

**A MEMOIR OF SOME STRATEGIC
POLICY DECISIONS AND MAJOR
HISTORICAL EVENTS**

BO YIBO

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CENTRAL COMMITTEE OF THE CHINESE COMMUNIST PARTY**

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

Save where use of English-language editions is specifically noted, citations reflect the author's use of Chinese-language editions, and the text of those citations reflects original work by the translators. Titles of these works have not been cited using Chinese characters, as they would be of little use to the English reader, and as a reader conversant with Chinese would have little difficulty in identifying the original editions.

Spelling of Chinese words and proper names follows the pinyin system, with two exceptions. The Wade-Giles spelling has been retained in the case of a few proper names familiar to the English reader from their use in Taiwan (e.g. *Chiang Kai-shek*, *Kuomintang*), and in cases where proper names appear in citations from English-language editions, (e.g. *Mao Tse-tung*).

English and Chinese prose have developed over the centuries from very different sources. Those who do not read both languages must take it on faith that they bring vastly different resources to bear on the expression of similar messages. As this work is a political memoir, the language of this translation is essentially that of English politics, with the necessary concessions to Marxist terminology. No attempt has been made to render the pungent and colourful individual quality of the Chinese text, which contains quantities of literary allusions and proverbial expression

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PREFACE

This is a book of memoirs, for which I have also done some research. It is in two volumes, and it covers the period from 1949 up to the eve of the Cultural Revolution in 1966. It deals with the creation of some of the Party's and the nation's strategic economic and social development policy decisions, and with some major events. For this reason, it is entitled, *A Memoir of Some Strategic Policy Decisions and Major Historical Events*.

Early in 1949, we were winning the War of Liberation across the country, and the main focus of the Party's work shifted from rural to urban areas. It was against this background that I was instructed by the Central Committee of the CPC to take control of the City of Beiping¹ while organizing and establishing the principal financial and economic institutions of New China. After the founding of the People's Republic of China under the direct leadership of Chairman Mao, Comrade Liu Shaoqi, Premier Zhou Enlai, Comrade Zhu De, Comrade Chen Yun and Comrade Deng Xiaoping, I became involved in the leadership on financial and economic issues, including industry and transportation. This enabled me to learn how the Central Committee of the CPC reached some of its strategic policy decisions and how they were implemented. For years, I have wanted to write a book based on the events I personally experienced and the facts as I saw them, supplemented by historical data. My heavy workload and lack of time prevented me from setting to work for a long time. Following the 13th Congress of the Party, my regular work within the Central Committee of the CPC was somewhat reduced. It was only then that this task really took form on my research agenda. In April 1988, I submitted a report to the Standing Committee of the Politburo of the Party's Central Committee, in which I expressed my wish to complete this task before I die. It was immediately approved by the Central Committee of the CPC. Thanks to the concern and guidance of the Central Committee Leading Group on Party Historiography as well as the support and assistance of the departments concerned, the first volume of this book was finally presented to our readers on the eve of the Party's 70th birthday, after more than two years of work.

The first volume of this book is devoted to strategic policy decisions and major events which occurred in the 8 years between 1949, when we took control of Beiping and Tianjin from the old regime and when we were striving to found New China, up to 1956, the year in which the socialist reforms were basically

¹ Name of the city of Beijing under the Kuomintang rule (1911-1949) [Translator's note].

complete. This was a period of profound change in Chinese society. During this period, some of the most crucial and significant major policy decisions and historical events involving the Party were those in which the Party led the people in rapidly healing the wounds left by the war, in the successful restoration of financial and economic activity under the leadership of the Party, in the timely transformation of private ownership of means of production to a system of socialist ownership, in the elimination of the exploiting classes and the system of social exploitation and in the successful establishment of a basically socialist economic system, thus ushering in a new epoch of socialist construction on the part of the Chinese people. This volume therefore focuses mainly on telling the readers of the historical context and objective basis of this historic policy decision made by the Central Committee of the CPC and Chairman Mao. It will also demonstrate the talent, wisdom and creativity which the Chinese people brought to the implementation of this policy decision, under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party. At present, many scholars both within China and abroad are studying the great social changes which took place in China during the 1950's. I hope this book will be of some help to them in their work.

Volume II of this book is currently in progress. It recalls the strategic policy decisions and major events of the decade of full-scale socialist construction from 1957 to 1966. These ten years mark an arduous period of policy shifts, as the Party strove to explore appropriate ways and means for building socialism in China. In the process, our successes enriched our experience, and our failures taught us lessons as well. A number of errors were made in policy decisions for which we paid dearly. In the second volume of the book, the readers will be told how these errors occurred and what the Party and the people did to rectify them. By analyzing and studying this period of history objectively and in depth and by learning the lessons of history, we should certainly be able to avoid making similar mistakes in our work in the future.

The basic conclusions on the main historical experiences and lessons covered in this book have been reached in the *Resolution Concerning Certain Historical Issues Within the Party Since the Founding of the People's Republic*, which was passed by the 6th Plenary Session of the Central Committee of the 11th Congress of the Party. I fully support it. Yet I feel that the *Resolution* can only provide conclusions in principle on many strategic policy decisions and major historical events. Since the period in question is a major subject of historical research, these conclusions must be further expanded and analyzed. I would like to carry out an experiment in this regard. I decided to write this book with these issues in mind.

As this book is not devoted to personal matters, it naturally differs from autobiographical works, yet it contains many personal recollections and details that cannot be found in historical archives. I feel obliged to write down the facts as I understand them for present and future generations to study and assess. It can be said that this book is the product of research which integrates personal recollections with archival material.

We face an urgent task: the creation of an authoritative “national history,” based on study of the history of the People’s Republic of China. It would be a source of profound satisfaction for me if my book could provide some historical data to the relevant departments of the Central Committee of the CPC in their task of writing authentic histories of the People’s Republic of China and of the socialist period of the Chinese Communist Party as well as for institutions, experts and scholars who study these issues. I would be gratified if a reading of this book would inspire readers, deepen their awareness of the need to abide by the Party’s basic line of “One Centre, Two Basic Points,”² deepen their belief in socialism, motivate them to work even harder for modernization, reform and greater openness, and, as a result, for the great cause of socialism with Chinese characteristics.

Please feel free to point out any errors which may be found in this book.

Bo Yibo

April, 1991, Beijing

² "One centre" is taking economic construction as the centre. "Two Basic Points" involve "upholding the Four Cardinal Principles and persevering in the policy of reform and opening-up". This slogan summarizes the basic line taken by the Chinese Communist Party at its 13th National Congress in 1987. The Four Cardinal Principles are: upholding the socialist road, upholding the people’s democratic dictatorship, upholding the Chinese Communist leadership, and upholding Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong thought. [Translator’s note].

CHAPTER I

TAKING CONTROL OF BEIPING³ AND TIANJIN

The Chinese revolution led by the Chinese Communist Party, following Chairman Mao's instructions to encircle the cities from the countryside and then take control of the cities, won its final victory in 1949 after a long, arduous struggle. Accordingly, the focal point of the Party's work also shifted from the countryside to the cities. This constituted yet another transition in the course of the Chinese Revolution. Our Party had previously gone through a period of transition from the cities to the countryside. That transition paved the way for the victory of the Chinese Revolution, though we paid dearly for it. The present transition, from its very beginning, was carried out in an orderly manner under the correct leadership of the Central Committee of the CPC headed by Chairman Mao. Taking control of Beiping and Tianjin confirmed the success of this transition. It also constituted the ground-breaking event in the formation of the New China. I therefore begin my account of our Party strategic policy decisions and major historical events from the time of formation of the People's Republic of China.

A. THE CLIMAX OF THE REVOLUTION AND MY MISSION IN BEIPING.

The beginning of 1948 saw the rapid growth of the revolutionary forces. Chiang Kai-shek's counterrevolutionary rule was doomed to failure. Realizing this, the Central Committee of the CPC and Chairman Mao, while still commanding military operations, began to prepare for the victory of the revolution throughout the country. The decision of the Central Committee of the CPC to establish the North China Bureau was an important component of these preparations.

On February 16, 1948, Comrade Liu Shaoqi, who was chairman of the Working Committee of the Central Committee of the CPC at Xibaipo⁴,

³ Beijing was also known as Beiping during the Nationalist regime (1911-1949)[Translator's note].

⁴ When Chiang Kai-shek's army attacked the Shanxi-Gansu-Ningxia Liberated Area in the Spring of 1947, the Party's Central Committee made a decision that Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai and Ren Bishi would remain in North Shanxi to command the War of Liberation while Liu Shaoqi, Zhu De and Dong Biwu would organize a Central Working Committee in North China to carry out tasks entrusted to them by the Central Committee of the CPC. Liu set up his office in Xibaipo, a village in Hebei Province (Author's note).

proposed to the Central Committee of the CPC that the two existing Liberated Areas, namely Shanxi-Chahar-Hebei and Shanxi-Hebei-Shandong-Henan, be amalgamated and that the party committees be merged to form the North China Central Committee of the Party. After consultation with Comrades Peng Zhen, Nie Rongzhen and myself, he sent the following telegram to the Central Committee of the CPC: "These two large liberated areas, once amalgamated and unified, will become the basic liberated area in North China, where we can mobilize a unified force of 50 million people to support Northwest China, Central China and East China." He added: "This force will be invincible." On February 20, in reply to this telegram, Chairman Mao instructed Liu to call a meeting of Peng Zhen, Nie Rongzhen, Chen Yi, Deng Zihui, Kang Sheng, Rao Shushi and myself to discuss in detail such issues as, among others, the merger of the two liberated areas, the organization of the North China Bureau, the establishment of a major Party academy, a major military academy, and a major Party newspaper. The situation at the time was as follows: the People's Liberation Army had switched to a nationwide counter-offensive; the people's revolution had reached a climax; the scattered liberated areas in North China had been or would be united. Seizing this opportunity to unify the whole of North China would provide strong support to the war of liberation throughout the country. This was our strategic hypothesis. Comrade Liu Shaoqi, as a chairman of the discussion on this issue, had intended to include Shandong and North Shaanxi. Owing to the opposition of Rao Shushi, only the two larger liberated areas were amalgamated. At the initial stage of the establishment of the North China Bureau, I was nominated its secretary. At that time I was Comrade Deng Xiaoping's assistant at the Central Bureau of the Party for the Shanxi-Hebei-Shandong-Henan area. After Comrade Deng Xiaoping transferred to the Dabie Mountains, I was entrusted to manage the day-to-day work of the Central Bureau. Well aware of the fact that if I was left to chair the North China Bureau, I could not assure sufficiently strong leadership, I suggested that Comrade Liu Shaoqi be appointed concurrently Secretary of the North China Bureau. Comrade Liu Shaoqi said he would not object to taking up the post concurrently, but that I must assume control of the day-to-day operations. On March 23, 1948, Chairman Mao and his party crossed over to the east bank of the Yellow River, passing through the liberated areas in Shanxi and Suiyuan, and finally met Comrades Liu Shaoqi and Zhu De in Fuping, Hebei Province, in the liberated area, where the Central Bureau of the

Shanxi-Chahar-Hebei Party was located. From April 30 to May 7 of the same year, the Secretariat of the Central Committee of the CPC held a meeting at Chengnanzhuang⁵. Among those present were Chen Yi, Su Yu, Li Xiannian, Nie Rongzhen, Zhang Jichun and myself. At this meeting, decisions were made to strengthen the Party, as well as the administrative and military institutions in the liberated areas of North China and Central China. Following the meeting, the Central Committee of the CPC issued an official decree on May 9, announcing that the two large strategic areas, Shanxi-Chahar-Hebei and Shanxi-Hebei-Shandong-Henan, would be amalgamated into the North China Liberated Area. Comrade Liu Shaoqi was named First Secretary of the North China Central Bureau by concurrent appointment. I was appointed Second Secretary and Comrade Nie Rongzhen was appointed Third Secretary. Comrade Nie Rongzhen was appointed Commander-in-Chief of the North China Military Zone, Comrade Xu Xiangqian was appointed First Deputy Commander-in-Chief and I was appointed Political Commissar. Prior to the convening of the North China People's Conference, the North China Joint Administrative Commission was established with Comrade Dong Biwu as Chairman. The Central Committee of the CPC also authorized the North China Bureau to establish a major Party academy, a major military academy, a major Party newspaper and North China University, and appointed individuals to direct each of them. On May 20, the North China Bureau held its inaugural meeting. Comrade Liu Shaoqi spoke at this meeting. He said: "Chairman Mao calls on us to extend the war to the area occupied by the Kuomintang, and the establishment of the North China Bureau is closely related to this strategy. From now on, our main task in North China will be construction, a task of nationwide significance. Unless the world situation takes a drastic turn, unless the United States invades China or Shijiazhuang is to be occupied (neither is really likely), North China will be engaged in long-term construction. We have to work out plans for the future, and we will gradually move towards normalization." On June 8, the North China Bureau called a meeting to discuss the publication of a major Party paper, and a decision was made to merge the *Shanxi-Chahar-Hebei Daily* and *The People's Daily* in the Shanxi-Hebei-Shandong-Henan area into one major newspaper, named *The People's Daily*. As long as *The People's Daily* was the organ of the North China Bureau, I read the proof. After the Central Committee of the CPC moved into Beiping, Chairman Mao took this matter up with some high ranking Party officials,

⁵ A village in Hebei Province [Translator's note].

urging responsible Party officials to keep a firm control over the newspapers. Following the creation of the North China Bureau, greater efforts were made to establish a government. After several months of preparatory work, in August 1948, the North China Provisional People's Congress was convened. The Congress approved replacement of the original North China Joint Administrative Commission by the North China People's Government. Comrade Dong Biwu was appointed Chairman, Comrades Lan Gongwu, Yang Xiufeng and myself were appointed Vice-Chairmen. I was also appointed the Party Secretary of the North China People's Government by the Central Committee. The subsequent working institutions of the Central People's Government were built on the basis of the working institutions of the North China People's Government. *The People's Daily*, the organ of the North China Bureau, also became the organ of the Central Committee of the CPC. This paper had undergone several changes. When I went to Yan'an in 1946, it was the organ of the Central Bureau in the Shanxi-Hebei Shandong-Henan liberated area. I asked Chairman Mao to write the logo for *The People's Daily*. Later, when it became the organ of the North China Bureau, I again asked Chairman Mao to do so. When *The People's Daily* became the organ of the Central Committee of the CPC, I asked him to do it a third time. The logo of *The People's Daily* that has been used ever since was the third one written by Chairman Mao. The publication of the May 1st Declaration on the decision of the Central Committee of the CPC to call a new political consultative conference was warmly received by all democratic parties, and by all patriots without party affiliation. In September of the same year, the Central Committee of the CPC planned to establish the Central Government in the 4th year of the War of Liberation, that is in the second half of 1949. Soon afterwards, news of a victory came from the Northeast China front. Chairman Mao began to move the 4th Field Army to turn southward in order to seize Beiping and Tianjin. On November 8 of the same year, the Central Committee of the CPC and Chairman Mao decided to give the North China Bureau responsibility for taking control of Beiping and Tianjin. They also decided that I was to go to Beiping as one of the advance party to make some preliminary preparations for the Central Committee of the CPC and its supporting institutions when they moved to Beiping. Chairman Mao instructed us to rely on the working class after we moved into Beiping. He said: "Chiang Kai-shek's capital is in Nanjing. He is supported by the capitalists of the Jiangsu and Zhejiang Provinces. We will draw our support in Beiping, among the working class and the broad masses of labourers." Acting on the decision