

*Fighting Side by Side: Cross-Border Military Exchanges and Cooperation Between the Chinese Communist Party and the Viet Minh, 1945–1949**

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Abstract

After World War II, the Chinese Civil War and the Indochina War broke out one after another. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and the League for the Independence of Vietnam (Viet Minh) launched cross-border military cooperation, challenging the legitimacy of the Kuomintang (KMT) in China and the French colonial regime in Indochina, and bringing together the socialist revolutionary cause of China and the anti-colonial movement of the people of Southeast Asia. At that time, the cooperation was mainly divided into three categories: First, when the guerrillas of the CCP in the southern border of China were forced to transfer to Vietnamese territory for concealment and training, the Viet Minh provided accommodation as well as financial and

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material support. Second, while they were in Vietnam, the CCP members assisted the Viet Minh in carrying out daily logistics, intelligence, and publicity work to help the Vietnamese army in training and in organizing the self-defence forces of the overseas Chinese. Third, starting from 1948, the CCP and the Viet Minh army carried out joint military operations on their border. Overall, the exchanges and cooperation between China and Vietnam from 1945 and 1947 were spontaneous, small-scale, scattered, and secretive. However, with the transformation of the Civil War in China in 1948, the exchanges and cooperation between the two sides took a strategic and long-term perspective. The Vietnamese first sent troops to help the Chinese side liberate the border areas, and then waited for the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) to move to the south to help the Vietnamese resistance, laying the groundwork for an anti-France campaign after the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC). At that time, the two parties of China and Vietnam were equal and mutually supportive, and the CCP's leadership over the Viet Minh after its successful revolution was not yet formed. In short, the mutual assistance during the revolution between China and Vietnam advanced the process of the revolutionary war in the two countries, reconstructed the relations between the two parties and two countries, and had a far-reaching impact on the revolutionary situation in Southeast Asia and the development of the Asian socialist camp.

Joined by the same mountains and rivers, China and Vietnam have had a thousand-year relationship. Modern Western colonialism broke the Sino-Vietnamese tributary relationship, and the traditional prestige of the Middle Kingdom was severely damaged. During World War II, China, as the main regional force for containing and resisting the Japanese army with the support of the United States and other allies, played an important role in the battles in the China, Burma, and India Theater and restored the nation's status and prestige in Southeast Asia to some extent. Moreover, China gained the opportunity to rebuild its relationship with Vietnam after the war. By attending the Japanese surrender ceremony that was held in Vietnam, the Chinese army and the KMT representatives were able to initiate relationships with various parties in this country. However, Chiang Kai-shek (蔣介石), Chairman of the National Government of China intended to first resolve China's domestic political conflicts and was unable to support Vietnam's anti-colonial movement at

that time. On 28 February 1946, the Chinese government signed the “Agreement on Sino–Vietnamese Relations” and the “Exchange of Notes regarding the Substitution of Chinese Troops in Defence of North Vietnam with the French Army” with France, thereby acknowledging France’s control of Vietnam and ceding to the French the defense of northern Vietnam. This not only led to the weakening of the KMT’s prestige and power in Vietnam, but also caused some Vietnamese retaliation.¹

The victory of the Chinese people’s liberation movement under the leadership of the CCP, however, greatly inspired the Vietnamese revolutionaries’ morale during their anti-French struggle.² The mission of rebuilding relations with neighboring countries such as Vietnam fell to the CCP. The aid given by the PRC to the Vietnamese resistance movement against France immediately became a landmark event for the establishment of a new relationship between China and Vietnam, which has been the subject of investigation and research by many scholars.³ One relatively neglected topic is the CCP–Viet Minh relationship from 1945 to 1949. Thus far, research has been paltry because of the secretiveness of these activities and the lack of available historical data given that the exchanges and cooperation occurred mostly on the Sino-Vietnamese border.⁴ In fact, the period from 1945 to 1949 was an important time for reconstructing Sino–Vietnamese relations between the two Communist parties and the two countries: relations between the two countries changed from being based on inequality during the KMT period to fraternal relations within the socialist camp; and relations between the two communist parties changed from those of equality and mutual help to those of inequality. This article aims to offer a preliminary study of this issue, using China’s historical documents as well as relevant archives in France and Vietnam.

1. The Viet Minh Provides Support for the Training of CCP Troops in Vietnam

With the CCP and the Indochinese Communist Party (ICP) acting as close fraternal parties, their respective leaders Zhou Enlai (周恩來) and Ho Chi Minh (胡志明) developed close ties beginning in the early 1920s. Afterwards, Vietnamese revolutionaries, including Ho Chi Minh, had a long history of revolutionary work in China and experienced the first civil war between the KMT and the CCP from 1927 to 1936 and the War

of Resistance against Japan. In August 1944, Ho Chi Minh returned from Liuzhou (柳州) to Vietnam via Longzhou (龍州) in Guangxi (廣西), China, and led the Viet Minh to fight against the Japanese and French colonizers, with an aim of seizing power and finally winning national liberation.

On 15 August 1945, the Japanese Emperor Hirohito issued the “Imperial Rescript on Surrender” to announce the unconditional surrender of the Japanese army to the Allied forces. At that time in Vietnam, French colonial officials were still detained by the Japanese army, and the Bao Dai regime, which was supported by the Japanese Army, was close to the point of collapse. Seizing the opportunity presented by this power vacuum, the Viet Minh launched the August Revolution and overthrew the Bao Dai regime. On 2 September, the interim government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) was sworn in at Ba Dinh Square in Hanoi. However, the new regime soon faced the problem of intervention from outside forces: according to the decisions of the Potsdam Conference and General Douglas MacArthur, the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers, on 17 August 1945, and the resultant division of Vietnam into two regions at 16 degree north latitude, British troops entered the south and Chinese troops entered the north of Indochina to accept the Japanese surrender. Immediately afterwards, French colonial forces regained control of Cochinchina with the help of the British. The Chinese troops in northern Vietnam, though interested in developing relations with Vietnam, could not fully trust the Viet Minh government. They quickly took over military traffic routes such as the railway and seaports, as well as making arrangement for pro-Chinese parties in Vietnam to participate in setting up a joint government. Therefore, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam actually did not achieve true independence and was subject to the two powers of China and France in matters of national affairs and national destiny. In order to seek China’s help in resisting France, Ho Chi Minh repeatedly promoted the goodwill of China and Vietnam and expressed his respect for Chiang Kai-shek, placing Vietnam in a position of relying on China.⁵ Nonetheless, China did not recognize the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and negotiated on issues relating to Indochina with France. That is to say, the KMT government gave up the opportunity to rebuild state-to-state relations with Vietnam.

To win extensive domestic and international support, Ho Chi Minh tried to downplay the Communist nature of the Viet Minh, which was

led by the ICP. On 11 November, he officially dissolved the ICP and organized party activities in the name of the Marxist Research Association. However, the ICP was still the leader of the Vietnamese government and army. Communist Party leaders such as Vo Nguyen Giap, who believed in class warfare and internationalist principles, hated the coercion imposed by the Chinese KMT and believed that the Chiang Kai-shek authorities were not only the enemy of the Chinese people and revolution, but also the enemy of the Vietnamese people and revolution.⁶ After the Sino-French agreements on 28 February 1946 were reached, the Viet Minh was more dissatisfied with the KMT government's indifference than before and its relations with the pro-Chinese parties also continued to deteriorate. In contrast, both the Party and the government of the Viet Minh secretly tried their best to help the CCP and its guerrillas from the southern border regions of China with camouflage and training. Importantly, they also provided material support.

At that time, China's KMT and the CCP were conducting peace talks to try to establish a coalition government. However, the historical contradictions between the two parties were difficult to resolve, and small-scale military conflicts began to take place in different localities. The CCP guerrillas in south China and southwest China had to enter the neighboring countries to the south of China to conceal themselves in order to avoid suppression by the KMT or being incorporated into its troops. Among them, the Qin-Fang Overseas Chinese Anti-Japanese Guerrillas (欽防華僑抗日遊擊隊 *qinfang huaqiao kangri youjidui*, hereafter Qin-Fang Guerrillas) from Fangcheng County (防城縣) (now in Guangxi Province), Guangdong Province, were one of the earliest CCP guerrilla groups to enter Vietnam. This team originally launched anti-Japanese activities in the border region. After hearing about the Japanese surrender, the CCP in Fangcheng County demanded that the Qin-Fang Guerrillas enter Vietnam on the side where the Japanese troops in the Sino-Vietnamese borderland had retreated, with the aim of protecting overseas Chinese, and cooperating with the Viet Minh allies to develop and strengthen the revolutionary forces. However, the Qin-Fang Guerrillas, led by their captain, Shen Hongzhou (沈鴻周), suffered a sudden attack by the KMT troops in Lao Cai, Vietnam. The guerrillas had to reassemble and hide with the help of the local Viet Minh branch, which also provided them with the necessary provisions and funds. Only in late September did this guerrilla group return to China when the local Viet Minh organizations had to withdraw because of news that the KMT troops would soon arrive.⁷

By that time, the Guangdong Provincial Party Committee of the CCP had predicted that the contradictions between the two parties of the KMT and the CCP were irreconcilable. To persevere in a long-term battle, it was urgent to preserve the revolutionary armed forces. The geographically vast and complicated China-Vietnam border area was an ideal base for the guerrillas to either mount attacks or retreat. Therefore, it was decided in December 1945 that the main force, including the first regiment of the Southern Region People's Liberation Army (南路人民解放軍第一團 *Nanlu jiefangjun diyituan*), locally known as the "Old First Regiment," should move to the vast area of the Shiwan Mountains near Vietnam to establish a base. In February 1946, the KMT's 467th Regiment of the 156th Brigade, led by the commander Liu Zhenxiang (劉鎮湘), began to attack, encircle, and suppress the Shiwan Mountains base. The local Party Committee, with the approval of its higher Party Committee and the consent of the Viet Minh, transferred the Old First Regiment to Vietnam's mountain area near Tra Linh and Trung Khanh in Cao Bang Province and That Khe in Lang Son Province for rest and reorganization.⁸ Hoang Van Hoan (黃文歡), Party Secretary of the Committee of Viet Bac, was responsible for receiving the Old First Regiment and promised to help solve the problem of supplies for the troops. Ho Chi Minh also sent a batch of medicine and funds to express the care and solicitude of the Vietnamese government for the CCP's troops which had entered Vietnam for grouping and training.⁹ Later, the Viet Minh arranged for the CCP's troops to be stationed in Vietnamese barracks, and gradually provided the Chinese army with hand-grenades, 60mm mortar bombs, land mines, and other military supplies. In addition, the Viet Minh local organization also provided medical assistance for the Chinese army to rescue the sick and wounded Chinese personnel when the latter encountered difficulty in adapting to the jungle climate in the mountainous region of Vietnam. The former recruited members of the Vietnamese military medical team to supplement the CCP's base hospital in order to treat injured fighters and provide necessary drugs.¹⁰ With the help of the Viet Minh, the Old First Regiment had more than a year of rest and training in Vietnam. In July 1947, it was ordered to return to China to continue to build the Shiwan Mountains base.

In the areas bordering Guangxi, Yunnan, and Vietnam, two CCP forces successively entered the northern part of Vietnam for camouflage and training. The first unit was comprised of guerrillas from the

Jing-Zhen Liberated Area (靖鎮解放區 *jingzhen jiefangqu*), Guangxi Province. On 24 May 1947, the CCP Central Committee sent to its Hong Kong Bureau “Instructions for Carrying out Guerrilla War in Southern China” and asked its army in southern China to build blocks of guerrilla bases. Like its Guangdong counterpart, the Guangxi Provincial Committee also noted the geographical advantages of the Sino-Vietnamese border region. Therefore, it chose to use the transition zone connecting Guangxi, Yunnan, and Vietnam as an important strategic base. It pointed out that this base could “enable cooperation with the main forces from Guangdong which is now in Vietnam as well as enable access to the vast Vietnamese liberated area (for setting up hospitals for the wounded soldiers, training classes, institutional residences, etc.).”¹¹ In accordance with the instructions of the higher authorities, in November 1947, military and political leading cadres such as Zhuang Tian (莊田) and Zhou Nan (周楠) led the Guangxi-Yunnan-Borderland Guerrillas (桂滇邊縱隊 *Guidianbian zongdong*, hereafter GYB Guerrillas) into the Jing-Zhen region to build a stronghold and mobilize the masses to carry out an armed struggle. In February 1948, the local KMT regulars and peace preservation corps unleashed large-scale attacks on the Jing-Zhen Liberated Area. In order to smash the encirclement by enemies, the leading body of the GYB Working Committee demanded that the main force be withdrawn into Vietnamese territory for rest.¹² Thus, from May 1948 the GYB Guerrillas began to retreat into Vietnam in several groups totaling about 1,000 people. They arrived in Ha Giang Province, Vietnam in the middle and late June.

The second force were the CCP guerrillas in the south of Yunnan Province. At the end of 1947, Zhu Jiabi (朱家璧) and Zhang Zizhai (張子齋), the main military cadres of the former CCP anti-Japanese guerrillas then seeking cover in Vietnam, were ordered by the Yunnan Provincial Working Committee to return to southern Yunnan to form the Yunnan People’s Army of Self-help and Resisting Chiang Kai-Shek (雲南人民討蔣自救軍 *Yunnan renmin taojiang zijiujun*, hereafter Yunnan Self-help Guerrillas). In June 1948, the same Committee dispatched the first column of the Yunnan Self-help Guerrillas to the Jing-Zhen Liberated Area to join the GYB Guerrillas in the local area for training and consolidation, as instructed by both the Shanghai and Hong Kong Bureaus of the CCP Central Committee. At the end of June, on the way to their ordered transfer, the Yunnan Self-help Guerrillas were suddenly informed that the GYB Guerrillas had withdrawn to Vietnam due to the KMT army’s

encirclement and suppression. At the same time, since the Yunnan Self-help Guerrillas were also being pursued by KMT troops, this team of about 1,080 fighters immediately withdrew into Vietnam. In August, they joined forces with the GYB Guerrillas in the Ha Giang area.¹³

The two forces totaled more than 2,000, and their replenishment during their training period placed a heavy burden on the Viet Minh. At that time, the French-Vietnam military conflict had erupted. The Viet Minh army itself faced many difficulties in logistical supplies, but the Viet Minh Central Committee nevertheless managed to raise supplies for CCP forces. Ho Chi Minh specifically dispatched personnel to transport rice to the CCP forces. He also sent a performance group to convey greetings and appreciation. And Vietnamese *dong* (currency) were distributed to the CCP soldiers as pocket money. According to the recollection of those who experienced this period, “the necessary supplies for troops to eat, live, and for medical care, etc. were mainly supplied by Vietnam. Even the paper used to print the newspaper ‘The Combat News’ and to publish books such as ‘Anti-liberalism’ was Ho Chi Minh’s paper.”¹⁴ These measures caused Zhu Jiabi and others to feel the fraternal support and care given by their Viet Minh comrades.¹⁵

In early October 1948, in order to coordinate with the strategically decisive campaigns of the CCP, the Hong Kong Bureau telegraphed the two forces training in Vietnam to return to China and ordered them to join the combat as well as consolidate and expand the base areas. From that point on, the training in Vietnam came to an end.¹⁶

As is clear from the preceding paragraphs, these forces were pushed into the territory of Vietnam to seek protection because of the urgent situation. They made this decision to enter Vietnam based on special circumstances rather than on the strategic instructions from the CCP Central Committee in advance. Therefore, some troops (such as the Old First Regiment) entered the northern part of Vietnam only after consulting their superiors and obtained the approval of Viet Minh; other troops (such as the Yunnan Self-help Guerrillas) were criticized after they failed promptly to ask for permission from their superiors when forced to enter Vietnam on the way to search for another army with which to merge.¹⁷ These cases reflect the following three characteristics of the flow of military personnel in the Sino-Vietnamese border region at that time: First, from a strategic point of view, the CCP Central Committee was not yet planning specific guidelines for cooperation with the Viet Minh Central Committee. Second, despite the lack of strategic cooperation, the

CCP regional committees in southern China maintained contact with Vietnam and had certain exchanges as a result of the frequent dealings between borderland people from both sides and the traditional cooperation of the two countries since the 1940s. Third, although the Viet Minh had disbanded the ICP, the Party still led the Viet Minh's fight for liberation against France. Though officially seeking the support and assistance of the KMT, the Viet Minh's leaders such as Ho Chi Minh privately followed the principles of internationalism and helped the CCP troops in Vietnam for the purposes of concealment, camouflage, and training. In the liberated area it controlled, the Viet Minh provided accommodation and financial and material support for the CCP troops despite their own difficulties, which enabled the CCP southern guerrillas to have the leeway to launch military operations and a rear base to retain their revolutionary forces.

2. CCP Members in Vietnam Assist the Viet Minh

When the dispute between the CCP and KMT intensified and the Chinese Civil War officially began in June 1946, peace negotiations between France and the Viet Minh also ran into trouble. Ho Chi Minh made a special trip to France to attend the French–Vietnamese negotiations at Fontainebleau, but the two sides failed to reach a satisfactory agreement. Although the Viet Minh did not give up the possibility of peace talks with the French side, preparations for armed resistance against France were imperative. On 19 December a large-scale military conflict broke out which marked the beginning of the First Indochina War. In this context, the CCP cadres and troops that entered Vietnam began to assist the Viet Minh government and its army in anti-French resistance.

First, CCP committees in the border areas of Guangdong, Guangxi, and Yunnan appointed commissioners to enter northern Vietnam to assist the Viet Minh to establish liaison stations at the grass-roots level, to develop guerrilla bases in the border areas, and to cooperate with the Vietnamese to carry out daily work such as organization, publicity, education, and intelligence.

In May 1946, when the KMT army that had entered Vietnam in order to attend the ceremony accepting the Japanese surrender left northern Vietnam, the CCP began to send its party members to Vietnam in order to establish party branches.¹⁸ In July, with the approval of the CCP Central Committee and the consent of the Viet Minh Central

Committee, the CCP Guangdong District Committee sent Zhou Nan, Deputy Minister of its Organization Department, as a liaison to work in Vietnam. The aim was to arrange for armed personnel from Hainan and Guangdong Southern Region to retreat into Vietnam as well as to build close military ties between the two parties.¹⁹ According to French intelligence, by the end of 1946, major cities such as Hanoi and Haiphong had seen the establishment of CCP branches, newspaper offices, publishing houses, bookstores, schools, and other institutions for publicity and education. Their main task was to conduct publicity and educational work among the Chinese as well as the overseas Chinese.²⁰ They also cooperated with the local Viet Minh government to carry out political propaganda activities and participated in the preparation of the theoretical publications of the ICP. Moreover, six CCP officials were hired as advisors to the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of National Education, and the Ministry of Communications of Vietnam.²¹

In addition, from the end of 1946 to the beginning of 1947, the CCP successively sent intelligence personnel to northern Vietnam to establish liaison stations. The purpose was to protect the CCP members and cadres who were wanted and sought by the KMT by allowing them to take cover in Vietnam, and to cooperate with the armed struggle in the mountains along the China–Vietnam border as well as provide a work base for a hidden front.²² CCP intelligence personnel in Vietnam were at the same time dispatched or appointed by the Ministry of National Defense of Vietnam to assist the intelligence services in the war zone to carry out enemy reconnaissance work. They obtained a wealth of valuable military, political, economic, and cultural intelligence, which enabled them to provide a large amount of accurate and reliable information for the Vietnamese Defense Ministry to formulate strategic guidelines and operational plans.²³

Second, at the request of Vietnam, the CCP's concealed troops in Vietnam helped the armed forces of the Viet Minh to carry out military and political training.

After the Fontainebleau conference, the situation in northern Vietnam became more and more tense, and the Viet Minh thus began preparations for a war of resistance. At that time, Hoang Van Hoan, the head of Viet Bac Liberated Area, turned to the Old First Regiment, which was then in Vietnam for training, and made a request that the Chinese military and political cadres help the Viet Minh army to carry out military and political training in order to learn from the CCP's fighting

style and experience. The Chinese side actively studied the deployment of the aid work to Vietnam and decided to send the leading cadres Huang Jingwen (黄景文) and Tang Caiyou (唐才猷) of the Old First Regiment to the Vietnam Senior Infantry School and the Thai Nguyen Provincial Cadre Training Class to serve as consultants and instructors. At the same time, a number of middle and lower cadres of the CCP were also transferred, with some of them being further dispatched by the Vietnamese Defense Ministry to the war zone to collect intelligence and the others to the Viet Minh army to give military classes or take office. In addition, Ho Chi Minh sent a personal letter to the Party Committee of the Old First Regiment and requested Tang Caiyou to compile "The Military Training Outline" for Vietnamese military cadres.²⁴

Besides the Old First Regiment, the GYB Guerrillas which, as mentioned, were trained in Vietnam in 1948, also helped the Viet Minh to carry out military and political training. Ho Chi Minh invited Zhuang Tian, the commander of the GYB Guerrillas and a senior general of the CCP to the Viet Minh Center Base, to serve as a senior military advisor to the Vietnamese Defense Ministry. The Vietnamese required that Zhuang Tian help their army to establish a sound political system, improve the army's tactical and technical capabilities as well as combat capabilities, make institutional reforms in its organization to ensure supply, and strengthen the operational command capacity of the army. Zhuang Tian also introduced and promoted Mao Zedong's military thoughts to the Vietnamese Defense Ministry and the military cadres at various levels, imparted the CCP's experience in building revolutionary bases, and participated in the Vietnamese army's staff meetings to formulate combat plans to resist the French offense.²⁵

Lastly, an important task of the CCP military and political cadres in Vietnam was to help the Vietnamese form an armed force composed of the overseas Chinese. After the outbreak of the French-Vietnamese war, the armed forces of the Viet Minh in major cities and towns such as Hanoi and Haiphong were severely hit by the French and had to be transferred to the China-Vietnam border. After learning of the difficulties of the Viet Minh, the Special Committee of Guangdong Southern Region ordered Yu Mingyan (余明炎) and Pang Zi (龐自), who were working on organizing the overseas Chinese in northern Vietnam, to advise Ho Chi Minh that the overseas Chinese residing along the No. 18 road behind enemy lines should be sent to fight alongside the Vietnamese people against the French colonists. After receiving the approval of Ho Chi

Minh, they mobilized a work team from the Old First Regiment to assist the Quang Ninh Provincial Party Committee of the Viet Minh to form an overseas Chinese armed self-defense force. In May 1947, since the enlistment numbers had increased to more than 200 people, the Overseas Chinese People's Self-defense Force of Northeast Vietnam was formally established.²⁶ Their task was to find the French troops, eliminate traitors, help the Viet Minh to carry out anti-French publicity, mobilize overseas Chinese to participate in the fighting, and assist the Vietnamese in setting up base areas and opening up guerrilla zones. In July 1947, the first detachment of this force was incorporated into the Vietnamese People's Army and became an independent regiment under the command of the Vietnamese People's Army as well as the PLA of the Guangxi-Yunnan Border Region.²⁷

In general, after the withdrawal of the KMT troops from Vietnam in May 1946 more and more CCP members entered Vietnam. The CCP and the Viet Minh began to carry out daily political, propaganda, intelligence, and military exchanges and cooperation in an organized and planned manner. In the spring of 1947, a new radio contact was established between the CCP Central Committee and its Viet Minh counterpart, which enabled the two old comrades-in-arms Zhou Enlai and Ho Chi Minh to discuss relevant issues directly.²⁸ In the second half of 1947, as the Chinese PLA's operations shifted from strategic defense to strategic offense, the situation in northern China gradually improved. Therefore, the CCP Central Committee paid more and more attention to the liberation struggle in the south and realized the importance of the Viet Minh's anti-French resistance for the Chinese revolution, for it could open up a large rear area for operations in southern China. At the CCP Central Committee meeting in December 1947, Mao Zedong proposed providing assistance to the anti-French resistance led by Ho Chi Minh.²⁹ After that, when the CCP Hong Kong Bureau provided supplies for its guerrillas in southern China, it also sent via secret channels all kinds of important materials, such as food, textiles, medicine, radios, and weapons, to the Viet Minh.³⁰ Moreover, the CCP Central Committee raised and provided funds for the Viet Minh. For example, at the end of 1948, an estimated 200,000 US dollars worth of funds was transferred through the CCP Hong Kong Bureau to Ho Chi Minh.³¹

Although the personnel liaisons and daily mutual assistance between the CCP and the Viet Minh generally were spontaneous local activities that resulted from common geographical advantages and shared political

ideas, they also evolved. With the establishment of a direct connection between the CCP Central Committee and its Viet Minh counterpart, as well as the changes in the Chinese Civil War, the exchanges and cooperation between the China–Vietnam border areas began to have strategic significance. The level and scale of the exchanges were elevated from the local to the central, gradually linking together the liberation of southern China and the construction of liberated areas in northern Vietnam.

3. The CCP and Viet Minh Launch Joint Military Operations in Border Regions

From the beginning of 1948, the CCP and Viet Minh guerrillas in the Chinese-Vietnamese border areas began to launch small-scale joint military operations and established a common armed defensive position.

In April 1948, in the Guangxi-Vietnam border region, one of the People's Army groups from Quang Ninh Province, Vietnam, entered the area of Na Liang (那良) and Dong Zhong (峒中), Guangxi Province, China. They formed a Sino-Vietnamese borderland joint headquarters with the local CCP guerrilla teams so as to have a unified command of the armed forces in Fangcheng County of China and the Quang Ninh border area of Vietnam, fighting against the local armed forces of the KMT and France.³²

Between the summer and fall of 1948, in the Yunnan-Vietnam border region, the Yunnan Self-help Guerrillas who were being trained in the Ha Giang, and the Viet Minh army in the Ha Giang liberated area, jointly attacked the French army near Lai Chau, seriously wounding a French officer, and basically taking control of Ha Giang City.³³ After the Yunnan Self-help Guerrillas returned to China at the end of January 1949, the Viet Minh dispatched Ho Duc Thanh (胡德成), who was responsible for liaison affairs, to establish a liaison office in Yunnan. He reached an agreement with the Chinese side that called for the Viet Minh to first provide assistance to Zhu Jiabi's troops in order to capture the KMT military base in southern Yunnan. After that, Zhu Jiabi's troops would assist the Viet Minh to fight against the French army in Indochina.³⁴

The success of the joint action to harass the enemy in local areas facilitated further top-level cooperation between the two parties. In October 1948, Li Chao (李超), a political commissioner of the Guangdong-Guangxi Borderland Party Committee, went to Hong Kong to report on his work. The Party Secretary of the Hong Kong Bureau, Fang

Fang (方方), expressed concerns about the armed struggle in the Shiwan Mountains area and instructed him that “the geographical conditions of this area, located at the borderland among three provinces and two countries, should be well utilized.” He added, “We must work together with the Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV) to open up and establish the China–Vietnam border corridor and then use this corridor to expand the liberated areas for both sides. I have already discussed with the representatives of the CPV in Hong Kong. They agreed. The principle of uniting the military force was also agreed upon. Namely, when our troops fight in Vietnam alongside the Vietnamese troops, the political commissar will be Vietnamese and the military leader will be Chinese; when the Vietnamese troops come to join the fight in China, the political commissar will be Chinese and the military leader will be Vietnamese.” Fang Fang also instructed Li Chao that the Party Committee of the Shiwan Mountains area should send a leader to Vietnam to discuss and reach agreement on the specific issue of joining forces with the CPV.³⁵ After that, the Third Detachment of the Guangdong-Guangxi Border Column (粵桂邊縱隊 *Yueguibian zongdui*) cooperated with the Viet Minh as ordered. And in March 1949, led by its Deputy Commander, Li Hanwei (黎漢威), the Third Detachment launched a surprise attack on Mong Cai, liberated the prison in the French stronghold, and successfully rescued more than 100 Chinese and Vietnamese revolutionaries detained there.³⁶

On the whole, although there were not many troops involved in the combined operations of China and Vietnam, these small-scale campaigns still caused many problems for the KMT and French troops on the border, which made the French colonial authorities and the local KMT government feel threatened. The French got information that the representatives of the CCP and the Viet Minh had signed a “Mutual Assistance Agreement” in Yunnan on 18 June 1948. In the agreement, the ongoing revolutionary struggle in China and Vietnam was considered as part of the international Communist movement, with each side providing the other with arms, ammunition, and supplies; exchanging military representatives; and expanding the base areas in the borderland.³⁷ The French colonial authorities and the KMT authorities who had similar concerns thus began to cooperate in 1948 to formulate a joint plan of “Suppression of Bandits.” Yang Litian (陽麗天), the Deputy Security Commander of the Longzhou administrative inspector’s office, claims that he was appointed by the Guangxi KMT authorities as the chief representative, went to Vietnam to negotiate with the French colonial army in Lang Son

Province, and signed a Sino–French joint agreement to eliminate the two People’s Armed Forces on the Sino–Vietnamese borders.³⁸ Therefore, from 1948 two opposing camps formed in the Sino–Vietnamese border areas, one comprised of France and the KMT, and the other being the CCP and the Viet Minh. In the latter case, the Vietnamese Anti-colonial National Liberation War and the Chinese People’s Liberation War (i.e., Chinese Civil War) were linked together.

When comparing the cooperation of the respective camps, it is clear that the cooperation between the KMT and France was limited, because both parties were reluctant to be involved in the internal conflicts of the other country so as to avoid lengthening the front line or internationalizing the dispute. Consequently, their cooperation was generally limited to cracking down on the smuggling of materials across the border, extraditing captured Communists, and engaging in combat operations in the form of intelligence exchange or aerial reconnaissance. Even here, the effect was limited. The main reason lies in the suspicions between the KMT and the French. As a result, both the KMT and the French had reservations when sharing information.³⁹ Furthermore, when the two sides attacked the Communist revolutionary forces, they did not do their utmost to eliminate the guerrillas. Instead, they chased the guerrillas into the other’s territory and left the problem for the other side.⁴⁰ Additionally, due to the length and the steep terrain of the border between China and Vietnam, the area could not be effectively controlled, as both the KMT and the French troops were insufficient and scattered.⁴¹

In contrast, the CCP–Viet Minh guerrilla teams were very mobile. Taking advantage of the geographical conditions of the border area and the traditional contacts of borderland people, the guerrillas of the CCP and the Viet Minh could readily move between both China and Vietnam. In addition, the CCP–Viet Minh cooperation was more comprehensive, including mutual assistance in intelligence gathering, military training, and the sharing of reserve materials. Moreover, their cooperation was based on common revolutionary beliefs. Potential dissonance, however, still existed. In the second half of 1948, since there were more cases of the CCP entering Vietnam to engage in combat, this drew the attention of the Viet Minh Party Committees in Ha Giang and Lang Son. The combat capabilities exhibited by the Chinese Communists enhanced the morale of the military and civilians in the Viet Minh base areas.⁴² But the Viet Minh was also under great pressure, for many Chinese borderland residents had escaped from the war zone and entered Vietnam, causing a

chaotic situation and difficulties for the Viet Minh borderland Party Committee in terms of population management.⁴³

In the middle of 1949, along with the southward march of the Chinese PLA, the most important joint Sino-Vietnamese operation took place on the border between Guangxi and Vietnam. On 2 April, Chen Mingjiang (陳明江), political commissar of the Third Detachment of the Guangdong-Guangxi Border Region, went to Vietnam to discuss with the Viet Min the coordination of military tasks in the border areas between the two countries.⁴⁴ Truong Chinh (長征), General Secretary of the ICP, and Hoang Van Thai (黃文泰), chief of the Vietnamese military, and others met with Chen Mingjiang. The two sides decided to establish a unified command. The Viet Minh integrated a Vietnamese major force with the independent medium regiment (made up of overseas Chinese guerrillas), together with five hundred soldiers from the Guangdong-Guangxi borderland, to be led by Le Quang Ba (黎廣波), commander of northern Vietnam's National Army. The activities of the allied forces would occur mainly in the border strongholds, such as Longzhou, Nanning (南寧), Qinzhou (欽州), Mong Cai, Lang Son, and Cao Bang. Ho Chi Minh instructed the Vietnamese military leaders who would soon enter China to keep the following in mind: "caution, secretiveness, unity, friendship, victory."⁴⁵ On 12 June, Le Quang Ba led more than 1,000 Vietnamese troops into China, and this force was later converted into the 27th Regiment of the Third Detachment of the PLA of the Guangdong-Guangxi Border Region, fighting side by side with the Chinese army.⁴⁶ From late June, the CCP-Viet Minh launched the Battle of the Guangdong-Guangxi Border Corridor. After three months, the guerrilla bases along the border of Guangdong and Guangxi were linked together. The coalition forces realized the strategic goal of controlling Guangdong and Guangxi's south access to the sea, creating conditions for the South Field Army to destroy the enemy in Guangdong and Guangxi's coastal areas. At the end of September, the 27th Regiment was ordered to return to Vietnam.⁴⁷

Soon after the founding of the PRC, Ho Chi Minh sent Ly Bich Son (李碧山) and Nguyen Duc Thuy (阮德瑞), officials in charge of overseas Chinese and Chinese affairs, and Hoang Van Hoan, to Beijing, via waterways and land routes respectively, in order to seek military assistance from the CCP Central Committee. At the end of 1949, Ho Chi Minh also went to Beijing and later to Moscow to request the support of both China and the Soviet Union. On 18 January 1950, the PRC recognized the DRV

and then immediately launched a campaign of aiding Vietnam's anti-French resistance, marking the beginning of a new period in Sino-Vietnamese relations.

4. The Characteristics and Influence of the CCP-Viet Minh Border Cooperation

After the Second World War, although the Chinese People's Liberation War and the Vietnamese People's Anti-French Resistance War were not the same in terms of the nature of the war they fought, they both were based on dissatisfaction with and attempts to subvert the postwar political arrangements in Asia agreed upon by the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom, and the United States, which demanded that the CCP should be incorporated into the KMT's government and acquiesced to the French return to Indochina. As leaders of their respective revolutionary wars, the CCP and the Viet Minh came together because of their common sense of mission—winning national liberation and dominating their country's destiny. The exchanges and cooperation between the two sides in the Sino-Vietnamese border areas were mutually reinforcing, so that the two groups could unite against the Chinese KMT authorities and French colonists. This cross-border revolutionary cooperation underwent two major stages.

The first stage lasted from the Japanese surrender to the end of 1947. During this period, the exchanges and collaboration between the CCP and the Viet Minh were mainly comprised of the spontaneous actions of the party branches and guerrillas in the border areas as a reaction to particular circumstances. Suppressed and hunted by the KMT army, the CCP guerrillas and some cadres were forced to go to the northern regions of Vietnam for concealment, training, and the establishment of underground party organizations in order to conserve their forces. These arrangements were made in light of the urgency of the situation and geography. They were not, as the French or the KMT believed, strategic deployment and instructions made actively or in advance by the CCP or even Moscow.⁴⁸ In fact, according to the postwar political arrangements and the strategic focus of the Soviet Union itself, the USSR was not concerned about the Communist movement in the Far East except in Northeast Asia.⁴⁹ Although some of the representatives of the Soviet Union in the Far East (such as the consul general in the Soviet legation in Bangkok, the capital of Thailand) wanted to support the Viet Minh's fight

against France, their efforts to promote the establishment of relations between the Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party (of the Bolsheviks) and the Viet Minh Central Committee failed.⁵⁰ At that time, the CCP Central Committee was so engaged in its life-and-death battle in the northeast and north of China that it did not put the issue of strategic cooperation with the Viet Minh on its agenda, for the southeast and southwest were controlled by the KMT.

Apart from spontaneity, the exchanges and cooperation at this stage were also characterized by their small scale, decentralization, and secrecy. Due to the complex geographical environment, poor travel conditions and communications, and enemy suppression, it was difficult for the Chinese guerrillas to establish large-scale liberated areas connecting their bases. It was thus sometimes necessary to take a devious route through Vietnam for the purposes of liaison. The Vietnamese army had similar problems. Therefore, the personnel exchanges and cooperation between the CCP and the Viet Minh were based on geographical conditions. Bases or traffic stations were established at some key positions on the border, with only about several hundred to a thousand soldiers stationed in each place. In addition, these actions were carried out in secrecy, including the Viet Minh's acceptance of and help given to the CCP members who entered Vietnam, and the latter's assistance to the Viet Minh's activities. It was particularly important for the Viet Minh not to disclose to the outside world their secret contact and cooperation with the CCP and instead to downplay their own Communist characteristics in order to win wide international support, including access to material assistance from the KMT.

The second stage lasted from the beginning of 1948 to the end of September 1949. At this time, the CCP and the Viet Minh began to take a strategic and long-term perspective in their plans for cross-border cooperation, especially through combining their forces to expand the scale of combat. This was mainly due to the transformation of the Civil War situation in China. With the CCP army pushing forward smoothly in the north, the CCP Central Committee began to consciously develop its relations with the Viet Minh, with a view to facilitating the PLA pulling south afterwards and liberating southern towns as soon as possible. In the same way, the Viet Minh Central Committee also realized that it could use the victory of the Chinese revolution and the force of the PLA to vigorously promote anti-French resistance in Vietnam. In January 1949, the Viet Minh Central Committee began preparations for

a full-scale counteroffensive strategy. The ICP General Secretary, Truong Chinh, issued a report at its Sixth Conference of Cadres and pointed out that since the CCP's forthcoming victory and the PLA's southward operations could cause pressure to the French colonial forces, the Viet Minh should take advantage of this opportunity and actively prepare for a general counter-offensive.⁵¹ Obviously, the perceptions of the Central Committees of both parties were also conveyed to the respective leading cadres in the border regions, making them further realize that they could rely on each other's strength, quickly unite the main forces, expand the armed base areas, and form strategic advantages against the enemy. At that time, two opposing camps had formed in the Sino-Vietnamese border regions: the CCP-Viet Minh versus the KMT-France.

It should be noted that at this point the target of the joint operations between the CCP and the Viet Minh were not only the French Army, but also the KMT army. For example, the large-scale joint operations in the middle of 1949 established a policy of cleaning up the KMT army in China first and then entering Hai Ninh, Vietnam, in order to fight. Hence the speculation that the two sides reached a tacit understanding that Vietnam would first help China in its liberation, and then China would fully assist Vietnam in resisting the French. Discussions about the revolutionary relations between China and Vietnam can be dated back to the early 20th century when Sun Yat-sen (孫中山), the founding father of the Republic of China held talks with the Vietnamese Nationalist leader Phan Boi Chau (潘佩珠). Sun Yat-sen advocated that Vietnamese patriots should first join the Chinese Revolutionary Party. After the Chinese revolution succeeded, China would fully support the oppressed countries in Asia to achieve independence; Phan Boi Chau advocated that the Chinese revolutionaries should fully support Vietnam, help it gain independence, and then use Vietnam as a base to capture Guangdong, Guangxi, and Central China, thus winning the Chinese revolution.⁵²

These two plans not only reflected China and Vietnam's revolutionary conditions for mutual assistance due to geopolitics and a common mission of the times—the establishment of independent and democratic new countries—but also reveal that the revolutionary leaders of the two countries had their own subjective consciousness and self-interested priorities in the order of revolution. Comparatively speaking, the border cooperation between the CCP and the Viet Minh also reflected the characteristics of revolutionary mutual assistance with greater efficiency than before. The key lay in the sense of mutual trust in

the revolution. Rather than emphasizing the question of who should first give aid, both sides made their judgment based on the revolutionary situation. At that time, the CCP had gained the advantage in the domestic war and would win national victory in the near future. Therefore, the Viet Minh should first assist the CCP in fighting in the Guangxi-Yunnan borderland and cooperate with the southward advance of the CCP's major force; then, after the founding of the PRC, the CCP would provide assistance for the Viet Minh and help Vietnam launch the general counterattack of its national liberation war. At the beginning of 1950, Liu Shaoqi (劉少奇), vice Chairman of the Central People's Government of China pointed out to Luo Guibo (羅貴波), who was about to enter Vietnam to take charge of the liaison work, that he would like to "thank Vietnamese comrades for their support of the Chinese revolution." The historian Wen Zhuang (文莊) points out that "this [statement] mainly referred to the Viet Minh's protection and help to the Guangxi-Yunnan-Guizhou troops being transferred to Vietnam during the Chinese People's Liberation War."⁵³ This reflected the fact that to some extent the PRC's assistance to Vietnam was to requite the Viet Minh's earlier favors.

This cross-border exchange and cooperation between the CCP and the Viet Minh had an impact on the relations between the two parties, the two countries, and even the situation in Southeast Asia. First, the process of the revolutionary wars in China and Vietnam was advanced. Mutual assistance and cooperation between the two sides not only helped to preserve their own strength, but also enabled them to develop and grow with the aid of collective power and to avoid falling into isolated and helpless situations.

Second, relations between the CCP and the Viet Minh were in an adjustment process. At that point, both the CCP and the Viet Minh were revolutionary parties that had not yet achieved national power. Their relations were equal and mutually supportive, and they also maintained independence and autonomy. However, due to the influence of internationalism and traditional concepts, they both had mentalities of being big parties and big powers. After the founding of the PRC, according to the arrangement made with the Soviet Union regarding the division of labor in the international Communist movement, the CCP formally assumed the responsibility of leading the Asian revolution. The actual relationship between the CCP and the Viet Minh became that of "the leader and the led". It obviously took time to adapt to the transition from an equal relationship to a supervisor-subordinate one, which may have caused some disputes.

Third, the CCP–Viet Minh’s cross-border cooperation strengthened their peoples’ sense of sharing a common hatred against the enemy under the propaganda and guidance of ideology, which had an effect on the reconstruction of the relations between the two countries. Vietnam was once a vassal state of China, and it was full of vigilance against, as well as respect for, the big northern power. The Viet Minh once tried to seek the KMT regime’s aid against the French. However, after the CCP and the Viet Minh carried out border exchanges and cooperation, the KMT became a common ideological foe. The Viet Minh vented their suspicion, disgust, and dissatisfaction with their big northern neighbor on the KMT while establishing a fraternal party relationship with the CCP. Consequently, national differences and contradictions between the two sides were minimized, while sympathy and understanding among the people in the border areas were promoted. In particular, the self-defense forces formed by the overseas Chinese, who fought alongside the Viet Minh against France, aroused the gratitude and appreciation of Viet Minh local committees in Vietnam’s border regions.⁵⁴ However, attention must be paid to the fact that the relationship between the two peoples also lay in the propaganda of two parties, which called for their people to have the spirit of internationalism and avoid nationalist sentiments.⁵⁵ On the one hand, this reflected the dissatisfaction of some border residents. On the other, it showed that both parties intended to use ideological concepts to strengthen the ties and cooperation between the two countries, which were then further advanced after the founding of the PRC and the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Vietnam. Hence the relationship between the two countries turned into a fraternal one in the socialist camp.

Finally, the CCP–Viet Minh cooperation reinforced the integration of socialist and national liberation movements in East and Southeast Asia, posing a challenge to the post-war Asian order. From the beginning of the Chinese People’s Liberation War, the CCP Central Committee intentionally linked China’s Civil War with the anti-colonial movement in Southeast Asia in its publications and media releases.⁵⁶ The continuous development of the Sino–Vietnamese border zone led to the formation of two opposing camps: the CCP–Viet Minh versus the KMT-France. As the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union intensified, with the success of the Chinese revolution and the continuation and expansion of Sino-Vietnamese cooperation, the curtain of the Cold War in Asia was about to unfold and the pattern of the Asian socialist camp was also to be established.

Notes

- 1 After the signing of the Sino-French Convention, the situation in Vietnam changed. The Vietnamese people believed that China had sacrificed Vietnamese interests and as a result the KMT troops and agencies in Vietnam were attacked. See “Li Ping’s Notes to Chiang Kai-shek about the Sudden Changes in Vietnamese Situation after Signing the Sino-French New Convention,” 15 March 1946, (002-080200-00305-026, Taipei: Academia Historica).
- 2 At the end of January 1949, when interviewed by reporters, Chairman Ho Chi Minh responded to the question concerning China’s Civil War as follows: “People’s China is part of the entire people’s world. The victory of democracy in China will have an impact on the entire world including our Vietnam.” See *Hồ Chí Minh Biên Niên Tiểu Sử, tập 4 (1946–1950)* (Nhà xuất bản chính trị quốc gia sự thật, 2016), tr.224.
- 3 See, among others, Yang Kuisong, “The PRC’s Policy Changes from Resisting France to Striving for Peace in Indochina,” *Zhongguo shehui kexue* (Social Sciences in China), Vol.1 (2011), pp.193–204; Niu Jun, “Re-discussion on China’s Policy of Aiding Vietnam and Resisting France,” *Waijiao pinglun* (Foreign Affairs Review), Vol.3 (2012), pp. 56–73; Chen Jian, “China and the First Indochina War, 1950–54,” *The China Quarterly*, No.133 (March 1993), pp. 85–110; Zhai Qiang, *China and the Vietnam Wars, 1950–1975*, (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000).
- 4 Chen King introduced information about the liaisons and activities between the CCP and Viet Minh by using the KMT’s sources, but that work contained a few mistakes and some unconfirmed statements. King C. Chen, *Vietnam and China 1938–1954*, (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1969); Zhai Qiang, in his book *China and the Vietnam Wars, 1950–1975*, quoting from Wu Jilin’s reminiscent article “A Little-known History of Aiding Vietnam and Resisting France,” *Junshi lishi* (Journal of Military History), Vol. 6 (1994), introduced the CCP’s assistance to Vietnam in the early stage of the Indochina War; Laura M. Calkins’s book, *China and the First Vietnam War, 1947–54* (London and New York: Routledge, 2015) has more coverage on this period. She mainly used the intelligence of the United States and Britain, but that material was not corroborated by materials from China or Vietnam. Therefore, the book reflects the degree of concern and understanding of Indochina in Western countries at that time only.
- 5 In 1946–1947, Ho Chi Minh sent several letters to the KMT to express his respect for Chiang Kai-shek and ask for aid. “Ho Chi Minh’s Reply to Wu Tiecheng” (26 April 1946), Special 11/27 · 2, KMT History Museum (Taipei); “The KMT Party Secretary-General Wu Tiecheng presented President Chiang Kai-shek his observations on the Chairman of Vietnamese

- Revolutionary League Nguyễn Hải Thân and others as well as reported to the superior for further instruction,” (7 June 1947), 001-062000-00002-011, Academia Historica (Taipei).
- 6 Vô Nguyễn Giáp, *Nanwang de suiyue* (The Unforgettable Years) (Hanoi: Vietnam Foreign Languages Press, 1971), p. 28.
 - 7 The CCP History Research Center of Qinzhou Municipal Party Committee, *Zhongguo renmin jiefangjun yueguibian zongdui disan diqizhidui shi* (The History of the Seventh Branch of the Third Detachment of the Chinese People’s Liberation Army’s Guangdong-Guangxi Border Column) (Nanning: Guangxi renmin chubanshe, 1996), pp. 5–6.
 - 8 *Zhongguo renmin jiefangjun yueguibian zongdui disan diqizhidui shi*, pp. 18–19.
 - 9 Wu Jilin, “A Little-known History of Aiding Vietnam and Resisting France”, p.23.
 - 10 *Zhongguo renmin jiefangjun yueguibian zongdui disan diqizhidui shi*, pp.141–144.
 - 11 *Zhongguo renmin jiefangjun dianguiqianbian zongdui (Shang)* (The PLA Yunnan-Guangxi-Guizhou Border Column, Volume 1) (Kunming: Yunnan renmin chubanshe, 1989), Vol. 1, pp.63–64.
 - 12 *Zhongguo renmin jiefangjun dianguiqianbian zongdui*, Vol. 1, p. 196.
 - 13 *Zhongguo renmin jiefangjun dianguiqianbian zongdui*, Vol. 1, pp. 202–204.
 - 14 Guo Mingjin, “Chinese troops training in Vietnam,” *Zhongguo gushi: chuantongban* (Chinese stories: a traditional edition), Vol. 9 (2011), pp. 124–126.
 - 15 *Zhongguo renmin jiefangjun dianguiqianbian zongdui*, Vol. 1, p. 349.
 - 16 *Zhongguo renmin jiefangjun dianguiqianbian zongdui*, Vol. 1, p. 8.
 - 17 *Zhongguo renmin jiefangjun dianguiqianbian zongdui*, Vol. 1, pp. 99–100.
 - 18 *Zhongguo renmin jiefangjun dianguiqianbian zongdui*, Vol. 1, p. 330.
 - 19 Central Archives and Guangdong Provincial Archives, *Guangdong geming lishi wenjian huiji (1946.1–1947.7) Guangdong qudangwei wenjian* (Collection of Guangdong Revolutionary Historical Documents from January 1946 to July 1947: Guangdong Provincial Party Committee’s Documents), 1989, p.87.
 - 20 “Note pour Haut Commissaire de France pour l’Indochine: Activités chinoises au Tonkin dans les zones occupées par les rebelles,” (24 juin 1947), 120QO/174, AMAE (Archives du Ministère des Affaires Étrangères).
 - 21 “Note de Haut Commissariat Indochine: Les communistes chinois et le Viet Minh (de Septembre 1945 à Septembre 1948),” (23 septembre 1948), 10 H 287, SHD (Service historique de la Défense).
 - 22 *Zhongguo renmin jiefangjun yueguibian zongdui disan diqizhidui shi*, p. 140.
 - 23 Wu, “A Little-known History of Aiding Vietnam and Resisting France,” p. 24.
 - 24 Wu, “A Little-known History of Aiding Vietnam and Resisting France,” p. 24.
 - 25 Wu, “A Little-known History of Aiding Vietnam and Resisting France,” p. 24.

- 26 The CCP History Research Center of Fangchenggang Municipal Party Committee, *Zhonggong Guangxi difang lishi zhuanji yanjiu* (Local History Study of the CCP in Guangxi: Fangchenggang City Volume) (Nanning: Guangxi renmin chubanshe, 2001), pp. 239–240, 247.
- 27 *Zhongguo renmin jiefangjun yueguibian zongdui disan diqizhidui shi*, p. 145.
- 28 Zhang Yisheng, “The Revolutionary Friendship of Premier Zhou and Chairman Hô,” *Yindu zhina yanjiu* (Indochina Research), Vol. 3 (1981), p. 11.
- 29 “Chairman Mao’s Talk at the CCP Central Committee Meeting in December 1947,” cited in Niu Jun, *Lengzhan yu xinzhongguo waijiao de yuanqi (1949–1955)* (The Origin of Cold War and The PRC Diplomacy (1949–1955)) (Beijing: Shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe, 2013), p. 224.
- 30 According to French information and the seized materials, in the spring of 1948, a secret communication line between Hainan Province in China and Nghe An Province in Vietnam was established. From time to time ships that had been loaded with Chinese food, textiles, medicine, etc. entered the waterway at C a Hôi. “Renseignement: Trafic chinois entre la province de Nghe An et Hai Nan,” (30 avril 1948) and “Avis de Renseignement N° 33,” (21 juillet 1948), 10 H 287, SHD. The Viet Minh also set up an agency in Hong Kong which was mainly responsible for liaison with the Hong Kong Bureau of the CCP and purchasing necessary materials. “Renseignement: de l’installation d’une mission d’achat à Hong Kong,” (13 mai 1948), 10 H 287, SHD.
- 31 “Fang Fang’s Telegram to the CCP Central Committee—Reimbursement Fees Requires \$7,000 or \$8,000 a Month,” 27 November 1948, *Zhonggong zhongyang Xianggang fenju wenjian huiji* (Collection of Documents by Hong Kong Bureau of the CCP Central Committee), (Central Archives and Guangdong Provincial Archives, 1989), p. 267.
- 32 *Zhongguo renmin jiefangjun yueguibian zongdui disan diqizhidui shi*, p. 104.
- 33 “Copie démarquée du T.O. 166-167 du 15 juillet de Fransulat Kunming,” (20 September 1948), 10 H 287, SHD.
- 34 “Bulletin de Renseignements (N° 37) (Pério de du 10 février au 10 mars 1949),” (10 March 1949), 4014 COL 23, CAOM (Centre des Archives d’Outre-Mer).
- 35 *Zhongguo renmin jiefangjun yueguibian zongdui disan diqizhidui shi*, p. 141. At that time, the Chinese communists often referred to the Viet Minh as the Communist Party of Vietnam.
- 36 *Zhonggong Guangxi difang lishi zhuanji yanjiu*, pp. 162–165.
- 37 “Renseignement de S.D.E.C.E.: Indochine—Traité d’alliance entre communistes chinois et communistes annamites,” (25 août 1948), 10 H 287, SHD.
- 38 Yang Litian, “The Inside Story of the New Guangxi Armed Forces’ Collaboration with the Imperialists to Harm the Revolutionary Forces in

- Guangxi-Guangdong Border Areas,” *Guangxi wenshi ziliao xuanji (diwuji)* (Collection of Guangxi Cultural and Historical Material), Vol. 5 (1963), pp.153–154.
- 39 “Télégramme de Kunming à Saigon (N°167),” (15 September 1948), 10 H 287, SHD.
- 40 “Fiche pour le Haut-Commissariat de France pour l’Indochine: Renseignements sur l’implantation des bandes communistes chinoises à la frontière de l’Indochine,” (avril 1949), 10 H 287, SHD.
- 41 “Note de Haut Commissariat Indochine: Les communistes chinois et le Viet Minh (de Septembre 1945 à Septembre 1948),” (23 septembre 1948), 10 H 287, SHD.
- 42 “Báo cáo về tình hình Hà Giang năm 1948 của UBKCHC Tỉnh Hà Giang,” (5.4.1949) in “Báo cáo tình hình chung trong năm 1948 của UBKCHC tỉnh Hà Giang,” PTT, ML 2, 52; and “Báo cáo tổng kết năm 1949,” (12.01.1950) in “Báo cáo tình hình chung trong năm 1949 của UBKCHC tỉnh Hà Giang,” PTT, ML2, 159, Trung Tâm Lưu Trữ Quốc Gia III (Vietnam National Archives No.3, VNA 3).
- 43 “Báo cáo về ba tháng 7, 8, 9 nam 1948” (20.10.1948) in “Báo cáo tình hình chung trong năm 1948 của UBKCHC tỉnh Hà Giang,” PTT, ML 2, 52, VNA 3.
- 44 “Report on the Work of the CCP Guangdong-Guangxi Border Prefectural Party Committee: The Enemy’s Movements and Our Work Achievements in the Four Months in Shiwan Mountains,” 3 February 1949, *Guangdong geming lishi wenjian huiji (1946.2–1949.5) Yuegui bianqu dangzuzhi wenjian* (Collection of Guangdong Revolutionary Historical Documents from February 1946 to May 1949: Guangdong-Guangxi Border Prefectural Party Committee’s Documents), (Central Archives and Guangdong Provincial Archives, 1988), p.542.
- 45 *Hồ Chí Minh Biên Niên Tiểu Sử*, tập 4 (1946–1950), tr.240–241.
- 46 *Zhongguo renmin jiefangjun yueguibian zongdui disan diqizhidui shi*, p. 142.
- 47 *Yueguibian wuzhuang douzheng shiliao* (Historical Material of Armed Struggle in the Border Areas of Guangdong and Guangxi) (Guangzhou: Guangdong rennin chubanshe, 1989), p. 526.
- 48 The French intelligence agency in Indochina noted that there were Soviet and Chinese communists working in Vietnam and that they might have established a new agency to substitute the Communist International Far East Bureau to guide the entire Southeast Asian communist movement, including Indochina. “Commissariat Fédéral aux Affaires Politiques: Le Parti Chinois en Indochine du Sud (Août 1945–Décembre 1946),” (3 février 1947), 2 HCI 326, CAOM.
- 49 In the early post-war years, the Soviet Union didn’t want to damage its interests in Mongolia and northeast China, so Stalin demanded that the CCP join the KMT’s government. As for the Indochinese problem,

- Indochina was far away from the Soviet sphere of influence. Therefore, Stalin didn't support the Vietnamese communists because his strategic focus was in Europe which was on the basis of the collaboration with France. However, with the international situation changed and the success of the Chinese revolution, Stalin modified his policy towards Asia. See Shen Zhihua, "The Chinese Civil War and the Reorientations of the Soviet Union's Policy toward China," *Lishi jiaoxue wenti* (History Research and Teaching), Vol.1 (2017), pp. 3–23; and Mari Olsen, *Soviet-Vietnam Relations and the Role of China 1949–64: Changing Alliances* (London and New York: Routledge, 2005), pp. 4–5.
- 50 Benoît de Tréglodé, "Premiers contacts entre le Viet Nam et l'Union Soviétique (1947–1948): Nouveaux documents des archives russes," *Approches Asie*, N°16 (1999), pp. 125–135.
- 51 *Văn kiện Đảng toàn tập*, tập10, Hà Nội : Nhà xuất bản Chính trị quốc gia, 2002, tr.38–39.
- 52 Guo Ming, ed., *Zhongyue guanxi yanbian sishinian* (The Evolution of China-Vietnam Relations for 40 Years) (Nanning: Guangxi renmin chubanshe, 1992), p.7.
- 53 Wen Zhuang, *Zhongyue guanxi liangqiannian* (Two Thousand Years of Sino-Vietnamese Relations) (Beijing: Shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe, 2013), p. 92. Wen Zhuang had previously been the interpreter in the Chinese Military Advisory Group.
- 54 "Báo cáo tình hình chung tỉnh Lạng Sơn trong tháng 12/47" (29.12.1947) in "Báo cáo tình hình chung tháng 12.1947 của UBND tỉnh Lạng Sơn," PTT, ML 2, 15, VNA 3.
- 55 *Văn kiện Đảng toàn tập*, tập10, tr.38–39.
- 56 *Zhonggong zhongyang wenjian xuanji (di shiliuce 1946–1947)* (Selected Works of the CCP Central Committee Documents 1946–1947) (Beijing: Zhonggong zhongyang dangxiao chubanshe, 1992), Vol. 16, p. 722.