

One

Late in 1949, soon after the establishment of New China, Chairman Ho Chi Minh and the Central Committee of the Indochinese Communist Party (ICP) wrote to Chairman Mao and the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), asking for Chinese assistance. In January 1950, Ho made a secret visit to Beijing to request China's assistance in Vietnam's struggle against France.

Following Ho's visit, the CCP Central Committee made the decision, authorized by Chairman Mao, to send me on a secret mission to Vietnam. I was formally appointed as the Liaison Representative of the CCP Central Committee to the ICP Central Committee. Comrade [Liu] Shaoqi personally composed a letter of introduction, which stated: "I hereby recommend to your office Comrade Luo Guibo, who has been a provincial Party secretary and commissar, as the Liaison Representative of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party. He is accompanied by eight staff members. Liu Shaoqi, Chief Secretary, Central Committee, 17 January 1950."

At that time, Chairman Mao and Premier Zhou Enlai were in Moscow conducting negotiations with the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union headed by Joseph Stalin. Their visit resulted in the Sino-Soviet Treaty on Friendship, Alliance, and Mutual Assistance.

I secretly left Beijing for Vietnam in January 1950. Comrade Shaoqi told me at the time of my departure that I would return to Beijing after my three-month mission. Because of altered conditions in Vietnam, however, I was away for eight years. In Vietnam, I lived through a second eight-year War of Resistance, a war in which my enemies were French rather than Japanese.

Two

I first returned to Beijing from the mountainous base area in northern Vietnam on 24 September 1950, eight months and seven days after I had left. After preparing a report on my work in Vietnam following the official format, I sent it to the leaders of the Central Committee, following oral instructions from Comrade Shaoqi and Commander-in-Chief Zhu De. Two or three days later, Comrade [Yang] Shangkun told me that Comrade Shaoqi had invited me to his office. I once again visited the familiar offices of the Zhongnanhai compound. After Comrade Shaoqi told me that Chairman Mao himself was waiting to hear my debriefing, he and I were taken by car to Fengzeyuan.

Fengzeyuan was the village in Beijing where the Kangxi Emperor had officiated at the annual spring ploughing ceremony. We visited the Emperor's former resting place at Fengzeyuan, which was a typical traditional compound containing two courtyards. Flowering crab-apple trees and pear trees were symmetrically planted on each side of the outer courtyard. There were no other decorations. The atmosphere was solemn and awe-inspiring. There was a large reception room called Yinian Hall, and on the eastern and western sides of the compound were rooms named "Picture of Mist and Rain" and "Painting of Clouds and Mountains." Simple and unadorned, they were Chairman Mao's personal living quarters.

The reception hall, in contrast, was rather luxurious inside. The ceiling, doors, and window-frames were made of carved mahogany. But the furnishings were sparse, with about a dozen easy-chairs surrounding a small table standing on old carpet at the center of the room. A long, narrow table stood behind the chairs. About half the floor space was completely empty. Such were the plain and simple reception areas and living quarters which served the chairman of our Party and of the People's Republic of China. In those days, moreover, official meetings were conducted without much ceremonial protocol. On the many occasions when I presented reports to Chairman Mao, the Chairman would sit in one of the chairs on the southern side of the room. I would sit just beside him, usually moving to a chair a little further away after finishing my report.

On this occasion, Commander-in-Chief Zhu De and Premier Zhou were sitting beside Chairman Mao when Comrade Shaoqi led me into the room. Comrade Shaoqi began by presenting a brief of my report. When he had finished, Chairman Mao stood up and addressed me, saying: "Comrade Truong Chinh, Secretary of the Central Committee of the Vietnamese Communist Party, has sent a telegraph requesting your return to Vietnam. Ho Chi Minh has invited you to be his Adviser-General. You will need to become mentally prepared for an extended tour of duty in Vietnam." At that point Comrade Shaoqi broke in to say, "Originally, you were assigned to a three-month mission to Vietnam. But that plan must be modified. We must make long-term plans!" Premier Zhou then informed me: "The Central Committee has made an internal decision to nominate you as our first ambassador to Vietnam." Chairman Mao confirmed this, adding, "You will continue your work as a bridge between the Chinese and Vietnamese Communist parties. You are our Party's first, and possibly the sole, Liaison Representative to Vietnam."

Premier Zhou and Commander-in-Chief Zhu then briefed me on the invasion of Korea by the American imperialist power and the formation of an army of Chinese volunteers prepared to assist Korea. They also delegated me to convey these details on the Korean conflict to Ho Chi Minh and the Central Committee of the Indochinese Communist Party.

Chairman Mao then declared: "In view of the situation in Korea, we have made the decision to assist the Koreans in their struggle against the United States. Our Volunteer Army will go openly into Korea; Chinese troops will fight shoulder to shoulder with Korean soldiers to resist the American invasion. Considering the situation in Vietnam, we have decided to provide covert assistance in the struggle against France by providing military aid, economic and financial assistance, and advisory support. Although China's assistance is taking a different form in Vietnam from that in Korea, in both cases China's support is internationalist and patriotic. We are committed to assisting Korea and Vietnam equally, and consider both tasks to be equally glorious. Mao then abruptly changed the subject to ask me about my wife and family. When I told him that my wife had joined the Red Army in 1933 and was a survivor of the Long March, the Chairman said cheerfully: "Well then, she is a battle-tested veteran. Very good! What work has she been doing?" I answered: "She has worked in internal security, administration, and cadre affairs." Chairman Mao's immediate reply was: "Good! Then please take her with you when you return to Vietnam to act as your assistant. Ho Chi Minh has urged me to allow our advisors to take their wives with them. As long as a spouse is suitable for the mission, I will agree to let her go." Later on, a few of the other Chinese advisers in Vietnam were also accompanied by their wives.

Comrade Shaoqi then said: "Financial problems, especially as they affect food supplies and currency, are presently the most urgent problems in Vietnam. We have selected several cadres with experience in finance, banking and grain supply work to serve as advisors in Vietnam. They will travel with you as an initial contingent. We will then select advisors in other fields and organize them into a Political Advisory Delegation to help the Vietnamese. You are the Advisor-General and will also be the head of China's Political Advisory Delegation to Vietnam."

Hearing Liu Shaoqi using the term "Advisor-General," Chairman Mao said, "Be careful not to follow the Soviet Union's negative example in your work as the Advisor-General. You must remember that Vietnam is not China. Do not attempt to simply replicate Chinese methods. Remember that the particular conditions found in Vietnam must be the foundation of every approach. Be honest and sincere with the Vietnamese. As well as telling them about our successful revolutionary experiences, be sure also to relate the details of our setbacks and painful lessons." The debriefing meeting was my first opportunity to receive directly Chairman Mao's guidance and instructions on international affairs.

Three

Our first step in assisting Vietnam was to break through the French defences along the Sino-Vietnamese border so as to establish direct links between China and areas controlled by the Viet Minh. Thus we would be able to ship supplies directly into Vietnam. The French forces would lose their primary advantage as soon as the People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN) were to control the strategic passes and routes across the border. There were two possible means of breaking through the French defences. The first was to capture the town of Cao Bang, on the border of China's Guangxi Province; the second was to capture Lao Kay, on the border of Yunnan Province. Or would it be best to attack both towns simultaneously? The ICP Central Committee and the CCP Central Committee spent nearly three months in

negotiations before agreeing on a plan of attack. On 2 July 1950, Chairman Mao responded to the ICP Central Committee in a telegram: "I endorse the proposal to capture Cao Bang first. Regarding the detailed plan of operations for the attack on Cao Bang, wait for the arrival of Chen Geng and then make your final decision after discussing the matter with him. As for continuing operations, you will need to make decisions based on your actual situation. When we provide views, they are only for your reference. This is because you are more familiar than we are with your own circumstances."

Comrade Chen Geng was the Chinese general personally selected by Ho Chi Minh to assist Vietnam. After Ho requested General Chen's help from Chairman Mao and our Party's Central Committee, Chen Geng was sent to Vietnam as the representative of the CCP Central Committee with a mandate from Chairman Mao and the Central Committee to help organize forces and lead them in the Border Campaign in which our Military Advisory Delegation was preparing to play a part. Chairman Mao paid close and careful attention to the crucial Border Campaign. Many important telegrams had to pass through his hands and receive his personal approval. He even drafted telegrams himself. During the period of preparations for the Border Campaign, Chairman Mao and the CCP Central Committee consented to the request of Ho Chi Minh and the ICP Central Committee for permission to move PAVN troops into the Wenshan area of Yunnan Province, for resting, re-equipping, training, and re-organizing. The Chinese advisors helped to reorganize these troops into two large regiments or divisions, thus transforming them into two strong fists. The two reorganized units played a crucial role in the Border Campaign. In accordance with Mao's instructions, Chen Geng rendered invaluable and selfless assistance in the campaign, helping the Vietnamese people and armed forces win a decisive victory. The victory brought the Vietnamese forces out of their defensive phase and consolidated cross-border communications between China and Vietnam. Ho Chi Minh, Vo Nguyen Giap, and other Vietnamese leaders were elated by the victory. On 14 October 1950, immediately after the battle, Ho Chi Minh wrote to Comrade Mao Zedong and the CCP, reporting: "We have won a complete victory in the Battle of That Khe and Cao Bang. The all-out assistance of the CCP and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union has been the principal cause of this victory. Comrades from the provinces of Yunnan, Guangxi, and Guangdong carried out your instructions precisely and wholeheartedly, providing us with direct assistance in disregard of their own hardships. I would like to point out the exceptional contributions to the victory made by comrades Chen Geng, Song Renqiong, Zhang Yunyi, Li Tianyao, Luo Guibo, Ye Jianying, Fang Fang, Wei Guoqing and the other comrades of the Advisory Delegation. In brief, I believe this to be a victory of Mao Zedong's revolutionary internationalist road. I will not say conventional words of thanks to express our gratitude. Instead I must declare that the Vietnamese comrades and people will surely fulfill the lofty expectations and repay the enormous assistance that we have received from our brothers in the Communist Parties of China and the Soviet Union with further endeavors toward a greater and final victory."

Four

I returned to China to report to the CCP Central Committee. As I was reporting a Vietnamese request for further assistance from China, Chairman Mao said: "Because the Chinese people have won a revolutionary victory, we now have an obligation to help the peoples whose countries have not yet been liberated: this is internationalism. Vietnam is struggling in a war of resistance against French aggression, but remains isolated, lacking the assistance of others. In this difficult time, Vietnam is looking to us for help. We are obliged as revolutionaries to provide assistance to Vietnam that is selfless, free of charge, and completely without political strings attached. Thus China will provide to the Vietnamese anything that they need which is in our possession." Chairman Mao then continued, "Not only are the French colonialist aggressors the enemies of the Vietnamese people; they are also our foes. France is the common enemy of the peoples of China and Vietnam. China's assistance to Vietnam is helping to defeat the French colonialist aggressors. To help restore peace in Vietnam is China's help to our neighbour. In return, by defeating the French colonialist aggressors and driving them out of Vietnam, Vietnam will help China by freeing our southern border of the threat of France's colonialist aggression."

Thus we should not one-sidedly refer only to China's help to Vietnam; we must say that Vietnam is also helping China; the assistance is mutual.

When I stated that Vietnamese expectations for assistance from China were overly ambitious, demanding, and out of touch with reality, Chairman Mao said: "Perhaps their lack of understanding of conditions in our country, and in their own as well, may account for their ambitious, demanding, and impractical requests for a program of aid from China. Another explanation might be their lack of experience. You must assist them with patience."

During the years of my stay in Vietnam, the guidance and instructions provided by Chairman Mao and the CCP Central Committee were implemented faithfully in our programs of assistance. These programs ranged widely, including the provision of weapons and military equipment, along with supplies of food, clothing, medicine and medical services, communications equipment, and vehicles. Thus not only did we offer our guidance by recounting and sharing the experience of the Chinese revolution, we also provided both frontline combat assistance and base logistical services in Vietnam.

The Chinese advisors in Vietnam worked with a sincere and whole-hearted commitment, making selfless contributions to the course of the Vietnamese people's revolution. In accordance with Chairman Mao's instructions, we asked for no compensation in the form of services or payments during our stay in the country. Living, working, and fighting shoulder to shoulder with our Vietnamese comrades, we shared their hardships and happiness. Likewise, the Chinese government supported Vietnam without requesting repayment in any form. China did not impose any unequal treaty or agreement on Vietnam, and did not maintain any military bases or deploy a single soldier in Vietnam. China's assistance and support was free and selfless, demonstrating clearly the greatness of Chairman Mao's internationalism. Internationalism in this spirit is rare in the world.

Five

During the winter of 1951, Ho Chi Minh paid another secret visit to Beijing. One day I escorted him to Yinian Hall at Fengzeyuan. As we approached the gate, Chairman Mao, Comrade Shaoqi, Premier Zhou Enlai, and Commander-in-Chief Zhu De all came out to meet Ho. They greeted him with friendly embraces. Ho had already got to know Chairman Mao, Comrade Shaoqi, Premier Zhou, and Commander-in-Chief Zhu during the China's First Revolutionary Civil War of China and later during the War of Resistance against Japan. His Cantonese-accented Chinese was so fluent that an interpreter was not needed. The meeting proceeded with intimate warmth rather than conventional diplomatic formalities, as though Ho had just been reunited with his own family.

Ho greeted Chairman Mao like a long-lost brother. After cordial greetings and an exchange of courtesies, they soon started to discuss important issues. Ho Chi Minh made a succinct presentation on the current situation in the war of resistance against France, the progress of building revolutionary base areas, and the work of the Chinese advisers in Vietnam. Premier Zhou and Commander-in-Chief Zhu then presented brief reports on the Korean War situation and China's domestic affairs.

At one point during their conversation, Ho Chi Minh addressed Chairman Mao: "Our Politburo hoped that Comrade Luo Guibo would criticize us more and offer more guidance as a participant in our Politburo meetings, but he has been overly modest and cautious. We hope that you will instruct him to criticize us more thoroughly. Chairman Mao, will you agree to do so?"

"Certainly," said Chairman Mao, "But his criticisms, ideas, and suggestions are for your reference only. Keep in mind those that you consider correct, while rejecting those that do not seem correct. The decisions are up to you."

Chairman Mao's conversation with Ho Chi Minh continued in an informal manner. But Chairman Mao expressed his views and preferences in a way that dissolved them into a home-style chat. Although their conversation might have seemed casual and relaxed, however, the content was actually profoundly significant. Ho Chi Minh, a man of strong emotion, appeared deeply moved by Mao's sincerity. Getting to his feet, he declared: "My Vietnamese comrades and I are convinced by Chinese actions that it is with true sincerity that you have assisted us."

It was time for lunch. Chairman Mao, Chairman Ho, Comrade Shaoqi, Commander-in-Chief Zhu, and I entered the dining hall together. Premier Zhou took his leave to keep appointments with foreign visitors. The dining hall was an area separated from the meeting room with a screen, leaving space for two tables. We found just one table there. During the lunch, Chairman Mao, Chairman Ho, Comrade Shaoqi and Commander-in-Chief Zhu conversed continuously, commenting, interjecting, and

amicably interrupting one another.

Hot chilli peppers were served with the lunch. Seeing the chillies, Chairman Ho said to Chairman Mao: "Comrade Luo Guibo has told us that you like chillies so much that you have no appetite without them. Is this true?" Chairman Mao smiled as Ho continued: "We Vietnamese also like to eat chillies. But the chilli plants in Vietnam are different from those in China. They are one or two meters high, like small trees. The chillies grow facing upwards, heading towards sky. They are truly hot-tasting..." Everyone listened with great interest to Ho's description of the small skyward-growing chilli peppers of the forests of northern Vietnam. Chairman Mao then said, "I am not the only one here who loves to eat chillies. Comrade Shaoqi and I are both from Hunan Province and like chillies like typical Hunanese. Commander-in-Chief Zhu is from Sichuan; the people from Sichuan love chillies as well." Referring to me, Chairman Mao continued: "He is from Jiangxi Province; the people of Jiangxi are also very fond of chillies. So are the people of Yunnan, so close to Vietnam. But although we all like to eat chillies, we have various ways of preparing them." We all then began to describe the particular methods of preparing chillies followed in our native places, with Vietnamese methods attracting the most interest. Ho Chi Minh explained that the Vietnamese custom was to pickle the skyward-facing chillies in fish sauce and a little lemon juice. Chairman Mao interjected at this moment to say: "Actually our addiction to chilli peppers is not the result of local customs. During the period from 1932 to 1934, the Guomindang imposed a strict trade embargo against our Central Soviet Region. A severe shortage of salt resulted. In order to bring in salt supplies, some comrades paid a very high price; some even sacrificed their lives. How we struggled then! Meals without salt were tasteless. Many comrades, including myself, substituted chillies for salt. A dish missing salt but served with chillies was considered a good meal!"

Although so many years have passed, our conversation about chillies still seems like something that happened just yesterday.

Six

After seeing off Ho Chi Minh, Chairman Mao, Comrade Shaoqi and Commander-in-Chief Zhu asked me to stay for further discussion.

Chairman Mao instructed me: "State your views and offer criticisms whenever Comrade Ho Chi Minh invites you to Politburo meetings and solicits your opinions. But you must make it clear that your ideas and suggestions are intended only for reference by the Vietnamese leaders. You must emphasize study and investigation, avoiding a subjective attitude. You must take specific conditions in Vietnam as your starting point when seeking to apply Chinese experiences, and avoid trying to transfer Chinese methods unmodified. You must be very cautious when you put forward your criticisms and suggestions. You must consider your remarks carefully, introduce them appropriately, and take responsibility for what you say. To help the Vietnamese, you must help them properly. Be sure never to impose your views. You must be very respectful of Comrade Ho Chi Minh and the other leaders of the Central Committee of the Vietnamese Labour Party. Never behave like an imperial envoy and be particularly careful not to assume a big-power chauvinist attitude. Your tendency to be cautious is correct."

Comrade Shaoqi and Commander-in-Chief Zhu then said, "Remember the limits of your mandate, and be sure not to exceed them. Always report to Chairman Mao and the CCP Central Committee on important issues as they arise or after decisions are made."

Chairman Mao's expression became more serious and emotional. He said to me, "You were in the Central Soviet Region before the Long March. You must remember Li De."

"Yes," I replied. "Li De is a German," Chairman Mao continued, "He fought with the Red Army and was decorated during the October Revolution. Winning Stalin's trust, he was sent to assist the CCP and arrived in the Central Soviet Region to serve as a military adviser. Before long, he obtained commanding authority over the Red Army of Chinese Workers and Peasants. Li De's leadership caused enormous damage to the cause of the Chinese revolution. He did not understand the specific conditions in China or the Chinese Red Army's situation. He did no studying or research to understand the situation, and ignored views different from his own. His approach was to transplant, directly and without modification, tactics and strategies that had been effective in the Soviet Union but were completely impractical in China. With his mandate from the Communist International, however, he was able to bully and intimidate everyone. In short, Li De was arrogant, commandeering, insistent, and coercive, just like an old-fashioned imperial envoy. Together with Bo Gu and other followers, Li De implemented a series of erroneous military strategies and tactics, causing us great suffering and costing a shocking price in blood."

Chairman Mao continued: "Remember the lesson of Li De's behaviour in China while you are working in Vietnam. Be sure also to speak about it to all your comrades in the Advisory Delegation. Encourage every one of them to keep it in mind by telling them that our assistance to Vietnam will not take the form of replicating our previous approaches, nor of direct transplantation; our help must actually help the Vietnamese become better off. Assistance will not be effective if Chinese advisors hold subjective expectations. Their assistance will only be effective if they recognise the specific situation in Vietnam and remain modest and cautious. They should seldom mention our victories and frequently discuss our setbacks. We have experienced defeats. As part of your work providing assistance to Vietnam, be sure to monitor and review all that you say and do. Follow a routine of reviewing your words and deeds every day, or once every three days, or at least once a week, so as to keep clearly in mind how you are proceeding correctly, and in what ways you might be deviating."

"As for Comrade Ho Chi Minh," Mao continued, "he enjoys the respect of the peoples of both China and Vietnam; internationally, he is even respected by his opponents." It was of great significance that Chairman Mao elevated Ho to such a lofty position; his praise made a deep impression on me. Thus Mao provided me with an extremely profound and at the same time very practical lecture on proletarian internationalism.

Seven

To Chairman Mao, the Vietnamese people's anti-colonial revolutionary cause was just as important as the Chinese people's revolutionary cause; he was committed to aiding Vietnam in a spirit of thorough internationalism and selfless sacrifice. Not only did he instruct me and the others in the advisory delegation in this spirit, Chairman Mao also demonstrated it to us by his deeds.

Chen Geng, Wei Guoqing and I communicated by telegram with Chairman Mao and the CCP Central Committee when asking for their instructions. Our communications were on a wide range of important matters including military operations (such as the Border Campaign, the Battle of Dien Bien Phu, and the Battle for the Northwest), the expansion and training of the Vietnamese armed forces, the strengthening of the Party ideologically and organizationally, economic and financial affairs, agrarian reforms, military support, public security, intelligence, and relations with ethnic minority groups. Chairman Mao read, modified and signed all telegrams sent to and received from Chen, Wei, and myself. He drafted particularly important telegrams with his own hand. Whenever Ho Chi Minh and the Central Committee of the Vietnamese Workers' Party sent telegrams to Chairman Mao and the CCP Central Committee seeking advice, Chairman Mao and the Central Committee would send suggestions by return telegram. In important messages, Chairman Mao invariably noted, "Our views are for your reference only. Decide for yourselves; you understand the situation better than we do."

Comrade Wang Jiaxiang chaired a team within the Liaison Department of the CCP Central Committee, drafting a set of provisional regulations to be followed by Chinese advisors in Vietnam. Chairman Mao made important additions when he edited the draft, including: "Take care of every piece of grass and wood belonging to the Vietnamese people; respect the independence of the nation of Vietnam and the customs of the Vietnamese people; support the Vietnamese Workers' Party and Comrade Ho Chi Minh, the leader of the Vietnamese people." Thus the words of the regulations were filled with the internationalist spirit of Chairman Mao and the CCP Central Committee.

When I returned to China in 1952 to present a routine duty report, I reported to Chairman Mao that most of the Chinese advisors were stable in their work in accordance with the instructions of Chairman Mao and the CCP Central Committee and in the spirit of internationalism. A few of them, however, had not become accustomed to the humid tropical climate in Vietnam, to the mosquitoes, or to the different way of life. Some were frequently ill, suffering from malaria and significant

weight loss. Moreover, exposed so often to ground combat and French aerial bombardment, these advisors were afraid that they would lose their lives in Vietnam. They hoped for or had applied for early transfers back to China.

On hearing this, Chairman Mao fell into a silence. After a while, he spoke quietly: “Norman Bethune was a Canadian who travelled thousands of miles to reach China, determined to help the people of China in their resistance to the Japanese invasion. Seeking nothing for himself, he was willing to sacrifice all he possessed. Bethune exemplifies the spirit of internationalism. He died a hero and was buried in China. He was an outstanding internationalist combatant whom we will honor and remember forever.”

Chairman Mao continued: “Many of our Party comrades are northerners who have worked, fought, and settled in southern China. Some have sacrificed their lives in the South. Meanwhile, many southerners have worked, fought, and settled in the North; some of them have also given their lives. All of our advisors in Vietnam are CCP members sent by our Party to help the Vietnamese in their struggle against France. Why should they not go on working, fighting, and living in Vietnam? Why should they not die in Vietnam?” Chairman Mao then recited two lines from a classical poem: “A loyalist may be buried in any place; is it necessary to carry home his horse-skin-wrapped remains?”¹¹ He then interpreted the meaning of the verse for me.

Eight

Secure food supplies and an effective currency system were important goals in China’s program of assistance to Vietnam. They were defined as early as March 1950 when Ho Chi Minh, Truong Chinh, Pham Van Dong, and Vo Nguyen Giap briefed me on the situation in Vietnam. They identified the food and currency issues as the most urgent and intractable of the problems for which they sought our help.

I reported the food supply and currency problems to Chairman Mao and the CCP Central Committee. Chairman Mao and Comrade Shaoqi responded and provided instructions. They argued that the fundamental solution to the economic and financial problems in Vietnam, especially those related to food and currency, was to uproot the old financial and economic systems that the French colonialists had set up and continued to control, and to replace them with new systems. Chairman Mao and Comrade Shaoqi referred to the CCP’s experience. During the War of Resistance to Japan and the War of Liberation, the CCP had developed a set of financial and economic policies to resolve these problems effectively. The policies included the imposition of grain-tax levies, the withdrawal of currency from circulation, and the encouragement of manufacturing. Chairman Mao and Comrade Shaoqi told me that these policies were in general suitable for Vietnam and could serve as a reference.

Following instructions by Chairman Mao and Comrade Shaoqi, the advisors and I began to help reform the Vietnamese systems of food supply and currency. We introduced Chinese experiences to the Vietnamese and adapted them to fit the situation in Vietnam, thus helping them to establish their own systems. This work ranged from macro-level strategy and policy-making, to discipline building in the form of charters, regulations, and directives, and to implementation orders and operations. As a result, the Vietnamese financial and economic situation had improved conspicuously by 1951. Soldiers and civilian staff had food on their tables and were no longer suffering from hunger. The civilian population also had more to eat. The Vietnamese currency was stabilized and inflation was halted. Markets gradually became lively. Ho Chi Minh, Pham Van Dong, Truong Chinh, and Vo Nguyen Giap were all pleased with these developments. As Premier Pham Van Dong declared in 1951, “Chairman Mao and the CCP have assisted us selflessly, sending advisers to help us win a strategic victory in the Border Battle of 1950, and thus decisively altering the situation of our War of Resistance. Now the Chinese advisors have helped us solve our most difficult and urgent problems—the financial and economic headaches, especially relating to food, currency and production. This assistance demonstrates the great internationalism of Chairman Mao and the CCP, and reveals the effectiveness of Mao Zedong Thought and the revolutionary experience in China as they have been applied in Vietnam.”

Nine

Following the Border Campaign of 1950, we waged many more campaigns and fought many battles, including the battles in the Middle Red River [December 1950-January 1951], Ninh Binh [May-June 1951], the Battle of the Northeast [March-April 1951], Upper Laos [March-May 1953], the Northwest [October-December 1951], the Red River Delta Partisan Campaign, and Dien Bien Phu [March-May 1954]. Finally, the French colonial aggressors were forced to sit at the negotiation table in Geneva and accept a ceasefire agreement. The Vietnamese people had at last won their decisive victory.

It was during the experience of the Vietnamese war against the French that Comrade Ho Chi Minh, the Vietnamese Workers’ Party, and the Vietnamese people came to understand Comrade Mao Zedong’s internationalism. Responding to the spirit of Mao Zedong’s great internationalism, the Vietnamese people respected Comrade Mao Zedong so much that they called him “Uncle Mao,” displaying sincere feelings. “Uncle” was the same respectful and affectionate term used by the Vietnamese people to refer to Comrade Ho Chi Minh.

History is the fairest judge and best reference. Despite the passage of time and changes in the world situation, Mao Zedong’s proletarian internationalist thought and his contributions to the Vietnamese victory against France will live forever in the history of the Vietnamese struggle for national liberation.