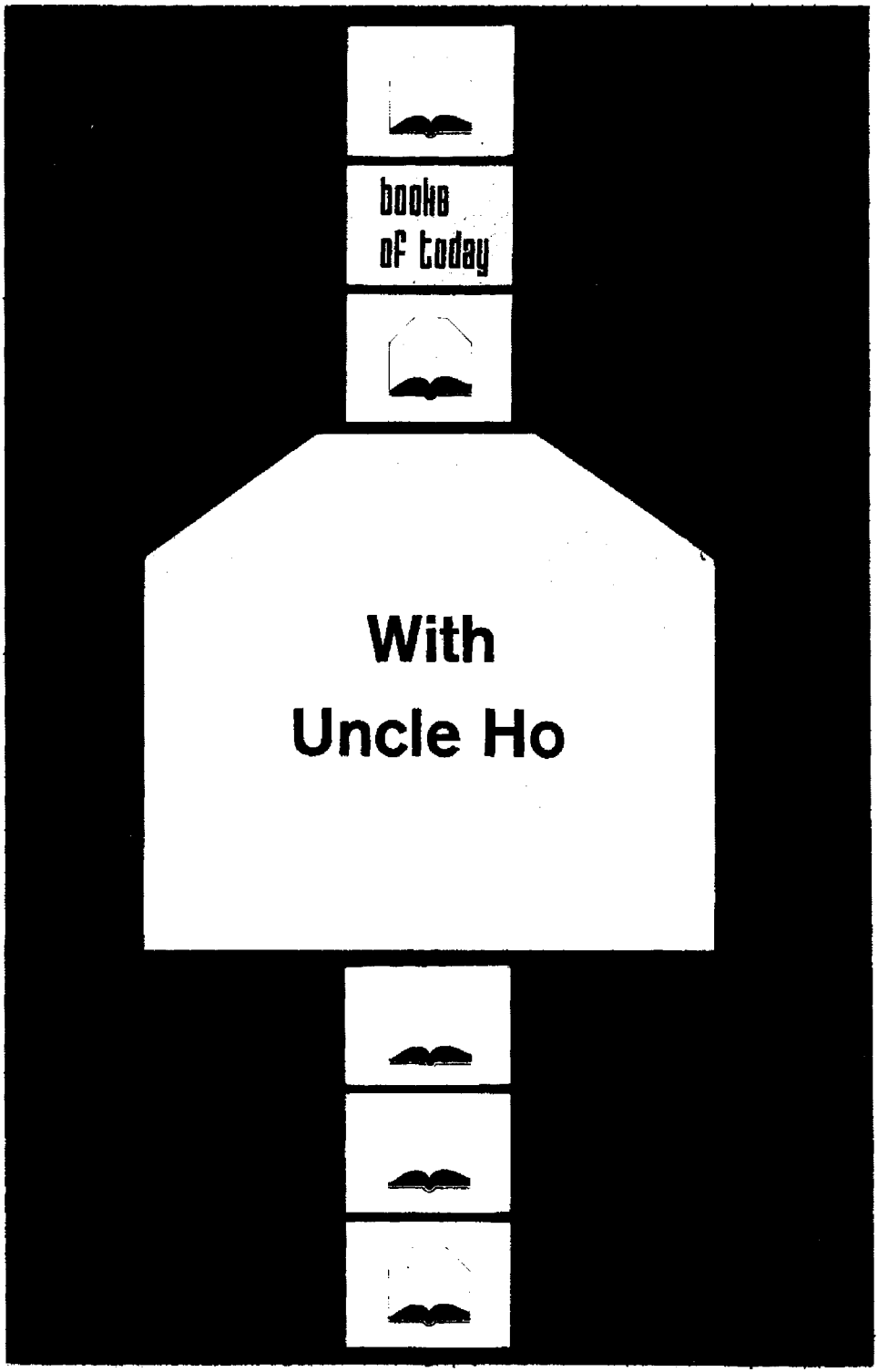

books
of today
With
Uncle Ho

For a revolutionary it is essential to leave behind the continuation of one's work, of one's struggle.

When one has lived for national independence against the colonialist and imperialist oppressors, when each daily act is a lesson renewing conviction in the inexhaustible capacities of man, and what is still more important, when one succeeds in giving a universal dimension to the struggle of one's own people, that is when fighters truly cross the frontiers of time and space and belong to humanity, to history.

Ho Chi Minh is of this stripe.

Animator and creator of the victorious struggle of the Vietnamese people against French colonialism and Yankee imperialism, Ho Chi Minh is one of the most resplendent figures of this century. Seldom in history has a people's leader, in the brief period of his own lifetime, succeeded in so profoundly imprinting on his times the mark of his destiny as a fighter.

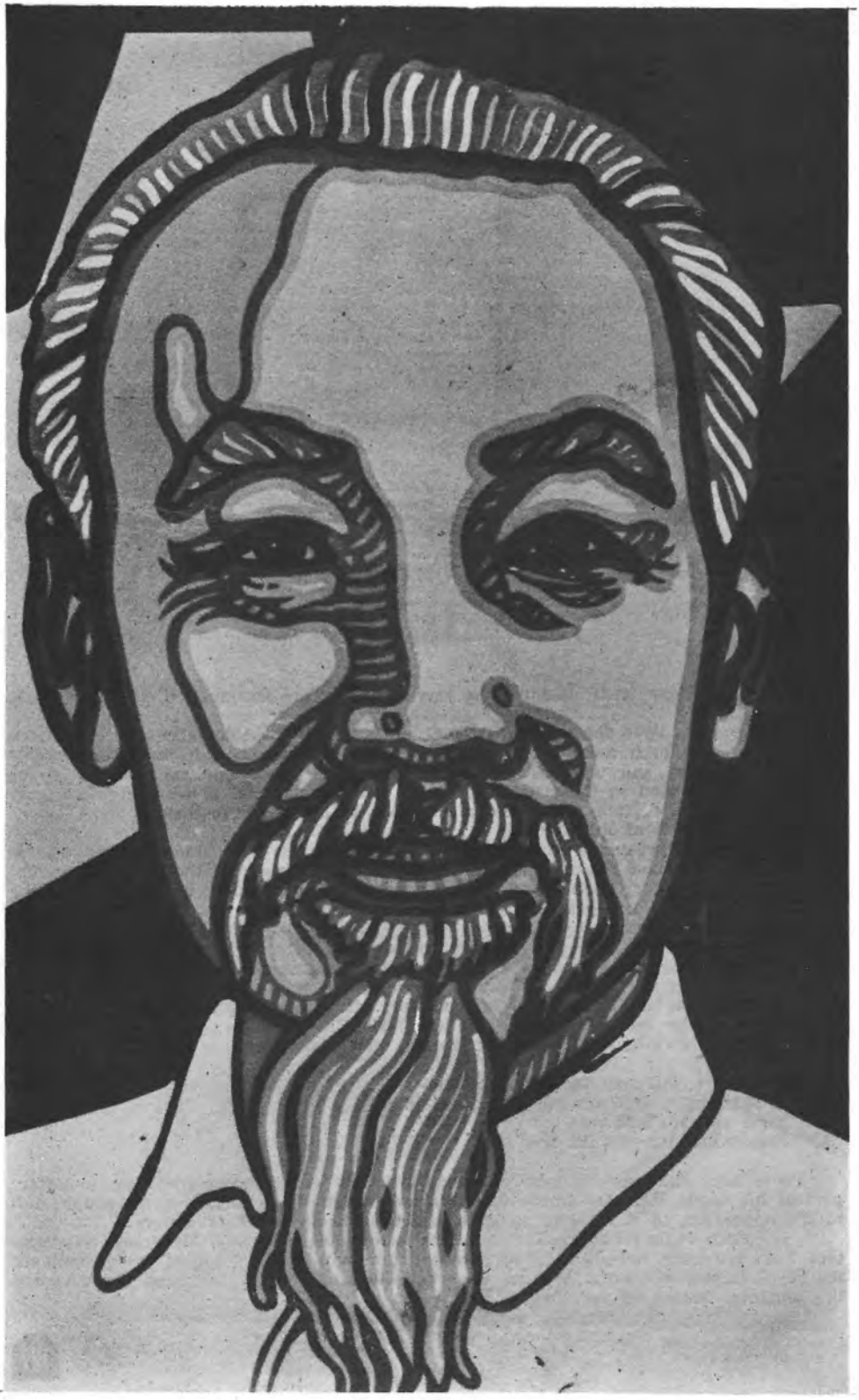
Future generations will not be able to refer to this period without mentioning Viet Nam. And to say Viet Nam is to speak the beloved name of Uncle Ho.

Endowed with an exceptional nature, possessing a unique intelligence, and at the same time an outstanding political and military strategist, unyielding and intransigent in the face of the task of national liberation, Ho Chi Minh forged his people in the revolutionary principles that made the Yankee defeat possible:

> Nothing is difficult; the only obstacle
> is that the heart does not persevere.
> Firm and resolute men
> raze mountains and fill seas.

These firm and resolute men referred to in his verses, were the most important part of his work. He, who embodied the most exceptional qualities of his people, left to the oppressed, to those who struggle, the unshakable belief in victory.

With Uncle Ho is a collection of the testimonies of some of his closest collaborators. Each narration reveals the daily preocupation with the training of the combatants, the revolutionary education of man, the exquisite sensitivity to life, that characterized the immortal leader of the Vietnamese people.



Days spent with Uncle Ho

In October 1945, along with other comrades, I was assigned to Uncle Ho's security. The days we spent with him gave us an understanding of how hard his life was then. At the beginning the Revolution had faced innumerable difficulties. A thousand and one problems arose and it was always Uncle Ho who had to solve them: to face up to the clique of Chiang Kai-shek followers, to lead the resistance in Nam Bo against the French aggressors, to organize the country's first general elections, to form the armed forces for the defense of the nation, to fight hunger, to wipe out illiteracy, to build a new life....

In spite of his many responsibilities, Uncle Ho was always solicitous of us. When he noticed that our level of education was not very high, he established a complementary program of studies for us, giving those who had a certain amount of education the responsibility of helping their less favored comrades. He taught us how to read newspapers and study documents and even gave us a theoretical course on Revolution.

We despised the Chiang Kai-shek troops deeply because of all the torment they had made our people suffer, but Uncle Ho made us understand why it was not yet possible to wipe them out. I was in favor of immediately liquidating the Viet Quoc agents in Chiang Kai-shek's pay.

One day, during an information session, I asked him:

"Honorable Uncle, why do we let this band of traitors and assassins live? With an order from you we could wipe them out in one night."

Uncle Ho smiled and, pointing to his office, he in turn asked us: "Suppose a rat were to enter that room. Would you throw rocks at it or try to trap it or chase it out?

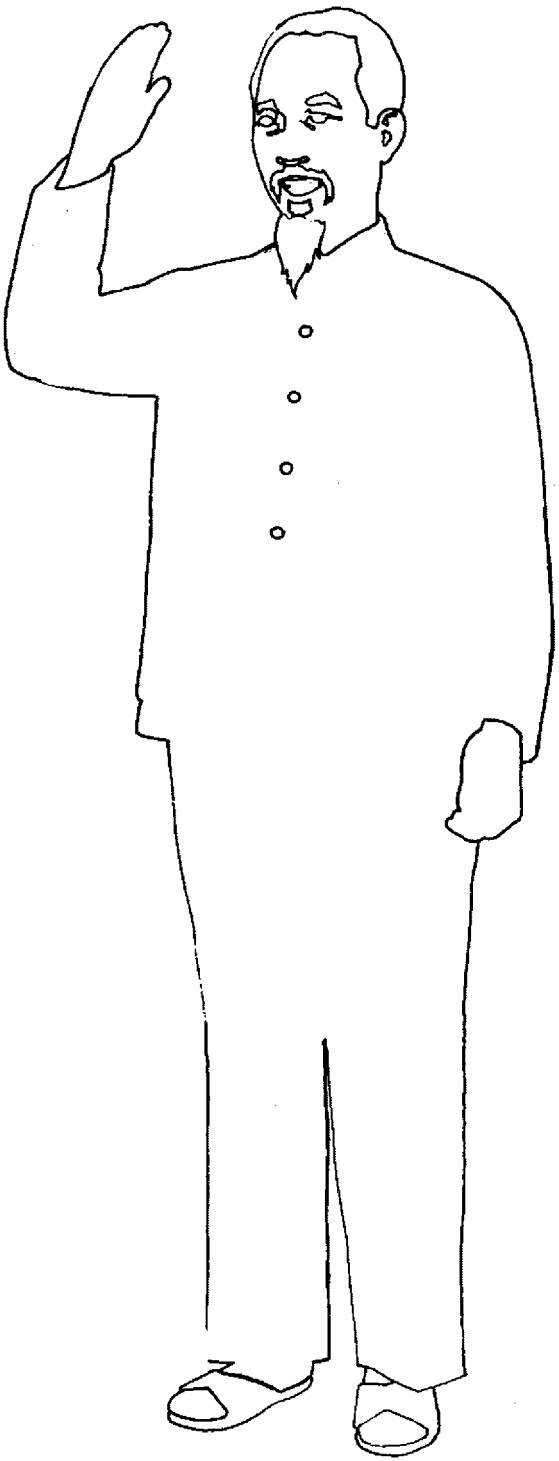
"If we throw rocks, we run the risk of breaking valuable objects in the room.

"The same thing happens with counter-revolutionary elements. In themselves they are nothing to fear, but their bosses are behind them. In order to construct a great work, one has to know a little more about the situation."

The President worked very hard but he scarcely ate anything. He always ate the rough rice at the same table with the service comrades. It took us a long time to get him to accept a better diet. That year the flood had destroyed a large part of the harvest; and we also had to feed Chiang Kai-shek's troops. Hunger was threatening us. Faced with this situation, the President issued a call to intensify production; he suggested "reducing the number of meals in order to fight hunger." He himself fasted every Saturday.

At night, my eyes filled with tears when I saw him working so late. If only I could help him, even with just a few of his tasks! But apart from my guard duty, the only thing I knew how to do was make envelopes, stamp or open correspondence.

Uncle Ho was, by nature, very senstive; he slept in a small room on the first floor, and got up regularly at 4 a.m. to work. On one of those mornings when the wind was blowing wildly outside, lashing the windowpanes, and the house itself was very cold, a child was selling his merchandise in the street. Uncle Ho opened his window and followed the small



vendor with his gaze. Then I saw the tears in his eyes.

As a measure of precaution against the Kuoumintang and the counter-revolutionaries, Uncle Ho constantly changed his residence. Fortunately, his health had improved. He showed what great perseverance he had by doing regular physical exercises in the morning, first gymnastics and then the traditional boxing; he especially liked the Thai Cuc Quyen movements. The initiates of this know all the difficulties presented by the 108 evolutions of attack and defense. The movements, apparently both flexible and easy; actually demand an intense muscular activity accompanied by a great nervous tension.

The life we lived then was not lacking in charm. Nights of clear moonlight when Uncle Ho trained with us on the terrace of the Bac Bo Phu residence. Under the light of the moon, on the horizon, the peaks of **Hoang Lan**[1] hung on the whim of a breeze. Watching him move before us with flexible and at the same time vigorous gestures, gave me the impression of being in the presence of a true master who was teaching the ancient fight to his fervent disciples.

After the Resistance broke out all over the country, our leadership services were transferred to the province of Ha Dong. During the days of Tet, the regime in the capital was still fighting against the French in the first combat zone. In order to exhort the people to the struggle and stimulate our troops, Uncle Ho went to the Voice of Viet Nam to broadcast his New Year's greeting. On the return trip, the front of the car caught fire. The chauffeur immediately stopped and jumped down from the machine to help the President get out; then we went to look for water; the rice fields all around us were dry. While we stood perplexed, not knowing what to do, we saw the President pull two cans of water out of the trunk of the car and throw them on the flaming motor. He had scarcely begun to pour from the second can, when the fire went out.

That was a lesson for me. From that moment, on any trip, I have always made it a rule to forsee all eventualities and take all the necessary precautions. At the beginning of 1947, when the enemy was still aggressively strong, and in order to facilitate leading the armed struggle, our services returned to the region of Tuyan Quang and Thai Nguyen, where the pre-revolutionary bases of the Resistance were. There, living conditions were even harder than in Ha Dong and Son Tay. When we arrived, the President's bodyguard consisted of a bare eight men to do guard duty, provide liaison and cook. We built a big bamboo hut and then divided it in two. One of the compartments was reserved for Uncle Ho, and the other served as living quarters, dining room, and meeting hall at the same time.

As guards, we had the most diverse tasks: we had to be ready for defense against the enemy, spies, and also against wild animals. Comrade Hoang Huu Nam, vice-minister of the Interior at that time, sent us a German Shepherd dog to help guard, but a tiger carried off the poor animal shortly afterwards.

Our life was very hard. Meals were reduced to a little poorly-shucked rice with a few wild vegetables fried lightly. If we happened to have meat, we cut it in small pieces, seasoned it with a good portion of salt and peppers, and kept it as a reserve provision. Uncle Ho called it "the preserves of the Viet Minh."


VIVA LA GRAN VICTORIA DEL PUEBLO DE VIETNAM

Wherever we went, Uncle Ho always had us continue our political and cultural study program; he was especially concerned that we keep up with the situation in the country and the world.

One night we were seated around the fire engaged in one of those habitual information and discussion meetings, when Uncle arrived. He asked if we had any questions and one of us said:

"Dear Uncle, the more we think about it the less we understand why the resistance has to be a long one; it seems that the longer it lasts, the greater will be our losses in men and goods."

Uncle Ho gave an example to illustrate this point.

"Right now we are comparable to an adolescent, while the adversary is a clever and cruel old man. We mustn't presume too much of our forces and attack without thinking. We have to increase our forces in the struggle. When we have acquired the vigor of a 20-year-old man and the enemy has become older and more decrepit, then we will be able to choose the favorable moment to annihilate him. That way our victory is more certain."

And concluding the point, he said:

"Some of you have names that are not easy to pronounce, not to mention the difficulties of keeping them secret. To make things easier and maintain anonymity, and at the same time show our determination, from today on, I would like to give each one of you a new name. What do you say?"

And he began to designate each of us one by one, by a new name. From that moment on, we were the eight whose names together formed the famous phrase of Uncle Ho: Troung, Ky, Khang, Chien, Nhat, Dinh, Thang Loi (Prolonged resistance is sure to win).

In mid-1947, as the situation on the various fronts became stabilized, Uncle Ho proposed that we produce food in order to partially meet our needs. Every time we had to go look for a new site for our installation, he gave us recommendations.

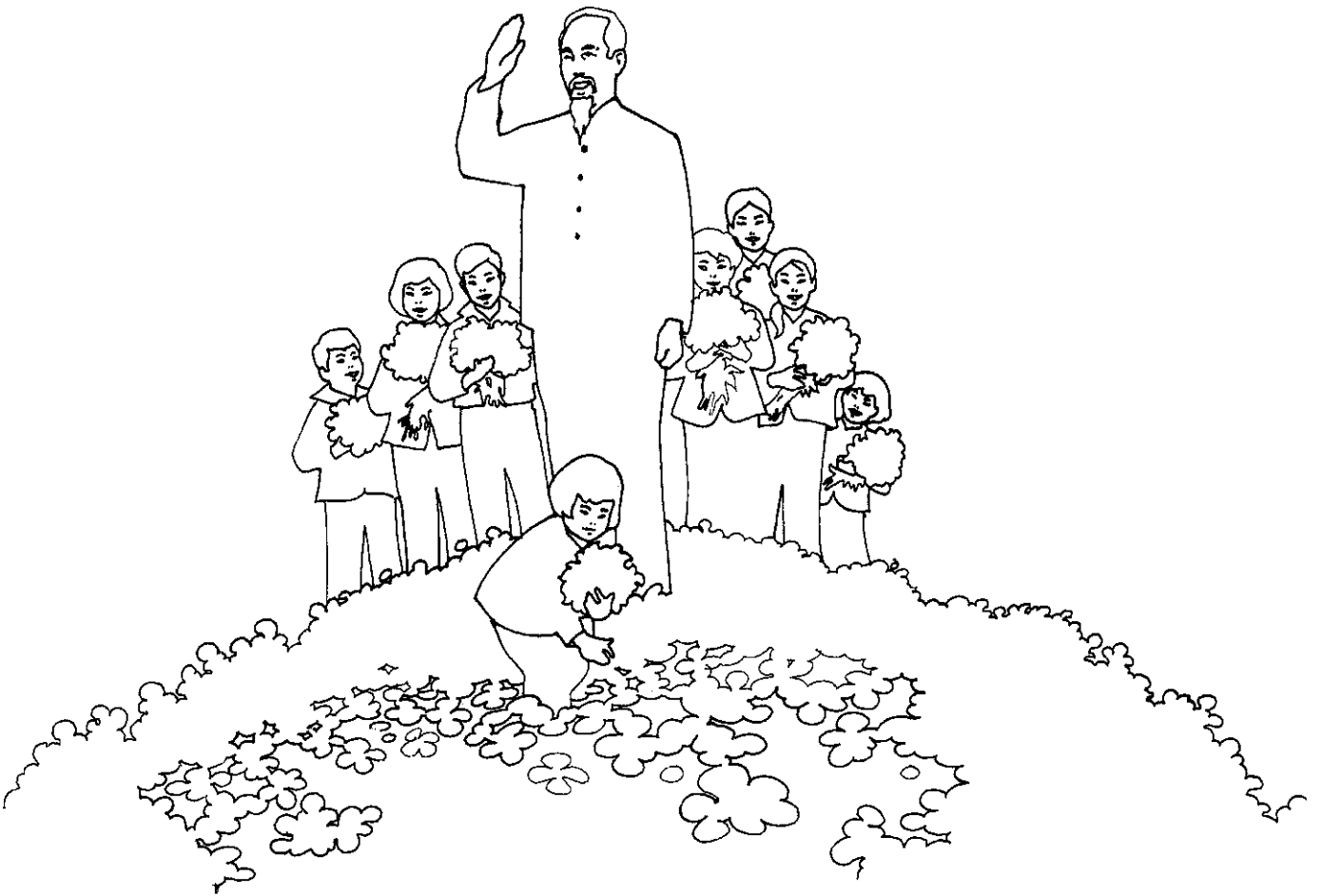
In addition to listening to them and in order to do as the President did, I put them in verse to better remember them:

Above, a mountain;
below, a stream.
Land to cultivate
and a piece for recreation
a road with practical access to the Central Committee,
easy communications with the General Staff,
airy but discreet living quarters,
near the population but not near the highway.

It was easy to remember, but oh how difficult to achieve! There were plenty of mountains, but we had to find a river. As for the spots out of sight of indiscreet glances, they lacked ventilation and were far from the population. But with a little effort we always managed to find places that met the required conditions.

By that time the Presidential Palace was no longer a bamboo hut. Uncle Ho lived apart in a two-story house; during the day, he worked downstairs and at night, upstairs, to avoid the wild animals and the humidity.

It was really a very modest house. Uncle Ho had insisted that the



roof should not be higher than the upstretched arm could reach, and that its width should permit him to reach everything on both walls without moving from his seat.

His personal effects were also modest. A blanket, a mosquito netting, a few clothes and a pair of rubber sandles. Every time we moved, we packed up the mosquito netting and the clothing in the blanket and everything was ready. Uncle carried a few books and documents with him in a bag, while we took charge of his typewriter.

Uncle did physical exercises in the morning and at night. He was very good at volleyball; he served with a sure hand, but because of his age, he only received the fronthand hits that weren't very strong. This weak point was rapidly discovered, and when the other team had an unfavorable score, the young players would hurl the ball with malice, skimming the net. Uncle laughed and yelled:

"Ah! That one knows how to catch me!"

And the forest would resound with our laughter.

When we went swimming, we swam close to him, to help him in places where the current was strong. Then he told us, laughing:

"I am an old propeller plane while you are defense fighters."

Because of this training, every time in the course of our movements that we encountered a river or stream that blocked our pasage, Uncle Ho easily overcame the obstacle by swimming, as we did. He never stayed behind, not even during the mountain torrents fed by floods.

Toward the end of 1947, our living conditions had improved considerably. Not only were there now gardens and vegetables growing around our house, with the birds picking here and there, but there was also a volleyball court, parallel bars and fixed bars. Uncle Ho also had us buy musical instruments to make our common life a pleasant one.

Sometimes he let us go visit peasants in the neighboring village to show them how to cultivate in the delta, to distribute medicines to them or to take part in their meetings. A cordial solidarity united us with the population.

This was the very period in which the French unleashed their big campaign against Viet Bac. After having parachuted their troops into Bac Can, the enemy ordered the Beaufré contingent to occupy Cao Bang, leaving from Lang Son, while the Communal contingent, sent from Viet Tri, successively occupied Doan Hung, Tuyen Quang and Chiem Hoa, moving up the Clear river. According to the plan of the General Staff, these two formations were to join each other at Bac Can and place the whole of Viet Bac under a kind of parasol that would be closed by tightening the encirclement while engaging in simultaneous offensives in the North and the South. Meanwhile other parachutists were dropped where the Party and Government headquarters were presumed to be located, in order to destroy the brain of the resistance.

The enemy expected to move to "pacification" of the remaining regions once this campaign was ended. After deliberations with the Central Committee of the Party and with the General Staff, Uncle Ho gave us the order to move the camp immediately.

When I asked him about the situation, he told me:

"The enemy maneuver is comparable to a pincer play. If one half breaks, the parasol is perforated. It's a shame we don't have enough

forces to cut off the hand that is grabbing at the mass. We must be prepared for a relatively rough time."

At that moment I didn't understand the meaning of these words, but I refrained from asking inappropriate questions.

That night we distributed our equipment in eight bundles. The road was slippery because of the recent rains, and a cold north wind was blowing. With his clothes tucked up, a suitcase on his shoulders and a staff in his hand, Uncle Ho awaited the arrival of Comrade Chu Van Tan, Party secretary of the autonomous zone, secretary of the Committee of the Party and chief of the General Staff of the armed forces of Viet Bac. For security reasons, Chu Van Tan personally took on the job of acting as guide. As soon as he arrived he started us off. With our shoulder packs, we took very few shortcuts, the same ones the second unit of the National Salvation Army had taken when it constructed its bases.

The following day, before beginning the march again, Uncle Ho said to us: "Last night the trail was hard because there wasn't any attention to political work. Tonight, don't get too far way from me. I'll tell you some stories along the way to distract you."

After several enjoyable anecdotes and a number of stories about the present, he told us:

"You should understand and memorize some selections from **Kieu** and **Chinh Phu Ngam**, those two masterpieces of our literature.

And he began to explain certain parts to us. Uncle began to recite some passages and we repeated them after him. As we listened to him recite in his melodious voice, we all forgot to think about being tired.

After two nights of hard marching, we were installed in the middle of the forest. Soon the news of our victories at Bong Lau, on Highway 4, at Clear River, Doan Hung and Dinh Ca arrived. Then the words that Uncle had spoken to me came to mind, and I said to myself: "The claws of the pincer still haven't been broken, but now they aren't so strong."

Scarcely were we settled when Uncle Ho sent us to help the population bring in the harvest. In the face of the immediate threat of enemy parachutists, it had to be picked and quickly transferred to a secure place.

One night when Uncle came back from a meeting late and as he neared the hut, we heard a galloping. "Another urgent problem," he said.

Moments later the chief of ordinance of the Ministry of National Defense and his Aide dismounted from their horses. After the regulation salute, the officer presented Uncle Ho with a message from Comrade Van (pseudonym of General Vo Nguyen Giap).

Our information services had just captured a secret message, according to which the enemy was going to drop paratroopers in the region where we were staying while the Beaufré contingent would move to Bac Can to comb the region of Thai Nguyen and Trang Xa.

Immediately Uncle Ho wrote his ideas down in a letter he then gave to the General Staff messenger, and then established telephone communications with the different services installed in the area. Finally, he issued the order to prepare to abandon the spot. At three o'clock all was ready.

We had orders to continue marching even during the day, in isolated groups of two or three. Uncle chose me to accompany him. In the countryside we came upon an abandoned and deserted hut. Uncle proposed

that we go in and rest a while. Even though dawn was breaking and there were only two of us, he established guard.

"You sleep now; you will do guard from five to six."

I obeyed his order, somewhat annoyed, but as I really felt exhausted, I had scarcely laid down when I fell into a profund sleep, from which Uncle awakened me at 5.10 to relieve him.

It was dawn now. I sat at the entrance of the hut watching Uncle sleep; he was in excellent health. His color was good and his calf muscles were evident; but his hair and beard had turned quite gray.

At this hour of the morning it was very misty. It was unlikely that the enemy would launch his paratroopers. Reassured by this, we continued the march. On the way, I told Uncle how much I regretted not having a batallion so he wouldn't have to go through so much. He appeared surprised at the idea.

"How can you think such a thing? If we had armed forces, we would send them to attack the enemy. Only by attacking would we be able to assure our defense."

Then he explained to me that in order to intensify the guerrilla movement, we must disperse our troops and send them out to create guerrilla groups in the provinces. But when the guerrilla war was extended, these troops would return to form the regular army.

"If the enemy dares to penetrate our liberated zone then," he added, "he will have to deal with us."

We marched without stopping that day until we reached Wuang Nap, where we got news that the French had launched paratroopers in the area we had just left behind. The enemy had also attacked Cu Van and Dai Tu, while the Beaufré contingent had reached Quang Vuong and Cho Chu with the obvious intention of sweeping the region. Uncle Ho ordered the various services to move still further up to the Day river. In our new position we learned that the French aggressors, hard hit on all flanks, had been forced to abandon Thai Nguyen and retreat to Hanoi. The Viet Bac campaign of 1947 thus constituted the first great defeat of the French colonialists. The enemy had planned to wipe us out, but it finally found itself forced to leave thousands of dead and hundreds of prisoners without having been able to achieve any of its objectives.

After the balance of forces was established on the main front, our resistance bases continued to consolidate themselves and our armed forces continued to add to their ranks. Uncle Ho's living quarters were more comfortable now; the fruit and vegetable garden that he himself cultivated and the mountain slope on which we had planted yuca, were also greener now.

In Viet Bac

The province of Bac Can had just been liberated. All along Highway No. 3 that runs from the capital to Ngan Son district — a distance of about 60 km. — not a single house remained, for the population had evacuated along the sides of the highway during the 22 months of occupation by the French troops, who, moreover, had burned all the empty houses that were still standing. The people still hadn't had time, since the liberation, to return to their hamlets. And so the cadres of Ngan Son district were concerned about how to receive the President who had to pass

through Na Phac and ...ep there. After many discussions there was nothing left but for us to build a reception house alongside the highway. The following day, the president of the administrative committee and some cadres from the district went to mobilize the population and in one day they built a comfortable shelter next to a junction in the highway. The house wasn't very big but it was clean and one could rest and cook there and it was large enough to house the President's entire group.

Uncle arrived as night was falling and everyone received him joyfully. He immediately asked how the people were, what was their morale and their resistance spirit; he asked especially about the plan to restore the district's farm lands, the living conditions of the local population, and many other things. There had been careful preparations made so that the district head was able to supply precise information. Uncle congratulated the various national minorities of the province for having evacuated their houses in the face of the enemy, and recommended to all that they restore the rice fields and vegetable farms quickly, now that the region had been liberated, reminding the cadres that they had to help the population in this work of restoration. He pointed to the recently constructed house and asked:

"Whose house is this?"

The district leader, somewhat embarrassed, answered him:

"Uncle, our compatriots' houses are several kilometers away from the highway so we built this house to receive you."

Then Uncle said in a kindly tone:

"So you want to isolate me from the population? The people walk these kilometers perfectly easily every day so why couldn't I have done the same?"

And he added:

"How many shifts of work did it take? Why wasn't that time devoted to restoring the devastated farmlands?"

Using the example of the reception house, Uncle advised the president of the district committee and the cadres present to pay special attention to the living conditions of the population and to consider their interests at all times. The following morning, he went out to visit the local peoples' houses.

The pilot unit that was to take Uncle to the front lines was made up of seven comrades. This was during the border campaign and the rainy season. Every time it rained, the smallest streams swelled until they were dangerous to cross and detained the inexperienced jungle traveller for hours. The seven comrades who preceded Uncle Ho came upon a stream that had flooded because of the torrential rain. It was a stream that could have been crossed in five or six steps during the dry season, but now it was hard to tell where to step. The river was dirty, full of refuse and branches. The comrades discussed how to cross the stream, having decided to cross it at any price. One of them took off his clothes and searched for a way to cross. On several occasions the water came up above his shoulders. For the young guides it was very easy, but the main thing was for Uncle to cross with complete security.

There were seven of them, and so there were seven proposals, all extremely detailed. To hold hands to form a line so that Uncle could cross easily, holding on to them; to look for ropes in order to throw a

cable above the river; there was another who proposed carrying Uncle on his shoulders. Everybody had an opinion. Uncle arrived, and those with him also made their suggetions. Some proposed resting there a few hours until the water had a chance to recede after the rain. The ideas were many and Uncle asked:

"Have you examined all the possibilities now?"

"We've looked it all over and here is where the water seems the shallowest, the rocks least slippery and the current weakest."

"But did you look from the bank?"

"Yes."

Uncle Ho smiled and the comrades looked at him, intrigued. Calmly raising his arm, he said:

"Look at the fields that are all around the river. The people aren't going to sit with their arms folded when it rains. You stayed on the bank, without going to ask the people in the neighborhood.

Two comrades immediately hurried toward the houses where the people lived. They returned at once, shouting from afar:

"There's a bridge."

Moving upstream, the group discovered a small bamboo bridge not far off, solidly attached to the trees. It was very simple to cross; and although no one said anything to anyone else, everybody was thinking about the lesson: **it is necessary to seek the support of the people in everything.**

After the border victory, Highway No. 3 became the artery that supplied the resistance. Units of vanguard youth from the region or from the valley stationed themselves along every inch of the highway, violently bombed during the day by the French. By night, the youth and the local population repaired the damaged sections.

That night it was very dark. A group of the youth had been given a brief rest to prepare to go to work at dawn. They were already to go to sleep. In the girls' barracks, they were still singing; the boys already had their lights out, but low-voiced conversations continued, spiced with a few guffaws.

All at once, one of the leaders was heard running into the barracks:

"On your feet, boys! We're going to have a good watch!"

There were some protests:

"Our leader is a little nuts today, eh?"

The leader entered the barracks and explained:

"Tonight a comrade from the Central Committee is coming to see us. Get yourselves together quickly, we're going to organize a good reception and hear what he has to say."

Everyone jumped out of bed and took a little bamboo out to the patio where they made an enormous bonfire and started singing around it.

There was a shout: "Viva President Ho." They all repeated "Viva" and went over to Uncle, accompanied by some of the cadres. As they moved toward him, he greeted them with his hand and told them to form a circle. They were all looking at him: as simple as ever, with his rubber sandles and his worn-out clothes. They listened attentively, and Uncle Ho asked:

"Do you young people like poetry?"

He had guessed right. Without having agreed to do so, they all replied in chorus:

"Yes."

"Then get some paper, I'm going to dictate a poem to you."
In the twinkling of an eye, the group dispersed and returned with their notebooks. The bonfire burned brightly and there was total silence. Uncle Ho picked up a piece of paper and dictated:

Nothing is difficult; the only obstacle
is that the heart does not persevere.
Firm and resolute men
raze mountains and fill seas.

Thus, in a forest in Viet Bac, the short poem that quickly became the guide for all Vietnamese youth was born....

Uncle's driver

After the border campaign, I received the order to prepare a good jeep, taken from the enemy. Le and Phung, in charge of food and transportation respectively, would make up the team along with Doctor Quoc and the mechanic, Chi.
Suspecting that I was going to be driving a high level cadre, I made very careful preparations. After going over my work, my chief told me that it would be President Ho Chi Minh. I couldn't believe what I heard. From the moment I had entered the army, I had always hoped I would meet the venerable leader and hear him speak, even if only a few words. I couldn't believe that I was going to see him. That I was going to drive for him. I still didn't know where we were going but I tried to imagine what the highways would be like after the last enemy bombings. I tried to distribute the seats in the vehicle. I would asked him to sit in back. In case of an alert, I would have him get out. My comrades would be in charge of his security while I would go on ahead to attract the planes toward me. No! Better I should tell him to sit in the front seat and, in case of danger, I would protect him with my body.
When we reached the appointed place, I saw an old man dressed in a tan jacket. I recognized the President. I got out and remained speechless, forgetting all the questions I had prepared.
"Well, young brother, is it you who is going to drive?"
"Yes, Uncle."
"How long have you been in the army? What company do you belong to?"
"Since the general insurrection, Uncle. I'm group head of Company 200."
"And why did you enter the army?"
"The whole country is in the resistance, Uncle; and so I entered too, to become a part of it."
This made him laugh. I felt so stupid that I blushed. If I had had time to think, I would have answered: "Because I hate the French colonialists, because I don't want to go on being a slave, etc." Caught by surprise, I could only give bumbling answers. Anyhow, the first moments of tension had passed.
"Let's go," said Uncle. Then with perfet ease, he got in beside me. I started up and away we went. Uncle remained pensive. I would have liked to ask him if the jeep was shaking him up, if we were going too fast: but I didn't dare open my mouth. If he didn't hear me say anything,

would he think I was sleeping? He turned toward me and offered me a cigarette and tried to engage me in conversation. I would have liked to assure him that I wasn't asleep; but I wanted so much to listen to him that I continued to say nothing and just listened and answered the questions he asked me.

Chi took sick a few days later. Doctor Quoc arrived that morning, as was his custom, to ask how Uncle felt.

"Chi is sick, have you already seen him, young brother? Uncle asked.

"I'll see him later when I leave here," Quoc answered.

"No, go right now," Uncle told him. "You have to see the sick person first."

Quoc, who knew the President's character very well, started to go to the patient's room.

"Wait," Uncle yelled at him, "a good doctor must also be a good mother." Take a little milk, prepare a glass for him and take it to him."

Chi was in bed a kilometer from there. Imagine what he said and felt when he learned that the milk had been sent to him by Uncle himself!

By the end of the week I was over my shyness. The comrades had told me how simple Uncle was, and how carefully he managed his time. Now I was able to learn this for myself.

In spite of the fatigue of the trip, Uncle continued to be punctual. When we stopped, he read the papers and marked the most interesting parts with a blue pencil. Despite his age, he was in excellent health. He still walked and ran with great agility. One day when we were seven km. from the Rhuy Khau bridge, he proposed that we run to it. Throughout the trip and coming back, it was Uncle who led the platoon. When the others began to pant, his breathing remained normal. I felt very happy to see that he still enjoyed good health and I knew it was the fruit of patient training.

We ate with him, which was a great pleasure for us, but often, we preferred not to because he always shared with us the food that had been prepared for him. On a certain occasion, they roasted a good wild bird for him. Uncle called Doctor Quoc:

"For you, doctor, who must work with your brain, the head."

Turning toward Phung, he continued:

"For you who are concerned with transportation and pass the time flying from one place to another, the wings."

It was my turn:

"For you, my driver, who must travel often, the feet."

There was only a small piece on the plate for him. So we suggested putting all our servings together so we could give him the best pieces; but he refused so we had to give up on this "initiative."

Once we told Le to prepare only Uncle's ration, and we would eat what was left over from the day before. When the President found out, he reproached Le many times over. We tried to explain things to him but we had no luck.

"You must make sure the fighters eat their whole ration," Uncle repeated to him, "and never reduce it, even when they themselves suggest it."

He was also very respectful of our customs. We were at the front and I had proposed that we set our daily departures for 5.30 p.m. On this day, he arrived on time as usual; but it was still very light. For that reason,

I told him it was better to wait for nightfall for greater security.

"In that case, set another time; but don't change things every day." And so I set our departures for 6 p.m., and we always left at 6 sharp.

After we had been with him for about two weeks, we had an accident. We were travelling between Ngan Son and Cao Bang when suddenly I saw a huge rock in the middle of the road. I took care to straddle the rock with the wheels of the car, thinking there would be no problem. But I forgot that the floor of the car was very low. I heard it hit and stopped immediately to see where it had struck. The radiator was smashed. I was very upset when Uncle got out.

"Don't worry. Take your time, fix it calmly and carefully," he told me encouragingly, shining his lantern so I could see.

Assisted by the mechanic, I was able to complete the repair job. Uncle didn't ask me what had happened until we reached our destination.

"Accustomed to driving trucks, I didn't think the rock was so high. I didn't think that...."

"You should have stopped and thrown the rock to the side," he said affectionately. "That way you would only have lost a minute instead of a quarter hour and you would have done the other drivers a great service."

When I returned to my group, I told my comrades many stories about Uncle. Right away an emulation movement started, to eliminate all the smallest defects and inadequacies. Our group became a "model group." When I was made section head, my section remained at the head of all the companies for several years. Once when he visited us, the President exhorted us to **take care of our transportation as we would our children, and ecomize on gasoline as if it were our blood.**

Later I was transferred to company 203. There my stories about Uncle Ho also had a mobilizing effect and soon our company received the banner for being "the best company." In it, the army hero Loc Van Trong was trained and so were many other outstanding fighters. Kin received from Uncle a silk shirt and an insignia for his very unusual feat: throughout the entire resistance, every single part on his truck was immaculately clean.

During the Moc Chau campaign, the enemy discovered our convoy one day. Five comrades went ahead with their truck to attract the fire. The rest of the convoy got out undamaged. On another occasion, Can, group head, was shot in the thigh; he bound his leg to the seat and continued driving and finally reached the Unit.

Uncle's high example was the starting point for everything our unit achieved. And for my part, I never had another accident after the one with the radiator.

When peace was reestablished, I again entered the service of the President. He recognized me at once.

"And now what are you doing?" he asked me.

"I've been named a company head, Uncle."

"And what unit are you in?"

"Company 203, Uncle."

"Good."

He was very busy and didn't have time to continue the conversation. But later I found out that he had asked to be kept up to date on what our unit was doing.