



Jack Anderson *Post* U.S. Dismissed *Aug 8/12* A Plea From Ho

YELLOWING diplomatic documents, locked in the dusty files of the State Department for nearly 27 years, tell how Ho Chi Minh tried to enlist the support of the United States and the United Nations to avoid a long and bloody war in Vietnam.

These papers show that Ho looked to the free world for help in ridding Vietnam of the French colonials. He also solicited and was promised assistance from Chiang Kai-Shek's Nationalist China.

A letter from Ho to the U.S. Secretary of State, dated Oct. 22, 1945, was carried by American army officers to the U.S. consul general in Kunming, China. A series of rubber stamps on the cover letter from the consul general show the slow passage of Ho's message over the bureaucratic treadmills on its way to the confidential files in Washington.

Along the way, America lost a golden opportunity to prevent what has turned out to be nearly three decades of death and heartbreak for the people of Vietnam, France and the United States.

"The situation . . . Vietnam has reached its critical stage, and calls for immediate interference on the part of the United Nations," Ho wrote. "I wish by the present letter to bring your excellency some more light on the case of Vietnam which has come for the last three weeks into the international limelight . . ."

"After 80 years of French oppression and unsuccessful though obstinate Vietnamese resistance, we at last saw France defeated in Europe . . . Though the odds were at that time against the Allies, the Vietnamese, leaving aside all differences of political opinion, united in the Viet-minh league and started on a ruthless fight against the Japanese. Meanwhile, the Atlantic Charter was concluded, defining the war aims of the Allies and laying the foundation for peace work."

Ho said the Atlantic Charter "was looked upon as the foundation of a future Vietnam." The San Francisco Charter, which established the United Nations, also spurred what Ho called "a national building program."

But the French, he charged, attempted to reinstitute colonial rule in Indochina.

"The whole Vietnamese nation rose up as one man against French aggression," wrote Ho. "The first street-sniping, which was launched by the French in the small hours of September 23rd, soon developed into real and organized warfare in which losses are heavy on both sides.

"The bringing in of French important reinforcements on board of the most powerful of their remaining warships will extend the war zone further. As murderous fighting is still going on in Indonesia, and as savage acts on the part of Frenchmen are re-

ported every day, we may expect the flaring up of a general conflagration in the Far East.

"As it is, the situation in . . . Vietnam calls for immediate interference by the United Nations." He said the Vietnamese wanted only "independence and the respect of truth and justice."

Philip D. Sprouse, the consul general who forwarded Ho's letter, interviewed the American officers who had been in Hanoi. Reported Sprouse: "Americans are extremely popular with the Annamites, who do everything possible to convince them of the justice of their cause." Annamite is the old word for Vietnamese.

"The French can, of course, return to Indochina but it will be a mistake unless they are prepared to re-enter in strength sufficient to overpower the Annamite resistance in short order," Sprouse said.

With prescience, he added: "If the French attempt to return to Indochina without overwhelming forces and impressive air support, the struggle will be long and bloody."

Ho's appeal and Sprouse's warning were ignored, and death and destruction have been daily events for 27 years. The U.S. government has tried to make its people believe that the North Vietnamese were manipulated by Moscow and Peking. The men familiar with the old files in the State Department, however, know better.

Fatal Oversight

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