

# Viet Minh Member

Time: Fall/Winter, 1945–46

You are a member of the Viet Minh and a supporter of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. This is the first all-Vietnamese government in almost a hundred years—since the French first took over your country.

You are from a peasant family in Vietnam. You grew up hating the French colonialists who controlled your country. The French say they brought “civilization” to Vietnam, but in your eyes they brought nothing but misery.

In order to force the Vietnamese to work for them, the French put taxes on all “huts,” as they called them, and on salt—an important ingredient in the Vietnamese diet. The only way you could get money to pay the hated taxes was to go to work for the French—on their railroads, in their mines, on their plantations. Conditions were hard. Many people died of injuries or diseases.

The French drafted your people to fight in their wars against other countries. Of course, you had no vote. The French provided few services; in Vietnam, they built more jails than schools and hospitals combined.

The French made fun of your music, your art, your religion. They even outlawed your village’s homemade rice wine and forced you to buy their stronger French wine. The French also required each village to purchase a certain amount of opium.

Angered by all these injustices, you joined Ho Chi Minh’s Viet Minh, an organization fighting for the independence of Vietnam. Like Ho Chi

Minh, you became a Communist, believing that everyone should share the wealth of Vietnam, not just a few foreigners and the rich Vietnamese landlords who do their dirty work.

In 1940, the Japanese invaded Vietnam and you switched from fighting the French to fighting the Japanese. During the war you helped the United States, providing them with valuable information and rescuing pilots who had been shot down.

When the Japanese were defeated, the Viet Minh took control of the country and proclaimed independence. This independence has begun to make a real difference in many people’s lives. For the first time in Vietnam’s history, national elections were held. People could choose their own leaders, Communist or non-Communist.

A literacy program was launched that some say taught as many as 2.5 million people to read and write. The Viet Minh took over much of the land that the French had stolen and gave it back to the peasants. The new government passed a law legalizing labor unions and strikes and proclaiming an eight-hour day.

Your goal is freedom and independence for your country. But the French appear to want to take back Vietnam. They complain about Communists like Ho Chi Minh. You will fight to the death before your country is made a colony again. You hope the United States government will support you in this freedom struggle.