence as the ultimate goal (“While waiting for the principle of national self-determination to pass from ideal to reality”). From the end of World War I through World War II and its aftermath, Ho Chi Minh would repeatedly call upon the Western democracies to live up to their announced principles. Reading 9 presents one of his appeals to President Truman in the fall of 1945.

*Translations of the French originals in the National Archives, Washington, D.C.
A. Letter of Nguyen Ai Quoc to the American Secretary of State

Paris, 18 June, 1919

To his Excellency, the Secretary of State of the Republic of the United States, Delegate to the Peace Conference

Excellency,

We take the liberty of submitting to you the accompanying memorandum setting forth the claims of the Annamite people on the occasion of the Allied victory.

We count on your great kindness to honor our appeal by your support whenever the opportunity arises.

We beg your Excellency graciously to accept the expression of our profound respect.

FOR THE GROUP OF ANNAMITE PATRIOTS

[signed] Nguyen Ai Quoc
56, rue Monsieur le Prince—Paris

B. Revendications du Peuple Annamite [Claims of the Annamite People]

Since the victory of the Allies, all the subject peoples are frantic with hope at the prospect of an era of right and justice which should begin for them by virtue of the formal and solemn engagements, made before the whole world by the various powers of the *entente* in the struggle of civilization against barbarism.

While waiting for the principle of national self-determination to pass from ideal to reality through the effective recognition of the sacred right of all peoples to decide their own destiny, the inhabitants of the ancient Empire of Annam, at the present time French Indochina, present to the noble Governments of the *entente* in general and in particular to the honorable French Government the following humble claims:

1. General amnesty for all the native people who have been condemned for political activity.

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1. The U.S. Secretary of State at the time was Robert Lansing.—eds.
2. Ho Chi Minh's pseudonym at the time.
3. The *entente*, or Allied powers during World War I, included France, England, and after 1917, the United States.—eds.
(2) Reform of Indochinese justice by granting to the native population the same judicial guarantees as the Europeans have, and the total suppression of the special courts which are the instruments of terrorization and oppression against the most responsible elements of the Annamite people.
(3) Freedom of press and speech.
(4) Freedom of association and assembly.
(5) Freedom to emigrate and to travel abroad.
(6) Freedom of education, and creation in every province of technical and professional schools for the native population.
(7) Replacement of the regime of arbitrary decrees by a regime of law.
(8) A permanent delegation of native people elected to attend the French parliament in order to keep the latter informed of their needs.

The Annamite people, in presenting these claims, count on the worldwide justice of all the Powers, and rely in particular on the goodwill of the noble French people who hold our destiny in their hands and who, as France is a republic, have taken us under their protection. In requesting the protection of the French people, the people of Annam, far from feeling humiliated, on the contrary consider themselves honored, because they know that the French people stand for liberty and justice and will never renounce their sublime ideal of universal brotherhood. Consequently, in giving heed to the voice of the oppressed, the French people will be doing their duty to France and to humanity.

IN THE NAME OF THE GROUP OF ANNAMITE PATRIOTS:

Nguyen Ai Quoc

3. “The Path Which Led Me to Leninism” (1960)*

By Ho Chi Minh

Ho Chi Minh’s path to revolution mirrors that of many Asian nationalists of his generation. In much the same way, Professor Li Dazhou, stunned by the very fact of the Bolshevik Revolution, called on his Chinese students to join him in studying Marxism and Leninism and, a few years later, founded the Chinese Communist Party.† So, too, Li and the early


A fter World War I, I ma pher’s, now as a paint distribute leaflets denoun Vietnam.

At that time, I support grasping all its historic imp great patriot who liberate books.

The reason for my joini gentlemens”—as I called n thy toward me, toward the neither what was a party, a

Heated discussions wer Party, about the question ond International, should should the Socialist Party j ings regularly, twice or thr sion. First, I could not u heated? Either with the St revolution could be waged International, what had be

What I wanted most to k ings—was: Which Internati I raised the question—the comrades answered: It is th gave me Lenin’s “Thesis on l’Humanité to read.

There were political terr reading it again and again, tion, enthusiasm, clear-sigh joyed to tears. Though sitti large crowds: ‘Dear martyrs need, this is the path to our

After that, I had entire ci Formerly, during the me discussion; I had a vague bel to who were right and who v debates and discussed with express all my thoughts, I sn