

Beijing, 11 April 1967

Pham Van Dong: We are very glad to see you healthy, Chairman Mao.

Mao Zedong: Just normal, not very well... Among all of you here, is there anyone from the South?

Vo Nguyen Giap: Comrade Pham Van Dong is a Southerner.

Pham Van Dong: My native village is in Quang Ngai province [in central Vietnam], where people are fighting the enemy very well.

Vo Nguyen Giap: Only in one year, people in Quang Ngai shot down almost 100 helicopters. They are fighting the puppet troops, [and] American and South Korean troops very well.

Mao Zedong: As you are fighting, you have drawn experience, you have come to understand the rule. If you are not fighting you will not have experience, will not know the rule... It looks more or less similar to your resistance against the French.

Pham Van Dong: We are now better than that and the fighting now is fiercer.

Mao Zedong: So, I said you now know the rule.

Pham Van Dong: We just began to do so.

Mao Zedong: It is a matter of course that in the process, changes can occur. The most difficult years were from 1956 to 1959... In 1960 there were some good changes. From 1960 to 1961, the armed forces were still small. But in 1963 and 1964, the situation changed. And now, in 1965 and 1966, you have better understanding of the rule, based on your experiences fighting against French, Japanese, and now American troops. You also fought the Japanese, didn't you?

Vo Nguyen Giap: Yes, we did, but not much; only in a small scale guerrilla warfare. In our fighting against the Americans, we always remember your words: try to preserve and develop our forces, steadfastly advancing forward.

Mao Zedong: We have a saying: "if you preserve the mountain green, you will never have to worry about firewood." The US is afraid of your tactics. They wish that you would order your regular forces to fight, so they can destroy your main forces. But you were not deceived. Fighting a war of attrition is like having meals: [it is best] not to have too big a bite. In fighting the US troops, you can have a bite the size of a platoon, a company, or a battalion. With regard to troops of the puppet regime, you can have a regiment-size bite. It means that fighting is similar to having meals, you should have one bite after another. After all, fighting is not too difficult an undertaking. The way of conducting it is just similar to the way you eat.

...I was told that you wanted to build a new 100 km railway, do our Chinese counterparts agree to help you?

Zhou Enlai: We have had discussions on the issue. Some people will be sent [to Vietnam] to make a feasibility study.

Mao Zedong: It is not too long, shorter than the distance from Beijing to Tianjin.

Pham Van Dong: We will make the feasibility study together with Chinese comrades.

Mao Zedong: It's all right, for the sake of war. What about the matter of food supply?

Zhou Enlai: We discussed this with Comrade Li Xiannian.<sup>[1]</sup> We will provide 100 thousand tons of rice, 50 thousand tons of maize.

Pham Van Dong: So, this year alone, China helped Vietnam with approximately 500 thousand tons of food. This help is very great.

Mao Zedong: We can help you. Last year we had good crops.

Pham Van Dong: Thank you, Chairman Mao.

Mao Zedong: If you want to say thanks, you should say it to our peasants... Later, when you have dinner with Comrade Zhou, you can ask Comrade Wei Guoqing how he was criticized by the Red Guards. I know comrade Wei because he often visits and reports to me when he comes back from working visits to Vietnam. Who is now the new [Vietnamese] ambassador?

Zhou Enlai: Comrade Ngo Minh Loan.<sup>[2]</sup>

Mao Zedong: Which [Chinese] character is [Loan]?

Zhu Qiwen: Phoenix-like.

Mao Zedong: This kind of bird is very strong.

Pham Van Dong: Comrade Loan will try his best to continue the job by Comrade Tran Tu Binh,<sup>[3]</sup> that is, to strengthen the friendship between the two countries.

Mao Zedong: I am sorry that Comrade Tran Tu Binh passed away.

Pham Van Dong: We are also very sad about it.

Mao Zedong: What kind of illness did he have?

Pham Van Dong: The same illness he had before and after he came back home, he was too busy.

Vo Nguyen Giap: He passed away after having a serious cold. He was in the same hospital with ambassador Zhou Qiyun.

Zhu Qiwen: The Friendship Hospital. I also have a record of high blood pressure.

Pham Van Dong: Today, we would like to pay a courtesy visit to you, Chairman Mao, Vice Chairman Lin [Biao] and other comrades. Once again, thank you very much.

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Mao Zedong: You have been bravely struggling both in the North and in the South.

Pham Van Dong: It's because we are learning Chairman Mao's military thinking.

Mao Zedong: [It is] not necessary. Without it, you still can gain victory. In the past, you were fighting the Japanese, the French. Now you are fighting the Americans.

Pham Van Dong: Thanks to the military policy of our Party and also to Mao Zedong's military thinking.

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Vo Nguyen Giap: As I remember, at one time during our resistance war against the French, Comrade Zhou sent president Ho a telegram that read: "Now is not the right time to have a peaceful solution. You should continue fighting." [Ed. note: Giap refers to late 1949 or January 1950.]

Zhou Enlai: At that time, the French were going to recognize us. But because we recognized Vietnam they ignored us. As Lenin taught, big countries have the responsibility to encourage the world revolution. At that time revolution was victorious in Russia, so Lenin thought of China and India. Now, Lenin's desire has been half-realized: the Chinese revolution has been successful. Yet, reality has not developed the way people want it to be. Some smaller countries gained victory earlier. Victory in Korea is followed by the one in Vietnam.

[1] Li Xiannian was a member of the CCP Politburo, and vice premier and finance minister of the PRC.

[2] Ngo Minh Loan was an alternate member of the VWP CC 1960-76, and Vietnamese ambassador to Beijing 1967-69. Had been Vice-Minister of Light Industry 1959-67. In 1968 visited Pakistan as "special envoy" and held talks with President Ayub Khan. From 1969-71 Minister of Food and Foodstuffs, ranked as minister up to 1976.

[3] Tran Tu Binh (alias Pham Van Phu) (1907-67), long-standing member of ICP, Inspector General of PAVN for three years during the First Indochina War. Succeeded Hoang Van Hoan as DRV ambassador to China in 1957 and served until his death in 1967; was succeeded by Ngo Minh Loan.