

General VO NGUYEN GIAP

DIEN BIEN PHU

Third Edition (revised and enlarged)



FOREIGN LANGUAGES PUBLISHING HOUSE
HANOI — 1964

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FOREWORD

Ten years have elapsed since the memorable Dien Bien Phu victory and the repercussions of this battle still make themselves felt, as witness the passionate discussions still going on about it. How is it that the Vietnam People's Army born of an essentially peasant people at the outset equipped with primitive weapons had the better of a modern and seasoned army, not in small ambushes or minor engagements but in modern battles, in the course of a long campaign, requiring the co-ordination of various arms?

Has there been any "mistake" of the French High Command, or in other words, what has been the share of the protagonists' personal responsibilities and that of historical necessities which were to bring the French Expeditionary Corps to defeat?

For all these questions, no answer, no commentary could match the account of events made by the leading actor of the drama, General Vo Nguyen Giap, Commander-in-Chief of the Vietnam People's Army, especially when this account clearly and thoroughly

analyses the strategy which was worked out, and throws a most vivid light on all the military and political factors which contributed to the victory.

In two editions which were most successful, we introduced a series of articles written by General Vo Nguyen Giap on the occasion of the fourth anniversary of the Dien Bien Phu victory. However the reader would like to have fuller information: these texts acquainted him with the strategy of the victorious People's Army in its outlines but concise as they were, they could not answer all questions.

Since then, the author has had the time to complete and enrich his text with new details and considerations, and the present edition will help the reader understand more thoroughly the unfolding of this historic campaign.

The main orders of the day and messages of the High Command of the People's Army during this campaign are published in an appendix.

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NOTICE

We advise the reader properly to locate on the map of Indo-China, and that of Vietnam in particular, the following regions in order to be able easily to follow the unfolding of the operations :

Vietnam's territory includes three parts : the North or Bac Bo (formerly Tonking), the Centre or Trung Bo (formerly Annam) and the South or Nam Bo (formerly Cochinchina).

In Bac Bo, the region between the Red river and the Laotian border is the Tay Bac (North-West), a mountainous region where Dien Bien Phu is situated. Between the Red river and the Chinese border to the west of the Hanoi-Lang Son line is another mountainous region, the Viet Bac which served as the main base of the Vietnamese Resistance.

In Trung Bo, the region of Highlands is called Tay Nguyen in Vietnamese, Binh Tri Thien is a short for the three provinces of Quang Binh, Quang Tri and Thua Thien (region of Hue).

From the military viewpoint, the country was divided into nine zones. Zone V where Operation Atlante took place is situated in the south of Trung Bo.

Herebelow are the names given by the French High Command to the positions of Dien Bien Phu :

Him Lam : Beatrice ; Doc Lap : Gabrielle ; Ban Keo : Anne Marie ; Hong Cum : Isabelle ; Eastern hills A1, C1, C2 : Eliane ; another Eastern hill north of Eliane : Dominique.

The positions to the west of the Central sector are respectively called : Huguette (positions E, D, to the north-west of the main airfield) and Claudine (which comprises the C.P.)

**PRESIDENT HO CHI MINH'S LETTER
TO THE FIGHTERS ON THE DIEN BIEN PHU
BATTLEFRONT**

Dear officers and men on the Dien Bien Phu battlefield,

This Autumn-Winter, you are assigned the task of marching to Dien Bien Phu to wipe out more enemy effectives, extend our resistance bases, and liberate more compatriots still under the enemy's oppression.

Last year, you valiantly fought, destroyed many enemies, and scored great victories. I am very glad of it.

This year, after several ideological remouldings and military courses you have made more progresses. You must fight more valiantly, be more ready to endure hardships, and keep firm your determination in every circumstance :

Resolute to kill the enemy,

Resolute to abide by the policy,

Resolute to win more successes.

The Government and I are waiting for your successes to congratulate and reward you.

With affection and determination to win

December 12, 1953

HO CHI MINH

**PRESIDENT HO CHI MINH'S
CONGRATULATORY LETTER**

TO OFFICERS, SOLDIERS, *DAN CONG* *, SHOCK
YOUTH ON THE DIEN BIEN PHU BATTLEFRONT
AND LOCAL PEOPLE

Our army has liberated Dien Bien Phu. The Central Committee, the Government and I convey our cordial greetings to you, officers, soldiers, *dan cong*, shock youth and local people, who have gloriously fulfilled your tasks.

This victory is big, but it is only the beginning. We must not be self-complacent and subjective into underestimating the enemy. We are determined to fight for independence, national unity, democracy and peace. A struggle, whether military or diplomatic, must be long and hard, before complete victory can be achieved.

The Government and I will reward the officers, men, *dan cong*, shock youth and local people who have performed brilliant deeds.

With affection and determination to win

May 8, 1954
HO CHI MINH

* People who out of patriotism help the troops in operation by discharging such tasks as building roads, transporting food and ammunition, carrying the wounded.

DIEN BIEN PHU

