

Homework: Letter from Ho Chi Minh

By 1967 President Johnson was considering withdrawal of U.S. forces from Vietnam. Attached is a letter from Ho Chi Minh (leader of North Vietnam) responding to President Johnson's request for negotiaion.

Letter from Ho Chi Minh

To His Excellency Mr. Lyndon B. Johnson,
President, United States of America

Your Excellency:

On February 10, 1967, I received your message. This is my reply. Vietnam is thousands of miles away from the United States. The Vietnamese people have never done any harm to the United States. But contrary to the pledges made by its representative at the 1954 Geneva conference, the U.S. has ceaselessly intervened in Vietnam, it has unleashed and intensified the war of aggression in North Vietnam with a view to prolonging the partition of Vietnam and turning South Vietnam into a neocolony and a military base of the United States. For over two years now, the U.S. government has, with its air and naval forces, carried the war to the Democratic Republic of (North) Vietnam, an independent and sovereign country.

The U.S. government has committed war crimes, crimes against peace and against mankind. In South Vietnam, half a million U.S. and satellite troops have resorted to the most inhuman weapons and most barbarous methods of warfare, such as napalm, toxic chemicals and gases, to massacre our compatriots, destroy crops, and raze villages to the ground. In North Vietnam, thousands of U.S. aircraft have dropped hundreds of thousands of tons of bombs, destroying towns, villages, factories, schools. In your message, you apparently deplore the sufferings and destruction in Vietnam. May I ask you: Who has perpetrated these monstrous crimes? It is the United States and satellite troops. The U.S. government is entirely responsible for the extremely serious situation in Vietnam.

The U.S. war of aggression against the Vietnamese people constitutes a challenge to the countries of the socialist camp, a threat to the national independence movement, and a serious danger to peace in Asia and the world.

The Vietnamese people deeply love independence, freedom and peace. But in the face of U.S. aggression, they have risen up, united as one man, fearless of sacrifices and hardships. They are determined to carry on their resistance until they have won genuine independence and freedom and true peace. Our just cause enjoys strong sympathy and support from the peoples of the whole world, including broad sections of the American people.

The U.S. government has unleashed the war of aggression in Vietnam. It must cease this aggression. This is the only way to restoration of peace. The U.S. government must stop definitely and unconditionally its bombing raids and all other acts of war against the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, withdraw from South Vietnam all U.S. and satellite troops, recognize the South Vietnam National Front for Liberation, and let the Vietnamese people settle themselves their own affairs. Such is the basis of the five-point stand of the government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, which embodies the essential principles and provision of the 1954 Geneva Agreements on Vietnam; it is the basis of a correct political solution to the Vietnam problem.

In your message you suggested direct talks between the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and the United

States. If the U.S. government really wants these talks, it must first of all stop unconditionally its bombing raids and all other acts of war against the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. It is only after the unconditional cessation of U.S. bombing raids and all other acts of war against the Democratic Republic of Vietnam that the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and the U.S. could enter into talks and discuss questions concerning the two sides.

The Vietnamese people will never submit to force, they will never accept talks under threat of bombs.

Our cause is absolutely just. It is to be hoped that the U.S. government will act in accordance with reason.

Sincerely,

Ho Chi Minh

Reading Questions:

1. Who does Ho Chi Minh blame for the war in Vietnam?
2. How does he support his argument? (What evidence does he give?)
3. What are Ho Chi Minh's demands?
4. Do YOU think that Ho Chi Minh makes a strong argument? Why or why not?