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## ASIA & PACIFIC

*SEN GEN VAN TIEN DUNG ARTICLE: "GREAT SPRING VICTORY"*

*[Volume II of Two-Volume Supplement]*



**FBIS** FOREIGN BROADCAST INFORMATION SERVICE

**DAILY REPORT**  
**CONTENTS**

*Asia & Pacific*

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*SEN GEN VAN TIEN DUNG ARTICLE: "GREAT SPRING VICTORY"*

*[Volume II of Two-Volume Supplement]*

Part X: "Capitalize on Victory"	42
Part X Continued	50
Part X Continued	54
Part XI: "New Opportunity, New Strategic Decision"	56
Part XI Continued	59
Part XII: "Lightning Speed"	62
Part XII Continued	65
Part XIII: "The Campaign Bearing Uncle Ho's Name"	70
Part XIV: "Battle Positions Are Taking Shape"	77
Part XIV Continued	80
Part XIV Continued	83
Part XV: "Boldness, Surprise, Sure Victory"	86
Part XV Continued	88
Part XV Continued	91
Part XV Continued	93
Part XVI: "The Last Hour of the Enemy"	97
Part XVI Continued	99
Part XVI Continued	102

Part XVII: "Advance on Saigon"	105
Part XVII Continued	108
Part XVII Continued	111
Part XVIII: "Total Victory"	113
Part XVIII Continued	116
Part XVIII Continued	119
Part XVIII Continued	122
Corrections to Volume I of Van Tien Dung Article	129

## Part X: "Capitalize on Victory"

Hanoi NHAN DAN in Vietnamese 22 Apr 76 p 3 BK/WA

[Text] When the Central Highlands front opened fire, our armed forces also began to coordinate their activities in Tri Thien. In areas southwest of Hue, a number of units of our II Army Corps attacked and captured various enemy positions on the Nui Bong line and on the Mo Tau 303 high point and annihilated part of the 1st puppet Division. The enemy mounted a sustained defense effort and fiercely counterattacked and blocked our advance. On 19 March, our infantry and tanks crossed the Thach Han River and liberated Quang Tri city. With the Tich Tuong-Quang Tri city-Thanh Hoi defense line smashed, the enemy pulled back to defend the line south of the My Chanh River.

Following the enemy's serious defeat in the Central Highlands, the Political Bureau and the Central Military Party Committee promptly assumed leadership over the Tri Thien front and directed the II Army Corps to rapidly change the direction of its offensive. On 17 March, the Tri Thien Military Zone was ordered to send its forces at once from the mountain areas to the coast to motivate the masses to intensify the people's war, to press closely on communications lines and the outskirts of Hue city, to intensify military proselytizing activities and so forth. At the same time, the II Army Corps was ordered to intensify its attacks from the Truoi area and to strategically sever Hue from Danang. On 20 March, the II Army Corps was ordered to be even more bold and agile. It immediately abandoned the Nui Bong and Nui Nghe areas and concentrated all its forces on cutting Route 1, making direct thrusts toward the coast, blockading Cua Thuan port, attacking Phu Bai, closely pressing on Hue city and preventing the 1st puppet Division from fleeing from Thua Thien. Moreover, the Tri Thien Military Zone was directed to send the zonal and provincial army units as quickly as possible to attack the coast, to send another unit to attack areas close to Hue city and blockade Cua Thuan port, and to coordinate with artillery in shelling Cua Thuan port.

Meanwhile, Ngo Quang Truong, 1st tactical zone puppet commander, boasted over Hue radio: "I shall die in Hue city. The Viet Cong will enter this old capital over my dead body." As for Thieu, he ballyhooed over Saigon radio: "We have abandoned Kontum and Pleiku simply to preserve our strength. Da Nang, Hue, the 3d Military Region and the 4th Military Region will be defended to the end."

Executing the directives of the Political Bureau and the Central Military Party Committee, the II Army Corps attacked and captured Kim Sac Mountain and went on to cut Route 1. We were informed that our tanks had pursued and attacked the enemy's 7th Armored Regiment and that within a very short period of time the enemy's convoy of armored cars had disintegrated. Some had burst into flames, and some had overturned. We attacked and captured the Phu Loc district capital and completely cut the enemy's escape route from Hue to Danang. Another unit of our armed forces crossed Route 1, moved through Phu Vang toward Cua Thuan port, and created conditions for the masses there to arise.

On 22 March, we launched a large-scale offensive to smash the My Chanh River line. The enemy pulled back along the Song Bo-An Lo-Huong Dien line in order to defend Hue city.

The Tri Thien armed forces attacked the 147th Marine Brigade, captured the springboard south of the Song Bo River, attacked the enemy on its counteroffensive and then advanced toward Cua Thuan port, while the artillery of the military zone shelled the Tan My-Cua Thuan area, and coordinated with our sapper units in laying mines to blockade Cua Thuan port.

On the evening of 26 March I was in the command post cave reexamining the plan to execute the General Staff's order on activating the III Army Corps and organizing our forces to defend the Central Highlands after liberation. I was also reviewing plans to develop the Central Highlands army units and the preparations for a planned move of rear service and reconnaissance units to eastern Nam Bo, when I heard Comrade Tuyen quietly reciting a poem to himself in that beautiful Hue accent:

Our Hue is happiest today,  
Our troops are advancing toward Cua Thuan port and our units have entered Hue city,  
Greetings to old people, sisters and brothers,  
Greetings to the brother troops who have just returned from the jungle.

Comrade Tuyen had just been informed by Hanoi that Hue--his native land--had been liberated.

On being told that Hue had been liberated, I could not control my emotions. My eyes were filled with tears. I remembered that on the day of liberation of Ban Me Thuot, Comrade Phan Ham returned to the command post from Ban Me Thuot city to report on the situation. Comrade Phan Ham saluted, shook hands with me and then embraced me. He was choked with emotion, his eyes filled with tears. He could say just one sentence: "Our victory is extremely great, brother."

Hue had now been liberated forever. We were the masters of Hue city for only for 25 days and nights during the 1968 Mau Than Tet. Comrade Tran Van Quang, as well as the brothers in the command posts and the army units that had participated in the general offensive and uprising on the Hue-Route 9-Khe Sanh-Quang Tri front in the spring of 1968, were certainly extremely happy on learning this news. I lit a cigarette. I had quit smoking long ago, but each time we succeeded in solving a thorny problem, won a victory or achieved particular success, I smoked a cigarette with particular satisfaction. When the comrades around me, including the guards, saw me smoke a cigarette they knew that I was enthusiastic.

We learned that on 26 March our artillery shells had shaken windows in Hue city. Faced with our strength, the enemy could not defend the city. The Phu Bai airfield was shelled, and all flights were canceled. Communications routes were cut. The enemy was left with only the route leading to Cua Thuan port for fleeing to the sea, but this route became one of disorderly withdrawal for the enemy. Tanks, armored cars, transport trucks and tens of thousands of enemy troops poured onto this road. Many groups of enemy troops and officers fired on each other to clear the way for their flight. When the way was blocked, the enemy abandoned even their vehicles and fled on foot.

Cua Thuan port was dominated by our artillery, and enemy ships could not come in to pick up the fleeing troops. While one of our army units liberated Hue city, other units of our armed forces crossed Route 1 from the south, crossed the Ta Trach River from the west, and advanced toward the coastal area. They surrounded and attacked the enemy, captured the majority of enemy troops in Cua Thuan port and seized hundreds of tanks and artillery pieces and thousands of trucks of various types. The 1st Division, once regarded by the Americans as a seasoned division of the puppet armed forces, was annihilated and disintegrated. We were now in a position to directly threaten Danang city from the north.

In coordination with the Central Highlands front, the 5th Military Zone armed forces, in addition to using the 3d Division to attack the enemy and cut Route 19, liberated Tien Phuoc and Phuoc Lam, defeated the enemy on its counteroffensive, liberated Son Ha, Tra Bong and almost all the adjoining areas, and at the same time intensified their attacks against the pacification forces in the coastal areas in various provinces, especially in Quang Ngai and Binh Dinh.

After our great victories in the Central Highlands, the regional party committee and the 5th Military Zone party committee, anticipating a new opportunity, cast aside plans to develop the offensive toward the south and shifted the direction of our offensive to the north with the aim of creating conditions for our attacks on Danang.

On 24 and 25 March, the 2d Division of the military zone, in cooperation with the regional forces, annihilated and disintegrated the 4th and 5th regiments of the 2d puppet Division and liberated Tam Ky and Tuan Duong. The Quang Ngai regional forces, in cooperation with the masses, attacked, rose up and liberated the northern part of the province. We annihilated the enemy and liberated the Chu Lai base. At the same time, the Quang Ngai armed forces and political forces repeatedly attacked, rose up and completely liberated Quang Ngai Province.

From Saigon, Thieu again called for the defense of Danang until death. On 26 March, the Political Bureau and the Central Military Party Committee directed the II Army Corps and the 5th Military Zone to hold fast to set guidelines, carry out bold and unexpected initiatives to take the enemy by surprise, concentrate forces to annihilate a great part of the enemy's potential in Danang--particularly the marine division and the 3d Division of the puppet armed forces--and to win great victory in this decisive strategic battle so as to create favorable conditions for further decisive strategic encounters.

#### Part X Continued

Hanoi NHAN DAN in Vietnamese 23 Apr 76 p 3 BK/WA

[Part X: "Capitalize on Victory"]

[Text] On 26 March I cabled brother Hoang Van Thai, deputy chief of the General Staff, requesting him to order the II Army Corps to immediately bring its long-range artillery to within striking distance of the airfield and port of Danang, urgently mount a siege on this city and boldly advance into this city to destroy all the enemy forces massing there. If this plan was achieved, we would be able to facilitate future operations on the Nam Bo battlefield. I asked the Central Military Party Committee to send brother Le Trong Tan, deputy chief of the General Staff, to supervise the II Army Corps attack on Danang to insure victory.

The II Army Corps operating on the Tri Thien front was composed of the 304th, 324th and 325th divisions and a number of technical units. On 27 March the Central Military Party Committee decided to set up the Quang Da Front Command with Comrade Chu Huy Man as political commissar and Comrade Le Trong Tan as commander. Comrade Tan boarded a helicopter in Hanoi to fly to Gio Linh. Up to that time Comrade Chu Huy Man had been in command of a unit operating very far away, between Quang Tin and Quang Ngai.

To attack Danang it was necessary to set up the command headquarters west of Danang. Upon his arrival in Quang Tri, Comrade Tan took a road east of the Truong Son range to go to A Luoi where he proceeded to an area west of Danang. While en route, he stopped at a general telephone switchboard station to contact the various units. Seeing that the situation was urgent, Comrade Tan talked with Comrade Man on the phone to determine the combat methods to be used. Thus, the command and the party committee of the Quang Da front had not yet met each other.

Beginning on 26 March Danang city was in a chaotic situation. Our forces quickly advanced to close in on the city. The enemy was forced to abandon his plan to hold up in Danang and began using Boeing 727's and helicopters to evacuate some American advisers and part of the puppet forces. The puppet troops fought among one another for places on the plane, causing noisy, brawling scenes at the airfield. Some of them were run over by taxiing aircraft on the runway; and others got themselves entangled in helicopter landing skids.

Together with their families, puppet officers and soldiers jostled one another to get to the evacuation flights. Prior to their retreat, enemy marines committed robberies, took part in shooting incidents and committed rape. Meanwhile, 3,200 new recruits undergoing training at the Hoa Cam military training center revolted, deserted and joined the revolution or returned to their families.

Our big artillery guns began bombarding Danang airfield, Hoa Khanh Base--the headquarters of the 3d puppet Division Command--Son Tra port and the command headquarters of the marine division in Non Nuoc--thus driving enemy troops in the city into greater panic. Our brothers who had been detained in Non Nuoc prison staged a rebellion to break away. The 2d Division of the 5th Military Region under the command of Comrade Nguyen Xon closed in south of Danang after liberating Tien Phuoc, Phuoc Lam and Tam Ky.

On 29 March ground troops and tanks of the II Army Corps, together with the armed forces of the 5th Military Region, advancing in four directions--north, northwest, southwest and south--rapidly and directly attacked the city. They captured Nuoc Man and Danang airfields and other important positions, especially the Son Tra Peninsula. Meanwhile, an independent regiment of the military region also attacked and occupied Non Nuoc and Nuoc Man. Some revolutionary organizations and our special action troops in the city controlled Trinh Minh The bridge and hoisted the revolutionary flag at the city hall. Self-defense forces personnel and the people led the way for our troops to quickly capture enemy positions and hold surrendered enemy troops and POW's.

The city was not subject to destruction. The airfield, military barracks and government buildings remained intact; public utilities were still in service; and ferryboats were still in operation. We seized 26 aircraft, 20 tanks and 40 artillery pieces. Within 32 hours we had destroyed or disbanded more than 100,000 enemy troops, captured a strong military base complex and liberated Danang, the second largest city in the south. With the liberation of Danang, we had completed the destruction and disintegration of the I Corps and totally liquidated the puppets' Military Region I--creating conditions for speeding up the total collapse of the puppet army.

I also received news about the situation on the Nam Bo battlefield through a letter sent by Comrade Tran Van Tra, commander of the Nam Bo armed forces and the 6th region, which was also known as B2. In Long Khanh and along Route 20, after liberating Dinh Quan, Hoai Duc and Gia Rai, we prepared to send a large part of the 7th Division supported by artillery and tanks to attack and liberate Lam Dong.

Firmly grasping the opportunity and operating with combat coordination among various armed branches for the first time, the 7th Division of the IV Army Corps moved in formations along Route 20, with armored cars opening the way for tanks followed by ground troops and artillery pieces; and the division personnel fought enemy troops whenever they showed up with unprecedented vigor. Enemy troops, caught by surprise and driven by fear, fled from their bunkers and fortifications. Some of them ran up the nearby hills and stood there, watching our troops' advance. The 7th Division advanced rapidly and liberated Lam Dong Province completely and Bao Loc city. Comrade Tra regretted he had not had sufficient forces to proceed immediately to capture Lien Khang-Drang and Dalat after liberating Lam Dong.

On Route 22 in Dau Tieng, after destroying enemy forces at the Dau Tieng subsector, Ben Cui, Ong Hung stream, Cau Khoi and the Dat Set intersection on Route 26, our troops cut Route 22, isolating Tay Ninh, and destroyed regular puppet troops, creating conditions for our forces to attack and liberate Tay Ninh.

In the area of operation of the 5th and 3d divisions, after opening a corridor leading to the 8th Region in the Mekong Delta, we would destroy the 9th Infantry Division and the 4th Armored Brigade of the puppets in Moc Hoa before mounting an attack on the Moc Hoa subsector. We had expanded our control over the areas north of Cai Be in My Tho and east of Kien Phong and the Nguyen Van Tiep canal.

In the 9th Region of western Nam Bo, our armed forces in Vinh Long developed their operations satisfactorily, but those in Hau Giang were still developing their offensive a little slowly. Generally, the enemy in Nam Bo was still strong in numbers, but his morale had been seriously shaken by the grave defeats sustained in the 1st and 2d tactical zones. Nevertheless, since we had not scored any big military victories, the enemy had yet to show any signs of disintegration.

To create opportunities it was necessary to conduct big annihilating battles and deal surprise blows with a view to completely disintegrating the enemy and rendering him at a loss to reorganize his forces. The basic law of the war was to destroy the enemy's military forces, including manpower and war materiel. The enemy had various types of troops and forces. Only by correctly determining the targets and smashing the enemy's key forces would we be able to disintegrate him quickly, change the balance of forces to our advantage and create an ever-spreading chain reaction.

At this time, the main target of our forces was the puppet regular army, especially its top leading organs. By correctly applying strong blows, we would trigger the disintegration of the whole defense system of the puppet administration on each battlefield. The enemy would not disintegrate and flee if we failed to deal deadly, rapid and continuous blows.

At the Central Highlands Front Command Headquarters, on 18 March--when the enemy was retreating from the Central Highlands--we discussed the trends for developing the operations of the Central Highlands forces. We came to the following assessment of the situation facing the enemy and ourselves:

Our victories in the Central Highlands had had a very strong impact on the enemy's strategic deployment of forces and his morale. By going on the offensive and quickly developing battle gains, we could speed up the enemy's disintegration. To avoid an isolated and besieged position which would mean no more supplies and, sooner or later, destruction, the enemy had been forced to hastily withdraw from the Central Highlands. The enemy's plan to withdraw his forces from the Central Highlands was aimed at defending the lowland provinces in Military Region II which were now vulnerable to attack.

In Binh Dinh, the enemy had the 22d Division, while other provinces were only defended by regional and popular forces.

Meanwhile, the enemy maintained his forces around Saigon, but reinforcements might be sent there. In the entire south, the enemy's II Corps had sustained the greatest losses in manpower and had to abandon a strategically important area--the Central Highlands consisting of five provinces. This was unprecedented in the history of the Vietnam war. The enemy's II Corps had also been suffering from the most serious slump in morale. In the short term, it was most unlikely that this corps could organize large-scale counterattacks in the Central Highlands in general and in Ban Me Thuot in particular.

The enemy's defeats in the Central Highlands and on other battlefields had further weakened the Thieu administration. If the enemy sustained more military defeats, this would lead to a possible downfall of the Thieu administration. Our victory in the Central Highlands was very great as it had gone beyond our expectations. We now had many favorable conditions to continue capitalizing on victory. The enemy was now in confusion and panic and was being closely pursued by our forces. Our forces had sustained only marginal losses in combat; the fighting spirit of our troops had increased greatly. We were still strong logistically--only part of the ammunition earmarked for the plan had been used, and a fairly large quantity of ammunition had been seized from the enemy. Our strategic communications lines now allowed smoother and quicker passage for trucks.

There still remained a month and a half of the dry season for us to continue our operations. All our battlefields throughout the south had developed their operations with good coordination. In the short term, the question was to determine the correct direction for developing the operations of the Central Highlands forces in the most continuous, rapid and effective manner in order to make full use of their might in the least possible time. Such a direction must be aimed at destroying as many vital forces of the enemy as possible and strategically dividing both militarily and administratively the territory under the Thieu administration's temporary control in the south in order to upset the arrangement of strategic positions and the strategic situation of the enemy and to further accelerate the military disintegration and political decline of the Thieu administration. If we stopped and launched our offensive in another direction, the enemy would regroup.

After intense discussions, we agreed that the direction for strategic development of the operations of the Central Highlands forces was to advance eastward. Specifically, our forces swept toward the coast and joined the armed forces of the 5th Military Region in liberating Binh Dinh and Phu Yen provinces and part of Khanh Hoa Province--destroying a good part of the enemy's vital forces and liberating more than 1 million people. By this time, filled with excitement, our troops wanted to rapidly advance toward the lowlands in the flush of victory as the people in the coastal areas were enthusiastically repairing and building roads and moving rice and ammunition to greet the arrival of our main forces.

## Part X Continued

Hanoi NHAN DAN in Vietnamese 24 Apr 76 p 3 BK/WA

[Part X: "Capitalize on Victory"]

[Text] Thus we would control all the three strategic routes--Routes 7, 19 and 21--which linked the mountainous zone with the lowlands, and the densely populated coastal areas of the 5th Region with the sparsely populated Central Highlands. This military sweep into the lowlands was also aimed at destroying the 22d puppet Division--the remaining force of II Corps. Meanwhile, our special action and local forces in Binh Dinh, Phu Yen and Khanh Hoa provinces stood ready to annihilate the two or three enemy regiments which might be sent from the 1st or 3d tactical zone to reinforce the 22d Division. By achieving this, we would basically succeed in smashing the enemy's II Corps, liberate the 2d tactical zone, cut the enemy's defense system in the south into halves and thereby isolate his 1st tactical zone in the north.

Later on, we made the following adjustment on our plan: After liberating Khanh Duong on Route 21, we would sweep toward Mo Drak Pass and create conditions for liberating Ninh Hoa before proceeding toward liberating Nha Trang and Cam Ranh. At this time, it was necessary to resolve two problems: We must quickly consolidate the armed forces, issue more weapons to the various units and guide them in the methods of fighting the enemy. The logistical problem presented no difficulties because we now controlled three strategic routes leading to the lowlands, which allowed for the transportation by truck of troops, weapons, munitions, grain and food. The general political department sent over many cadres who would not only strengthen the troops' morale but would also actively contribute to building the basic-level administration in the areas which had just been liberated, while the general technical department assigned to the front more than 300 engineers and workers to repair hundreds of tanks, trucks and artillery pieces captured from the enemy.

On 19 March I worked with comrades Bui San and Kien, members of the standing body of the 5th Region Party Committee; and Comrade Can, member of the 5th Region Party Committee and secretary of the Darlac Provincial Party Committee. The situation in the provincial capital and its surrounding areas had been gradually stabilized. Most of the people in the provincial capital had chosen to stay with the revolution. Markets had been re-opened and hospitals were working again. Water supplies had been restored after only 2 days. The people of all walks of life had held meetings to welcome the liberation of their native land. Most enthusiastic were the workers, youths and students who had volunteered to clean the streets, repair the radio station, restore power and water supplies and participate in the maintenance of public order and security. During mass meetings held in the provincial capital, the people had posed many questions about their lives: Would they be allowed to work in the fields all day long and return home after dark? Would they be allowed to fell trees in the forests? Would they be allowed to withdraw money from their bank accounts? Would civil servants and teachers continue to receive their pay? Would schools be reopened and what about the curriculum? I passed on my views to the local leading comrades and instructed the Central Highlands Command to help resolve some major problems such as building the basic-level administration and the local armed forces; implementing the various economic, cultural and educational policies; organizing relief assistance for the 100,000 people in the provincial capital of Ban Me Thuot and its surrounding areas and for more than 50,000 evacuees in nearby areas; and correctly carrying out the policies toward the various ethnic minority groups, the bourgeoisie and foreign residents.

There was a serious shortage of local cadres, and it was hoped that ethnic minority cadres who were attending the school of nationalities in the north as well as cadres from elsewhere throughout the country would be sent here to help.

As an initial step, we set up a military region which would simultaneously perform the task of military management and provide leadership in various fields over the three provinces of the Central Highlands. The military region party committee was made up of military and civilians, along with administrative and party cadres. This organization would not appear publicly but would directly guide the protection, restoration and building of the economy in the Central Highlands. We estimated that hundreds of thousands of hectares of land in this region could be exploited over a number of years--in fact, only the day before a combatant had exclaimed: "Good God, just take a look at the land around Ban Me Thuot! It is vast! It is just not true to say that our country is small and poor."

The military sweep toward the coastal plains of central Vietnam along Routes 19, 7 and 21 began with a vigorous surge. Advancing along Route 19, the 968th Division liberated Binh Dinh Province and, together with the 3d Division of the 5th Region, destroyed and disbanded the 22d puppet Division in Phu Phong, Lai Nghi and Phu Cat. The people in the provincial capital of Qui Nhon rose up and joined the local armed forces in liberating the city and the Phuoc Ly and Phuoc Hai peninsulas, thus preventing enemy ships from picking up remnant enemy troops waiting on the shore. On the same day, we attacked and occupied Go Quanh Airfield, capturing 1,000 enemy troops and seizing 30 aircraft.

Moving down Route 7, the 320th Division liberated Cung Son, Tuy Hoa, Tuy An and Song Cau, and totally liberated Phu Yen Province.

At that time, puppet General Pham Van Phu, Commander of MR II, noisily called for the defense of Nha Trang to the end while the U.S. consulate there was making preparations for evacuation and the puppet officers and men, together with their families, were packing up to flee. Three thousand puppet troops at the Lam Son Training Center and the school for noncommissioned officers in the northern part of the city fled to the city center. Policemen guarding the city prison also took flight. Two thousand imprisoned puppet soldiers broke out of the jail, seized weapons and began to fire indiscriminately and go on a robbery rampage, spreading still more confusion in the city.

Meanwhile, on Route 21, Comrade Vu Lang and Comrade Nguyen Hiep with the 10th Division led by Comrade Ho De pursued the fleeing enemy to the coast. Comrade Vu Lang especially wanted to liberate Ninh Hoa as he had strenuously fought against the French aggressors there 29 years earlier. On arriving at Phuong Hoang Pass, he was ordered to return to meet me and receive new orders. After liberating Khanh Duong and Ninh Hoa, the 10th Division marched into Nha Trang city. The people and some policemen in the city went out to greet our troops and guide them to occupy various positions. Our troops stormed into Pham Van Phu's residence but he had fled, not even having time to finish his meal. Some enemy forces in Nha Trang escaped to Cam Ranh. The 10th Division, in the flush of victory, continued the offensive and liberated Cam Ranh--one of the biggest and most important military ports--thus totally liberating Khanh Hoa Province.

Pham Van Phu fled to Phan Thiet and was informed by the deputy commander of MR III that Thieu had annexed the two southernmost provinces of MR II--Ninh Thuan and Binh Thuan--to MR III in order to form an outer defense line protecting Saigon. Thus, the entire MR II of the puppets was erased from the map.

On learning the status of our numerically strong reserve forces in the Central Highlands, we ordered a unit to attack and liberate Dalat. After liberating Dalat, we had to create conditions for sending our troops to attack and capture Thanh Son Airfield in Phan Rang, an important air base of the enemy which commanded the road on which our forces would march to Nam Bo. We dispatched a sapper regiment to carry out this task. Dalat was well known not only for its vegetables and fruits but also for being a resort city and a cultural and scientific center. Situated there were an atomic research center and many schools and institutes. We had to instill in our troops who were to attack Dalat a satisfactory sense of discipline and organization so that they would be able to successfully take control of the city and protect and maintain all equipment, means and facilities. Equipped with trucks and artillery pieces, the 198th Sapper Regiment under the command of Comrade Kinh passed Quang Duc Province and entered the provincial capital of Gia Nghia, where it was joined by the regiments of eastern Nam Bo which had been liberated. Together, they moved forward and liberated Dalat.

At this time, cadres of the front staff had to admit somewhat ruefully that they could not draw maps quickly enough to catch up with the advance of our forces; all the battlefields were surging forward in the flush of victory.

Part XI: "New Opportunity, New Strategic Decision"

Hanoi NHAN DAN in Vietnamese 26 Apr 76 p 3 BK/WA

[Text] While the Central Highlands troops gradually advanced to the delta on three strategic routes, on 20 March we received a message informing us that the Political Bureau and the Central Military Party Committee had just met to assess the situation. Our recent great victory had had a strategic significance and marked a new turning point in the South Vietnam war. The enemy was planning to carry out a large-scale strategic retreat in order to concentrate forces in the Saigon area and part of the Mekong Delta and perhaps also in Danang and Cam Ranh with a view to establishing a relatively strong position to seek a political solution--forming a coalition government or agreeing to a partition of South Vietnam. It was, therefore, necessary for us to lose no time in using the factor of great surprise in matters of timing, direction of the attacks, strength and boldness while insuring certain victory. Accordingly, the Political Bureau weighed pros and cons and drew up a plan to liberate Saigon earlier than had been anticipated.

On 27 or 28 March, the Political Bureau sent Comrade Le Duc Tho to see me in the Central Highlands to officially inform me of its resolution. Meanwhile, messages were sent from Hanoi to comrades Pham Hung and Tran Van Tra in Nam Bo, and Vo Chi Cong and Chu Huy Man in the 5th Region to immediately join me in the Central Highlands to receive information about the Political Bureau's intention and to discuss the plan to implement it. Thus, a new development was shaping up, a new task being formulated by the realities of combat and the clever mentality of our party, and a new great opportunity was coming.

With impatience, I waited for the arrival of Comrade Le Duc Tho and for the extremely important instructions of the Political Bureau at that historic moment of national history.

During its 24 March historic meeting, the Political Bureau had assessed that our strategic general offensive had started with the Central Highlands campaign, that a new strategic opportunity was coming, and that we had the necessary conditions for carrying out our decision to liberate South Vietnam at an early date.

The Political Bureau intended to concentrate forces, weapons, and technical and material means to liberate Saigon before the rainy season--that is, in early May 1975--and to take advantage of the enemy's strategic retreat to annihilate and disintegrate the enemy I Corps and the bulk of his II Corps and to prevent his troops from withdrawing and regrouping around Saigon.

That was a strategic decision of our party, army and people. Exactly as assessed by the Political Bureau, the situation was evolving very quickly every hour and minute, and the enemy was perplexed and confused though his troops were still numerous. Therefore, we should act quickly and knock him down. If we allowed him to carry on until the rainy season, the situation would become complex.

On 25 March, the Political Bureau sent me a cable informing me of its final decision that three divisions should urgently be deployed from Routes 7 and 21 to carry out the plan to liberate Saigon, that a number of units of technical branches should also make quick preparations so the plan might be implemented in a month or more and that the sooner these troops were deployed, the better. The message added: "We will carry out our plan during the dry season because heavy rains will fall in about 2 months. Even if the rainy season has started when we near Saigon, there will not be many obstacles. We should try by all means to overcome difficulties. The situation is changing. There will be new opportunities.... The situation is developing very rapidly now. Our plan is a big leap forward. We must make every effort not to lose time. Not losing time and seizing every opportunity at this point would be a very decisive move."

On receiving the Political Bureau's message, I pondered ways to carry out its plan most satisfactorily. Should the 320th and 10th divisions stop pursuing the enemy and be transferred immediately to Nam Bo or should they move into the delta, liberate Phu Yen and Khanh Hoa provinces and attack Nha Trang and Cam Ranh? Then, should the 320th Division use Route 7 to return to the Central Highlands, and should the 10th Division follow Route 20 to launch operations in the direction of Nam Bo?

If we let our troops seize opportunities to rapidly pursue enemy troops and destroy and disintegrate them as quickly as possible and also seize opportunities to annihilate other enemy troops in Military Region II, we would create favorable conditions for our forthcoming action which would have a decisive effect on the war--that is, the liberation of Saigon-Gia Dinh.

We carefully considered the time needed to fulfill our mission, our means of transport, the movement of heavy weapons, the means for rear service transport, battlefield preparations, and the remaining period of the dry season so that the 320th Division might complete the liberation of Phu Yen and the 10th Division begin attacking Cam Ranh without hampering the scheduled launching of operations into Nam Bo.

During the recent battles, the Central Highlands divisions had won quick and great victories in attacking cities and did so without stumbling. Therefore, we placed great confidence in the war-seasoned divisions of the Central Highlands.

I imparted these thoughts to the Political Bureau and proposed that the Central Highlands units continued expanding their attacks toward the delta for a few days more. Since our troops were decidedly in the flush of victory and the enemy troops were in disorder, we had the conditions to attack, annihilate and disintegrate large enemy units and to occupy key areas in order to both preclude future troubles for our troops engaged in the ~~the~~ Nam Bo campaign and to simultaneously distract the enemy.

If we did so, we could still adhere to the deadline set by the Political Bureau and satisfactorily carry out future tasks.

I was very glad to receive a message from the Political Bureau and the Central Military Party Committee approving our battle plan. The message added that though still carrying out operations under favorable conditions, the Central Highlands troops should be regrouped and quickly strengthened before being transferred to Nam Bo to attack the key enemy areas according to the new strategic decision.

We were then faced with countless and very complex new tasks involved in organizing our troops to fight and advance along coastal areas. First of all, we had to help organize local armed forces in the Central Highlands provinces and to build local regiments and battalions and to provide them with adequate equipment and weapons to defend their native lands after the departure of the main forces. The 25th Regiment was given additional artillery and anti-aircraft guns and assigned to stand by to control Route 21. The 29th Regiment was sent to defend Ban Me Thuot while a Darlac local regiment was set up to join it in defending Ban Me Thuot. The Annamese cordillera units were assigned to defend Kontum and Pleiku. There was already a local battalion which had been operating in Phu Bon.

On 27 March, in view of the new situation and according to the instructions of the Political Bureau and Central Military Party Committee, I held a meeting with the Central Highlands Front Command at the new command post--which had been transferred to an area west of Route 14--to make known the gist of these instructions. Everyone was highly enthusiastic, all agreed and all were resolved to strictly implement the instructions.

We discussed ways to carry out the two most important tasks: 1) to carry out the plan to regroup troops for consolidation, encouragement and rearrangement purposes and 2) to organize and immediately send more than 50,000 troops and thousands of tons of material from the Central Highlands to Nam Bo.

I declared the formation of the III Army Corps and assigned tasks to the corps command composed of comrades Vu Lang, commander; Nguyen Hiep, political commissar; Nguyen Nang, deputy commander; and Phi Trieu Ham, deputy political commissar. The III Corps included the 10th, 320th and 316th divisions. The 968th and 3d divisions were sent back to Military Region V. Comrade Hoang Minh Thao, former deputy commander of Military Region V, who had already fulfilled his mission in the Central Highlands, now returned to Military Region V to command a column composed of the 968th and 3d divisions to move from the delta to Cam Ranh to replace the Central Highlands divisions which were about to go on other missions.

We set up a light command organ with signal equipment for this column to maintain direct contact with me. I shook hands with Comrade Hoang Minh Thao and hugged him after our great victory in the Central Highlands. We affectionately wished good health to each other so that we would be able to win complete victory. Then we said goodbye.

## Part XI Continued

Hanoi NHAN DAN in Vietnamese 27 Apr 76 p 3 EK/WA

[Part XI: "New Opportunity, New Strategic Decision"]

[Text] The III Army Corps had been formed, and it took the lead in the period that was the turning point of the war. At the time it was formed, a new development occurred--the more we fought the stronger we became, both tactically during this campaign and strategically during the general offensive.

Until then, after each fighting season or military campaign we had usually spent some time to consolidate forces, reorganize troops, review experiences, improve troop strength and equipment, and prepare battlefields and secure supplies. Generally, we had set out again stronger than before; however, we had never become stronger while fighting. During the victorious Route 9 campaign in southern Laos in the spring of 1971 after 43 days of combat, although there was still opportunity, we had to stop our operations without being able to advance quickly toward Khe Sanh. During the spring-summer Tri Thien campaign in 1972, after liberating Quang Tri, we could only take our offensive to the My Chanh River, where we had to stop. But in 1975 the situation was completely different. We had conducted repeated campaigns, and had grown stronger in a marked and steady manner during the fighting. The Central Highlands armed forces, initially composed of regimental and divisional size units, had after only less than a month of fighting been organized into a very mobile army corps complete with various technical armed branches. Our armed forces in Tri Thien, the 5th Region and Nam Bo had also grown and matured in a similar manner in terms of material forces and morale as well as fighting ability and organizational and command methods. For the first time during the development of the Central Highlands armed forces, each of our battalions reached full numerical strength, more than 400 troops, and each of our divisions had a basic firepower superior to that of their enemy counterpart.

The opportunity to liberate Saigon had become riper and riper. Our party Political Bureau--being completely imbued with a spirit of revolutionary offensive, making a scientific analysis of events and having the vision to detect new developments--was determined to capitalize on this opportunity to develop the offensive and to promptly solve all problems in the most active manner. At this time hesitation, procrastination or delay would have been a grave error.

On 28 March General Weyand, chief of staff of the U.S. Army--the man who had furled the colors of a U.S. military unit that had withdrawn from South Vietnam 2 years earlier--arrived in Saigon to prepare a defense plan for the puppets. After our armed forces had completely liberated Cam Ranh on 3 April as well as the territory north of this base, and either destroyed or disbanded the I and II corps of the puppet Saigon administration, Weyand hurriedly urged the puppet forces to establish a strong outer defense line in Phan Rang to check our advance. He sent a cable to the United States requesting emergency aid for the puppet administration. President Ford sent an airlift to transport weapons from Bangkok, Thailand, to Saigon and used giant Galaxy C-5 transport planes to fly from the United States to Tan Son Nhut hundreds of artillery pieces and a lot of weapons and munitions. He also dispatched four big LST transport vessels together with the aircraft carrier "Hancock" and 15 large helicopters with 300 marines to the South China Sea.

By this time the U.S.-puppets thought that after liberating the provinces of Military Regions I and II, we would have to leave many troops behind to defend these localities, at least a regiment for each province; that, therefore, we could send no more than an army corps to reinforce our forces in eastern Nam Bo; and that even if we moved as fast as possible, it would take us 2 months to arrive there. For, although equipped with many transport planes and vessels and trucks, even the U.S.-puppets, if they wanted to move a force of this size, would need at least a month to get ready for combat. Thus, even during his dying hours, the enemy remained very subjective and judged our ability in a completely erroneous manner.

Of course, the enemy was no longer surprised that we would launch continuous attacks throughout the south. However, it was obvious that he had not yet discovered our direction of attack, the time for action, the forces to be used, the fighting methods, the strategic plan or our extraordinary efforts to seize this new opportunity. Since the enemy had been caught by complete surprise in the Central Highlands as well as in Hue and Danang, he would surely receive an even greater surprise in Saigon.

On 2 April Cao Van Vien, chief of the Joint General Staff of the puppet army, noisily urged the puppet forces to resolutely defend their remaining territory and called for a last-ditch defense from Phan Rang south. He set up a forward command of Military Region III in Phan Rang headed by puppet Lt Gen Nguyen Vinh Nghi. The enemy ordered all fronts to try holding out until the rainy season of early June 1975, when we would be unable to intensify our activities while he would be more prepared--for according to his plan, his various recruit-training centers would by 15 May turn out a considerable number of troops--enough to resurrect some divisions that had been destroyed.

Since the beginning of the campaign, our troops had won victory after victory. In particular, after the lightning battle of Ban Me Thuot and our attacks on the disintegrating enemy forces in Military Regions I and II, our armed forces became invincible. However, it was totally incorrect to think that the enemy forces in the remaining positions in Military Regions III and IV, and especially in Saigon--the nerve center of the U.S. henchmen's ruling apparatus--would quickly disintegrate or collapse without our making careful preparations or mobilizing superior forces.

Nam Bo was the last stronghold where the enemy could reassemble his forces--the last defense line of an enemy made very stubborn and reactionary by the nature of his class and his class interests. This would be the site of the last battle that would mean victory or defeat for the revolutionary versus the counterrevolutionary forces, our people versus U.S. imperialism, and socialist versus capitalist forces. This fierce test of strength did not allow us to be subjective; nor did our repeated victories allow us to rest on our laurels or consider the enemy to be the same as he was when he was fleeing in disarray.

I asked the Political Bureau and the Central Military Party Committee to send from one to two divisions complete with various armed branches to join forces of the 5th Military Region on Routes 1 and 20 as the ready reserve force of the campaign. Enemy fighter aircraft at Thanh Son airfield in Phan Rang, with an operational radius of only 400 km, could not reach Danang or Kontum; therefore, we must boldly use transport planes and sea-going vessels to move troops and all kinds of logistic supplies into Danang and Pleiku. Military reinforcements sent by the High Command should be mobilized for the decisive battle for Saigon instead of being dispersed in Tri Thien and the 5th Region, where local forces could be mobilized.

I made a tour of Ban Me Thuot, Phu Bon and Buon Ho to observe former enemy positions and the routes on which our troops had advanced in the previous campaign. The Central Highlands front, where a turning point of the war had occurred, was shrouded in silence. Looking at the old battlefield where the entire enemy force defending the Central Highlands had collapsed and where a flag of our armed forces was now seen victoriously fluttering, we further understood the enemy whom we must continue to destroy in coming days. We felt boundless pride in the clear-sighted, flexible, resolute and timely leadership of the Political Bureau and the Central Military Party Committee, in the fine and creative organizational and operational capabilities of cadres at various echelons on the battlefield, and in revolutionary heroism marvelously displayed by our people's army.

We urgently studied the information extracted from enemy officers and military documents we had captured in the Central Highlands to plan our next moves. I visited Ban Me Thuot prison, where brothers Nguyen Chi Thanh and To Huu and many other comrades had been detained and tortured by the enemy; however, they had maintained their revolutionary optimism. On this very Ban Me Thuot front 25 years earlier some of our comrades graduating from the first infantry training course had valiantly sacrificed their lives when the French army had attacked and captured Ban Me Thuot. Anyway, we had prepared a meeting site to receive brother Le Duc Tho who would come to disseminate a resolution of the Political Bureau and the Central Military Party Committee to comrades Pham Hung, Vo Chi Cong and Tran Van Tra and me. The meeting site was a bamboo house temporarily erected in Chu Leo on the side of Route 14 to the west of Thuan Man. However, prompted by the drastic developments of the situation, especially the liberation of the whole stretch of central Trung Bo, I cabled the Political Bureau suggesting that the meeting in the Central Highlands be canceled and that we should go directly to B2--Nam Bo--instead and wait for Comrade Le Duc Tho to hold a meeting there. Comrade Le Duc Tho left Hanoi on 28 March and arrived in Dong Hoi by plane on the first leg of the journey. He was in a very joyful mood; and while stopping over in Quang Binh on the first night of his trip, he wrote a poem dedicated to brother Le Duan as follows:

Brother, you told me to go and return with victory;  
 At that touching moment, I could not speak.  
 Your words are truly the call of our country,  
 Which fill me with vigor to cross the Truong Son Mountains.  
 The way to the frontline is enlivened by good news;  
 Victories are scored everywhere.  
 As I hurry on my long trip,  
 Favorable opportunity has been given us.

On 31 March both Comrade Le Duc Tho, who was moving along the Truong Son mountain chain, and I, in Ban Me Thuot, received an urgent message from Comrade Le Duan, which said in effect: As it is necessary to take advantage of this opportunity and act quickly, brother Tuan should urgently go to Nam Bo to meet brother Bay Cuong--that was brother Pham Hung. Brother Sau--that was brother Le Duc Tho--should go there, too, for the meeting. Brothers Bay Cuong and Tu Nguyen--that was brother Tran Van Tra--need not go to the Central Highlands.

Comrades Vo Chi Cong and Chu Huy Man in the 5th Region also received a Political Bureau message informing them that they no longer had to attend the Central Highlands meeting. In fact, Comrade Vo Chi Cong, upon the liberation of the Central Highlands, had left the 5th Region for the meeting. Arriving in Kontum, he saw that the situation had developed considerably and returned immediately to assume leadership.

Upon his return, he found the Political Bureau message telling him not to go to Ban Me Thuot for the meeting with Comrade Le Duc Tho. Comrade Bui San, after working with me in Ban Me Thuot, had left for Kontum in a hurry to meet Comrade Vo Chi Cong. They did meet one another but were only able to work together for a brief session before going their separate ways due to the extreme urgency of the situation. Each and every leader clearly felt the urgent need to take advantage of the new opportunity and thus contribute to the party's general leadership.

Faced with the new opportunity and the new strategic decision, the party, people and army were most elated. Everyone was ready to offer his energy and intelligence and to emulate in fulfilling any mission entrusted to him. The slogan "Everything for the frontline, everything for victory" had become a reality at the climax of the last stage of the anti-U.S. resistance for national salvation. The great socialist northern rear had quickly mobilized human and material resources for the battlefield. On the great southern frontline, our troops were marching forward in great numbers day and night in their advance into Nam Bo at lightning speed and with firm confidence in victory. At this time, no force could check our advance.

#### Part XII: "Lightning Speed"

Hanoi NHAN DAN in Vietnamese 28 Apr 76 p 3 BK/WA

[Text] Since war is by definition a deadly contest, the final and decisive strategic battle is always the ultimate test of strength between two sides and demands of both sides the utmost in leadership and practical action. On the morning of 31 March, the Political Bureau met to hear a report by the Central Military Party Committee on developments in our offensive over the past 3 weeks, especially those in the past few days. The Political Bureau unanimously noted that, with our victories in the 9th region and eastern Nam Bo, the liberation of Phuoc Long Province, and our resounding victory in the Central Highlands battlefield, our strategic general offensive had, in effect, already begun and had scored enormous successes in a very short period of time. We had annihilated and disbanded over 35 percent of the enemy force and, for the first time, destroyed and put out of action two enemy army corps. The enemy troops had lost more than 40 percent of their modern weapons and technical equipment, while we had seized and destroyed over 40 percent of the puppets' material and logistic bases and liberated 12 provinces--thus raising the total population of the liberated areas to nearly 8 million.

Worthy of note is the fact that the effect of combining military attacks and mass uprising was most obvious during the Danang battle when the people's discontent with the enemy was at a peak and needed only an opportunity to explode and when the majority of enemy officers and soldiers had lost their combat spirit. Because of this situation, our troops and people--though much inferior to the enemy in strength--opportunistically and boldly destroyed one of the largest military base complexes of the puppets in the south in a little over 30 hours from the time the first shots were fired.

Our armed forces matured in an outstanding manner during the fight. The number killed and wounded was very small in proportion to the victories won, and the expenditure in terms of weapons and ammunition was negligible. Meanwhile, we gained more experience in combat organization and command and seized vast amounts of weapons and ammunition. From the standpoint of strategic position and military and political forces, our strength overwhelmed the enemy.

Our troops and people were fully able to take strategic initiatives while the enemy was in a passive, confused and perplexed position, strategically and tactically deadlocked. Moreover, the United States had proven itself to be completely impotent. Even if it were to increase its aid, it would still be unable to save the puppets from imminent collapse--and by now total collapse had virtually become the inevitable fate of the enemy.

Considering these facts, the 31 March Political Bureau conference reached the following assessment: The revolutionary war in the south had not only entered a period of gigantic developments, but had also been provided with the right strategic opportunities for a general offensive and uprising right at the enemy's stronghold. At this moment, the last decisive strategic battle of our armed forces and people had begun with the aim of completing the national, democratic and popular revolution in the south and achieving peaceful national reunification. The revolution in our country was developing most intensively and at a quick pace--with one day equaling 20 years. In view of this, the Political Bureau decided to seize even more avidly this strategic opportunity and apply prompt, daring, surprising and certainly victorious leadership tactics with the great determination to stage a general offensive and uprising at the earliest date--specifically no later than April.

At this time, to insure certain victory and to maintain the factor of surprise we must not lose any time in attacking the enemy when he has been driven into a confused and declining state; we must further concentrate our forces on attacking key targets at a certain time and in a certain direction. It is necessary to firmly grasp the strategic aim of developing the strength of all three strategic blows and coordinating the offensive with an uprising in order to stage attacks from both without and within. In each direction, we must concentrate forces at a certain time to overwhelm the enemy, quickly create favorable new conditions and promptly seize the opportunity to vigorously develop victory. In the short term, as an earlier opportunity for action has been established, we must urgently strengthen our forces west of Saigon and quickly split and strategically surround the enemy forces therewith a view to completely blocking Route 4; at the same time must quickly assemble our forces from Ba Ria and Vung Tau east of Saigon to attack and capture key enemy positions with a view to completely surrounding and isolating Saigon, and have our main forces, including technical units, stand ready to await the opportunity and once it arises, immediately unleash strong blows against the most vital and important enemy positions right in the center of Saigon city.

Examining the actual situation, everyone was aware of two strikingly contradictory requirements--the extreme urgency of the new strategic opportunity which had presented itself, and the need to prepare an all-round powerful force for the last decisive strategic battle which would be launched on a large scale and in a vast area with the use of new, special fighting methods. While the first requirement demanded that preparations should be made within as short a time as possible, the second called for a relatively long period in which to make satisfactory preparations--both quantitative and qualitative. Meanwhile, the U.S.-puppets were trying their best to capitalize on the situation in an attempt to check our efforts and force us to prolong the time needed to prepare our forces for an offensive on Saigon-Gia Dinh. The Political Bureau therefore decided to concentrate leadership and forces on insuring total victory for this historic decisive battle. All the military regions, localities and administrations at various levels throughout the country were ordered to give priority to meeting all the demands that would arise on the key battlefields.

Meanwhile, the various organs of the high command were working day and night--providing satisfactory guidance in the control of the newly liberated areas while making preparations for the coming decisive strategic battle.

All our party, people and armed forces were resolved to implement the new strategic decision of the Political Bureau. In early April 1975, on all the land routes, riverways, sea lanes, railroads and air routes, our people lived hectic and very busy days. A whole nation was in a festive mood this historic spring; a whole nation was gearing up for the forthcoming battle under the slogan "lightning speed, more lightning speed; and boldness, more boldness." Our troops moved south endlessly and all vehicular traffic seemed to head in only one direction--due south.

From the north, various types of vehicles sped bumper to bumper southward to move troops and supplies to the frontline. In Dong Ha, the convoys broke into two columns--one turning to cut down east and west of the Truong Son mountain chain and the other taking Route 1 directly south, passing through Hue, Danang, Quang Ngai and Qui Nhon in the wake of the advancing units. On the red earth Truong Son route, swirling dust could now only be seen at the southern end. The stream of traffic flowed further and further south, passing Duc Lap and Bu Gia Map toward Dong Xoai and Loc Ninh; and then split to enter the various rubber forests in Dau Tieng and Combat Zone D, and to move along the banks of Saigon, Song Be and Van Co Dong rivers.

Watching for the first time the endless flow of revolutionary troops passing through their native land day and night, seeing our young, healthy and cheerful troops, and gazing at the big artillery pieces, antiaircraft missile launchers and long columns of tanks, armored cars, antiaircraft guns and engineering vehicles, the Central Highlands people living in the newly-liberated areas along Route 14 were filled with joy and could not hide their surprise. Fed for years with deceitful and distorted propaganda by the U.S.-puppets, they could not believe that Uncle Ho's armed forces had so many vehicles and artillery pieces and that our troops were so young, good-looking and cheerful. Seeing trucks loaded with missiles pass by, they pointed at the missiles and called them wingless airplanes.

Hundreds and thousands of vehicles sped southward--bumper to bumper day and night. On some sections of the road, where the dust churned up by the wheels decreased visibility, our vehicles turned on their headlights and blared their horns repeatedly. The long trail of dust did not settle; it snaked through the dense jungles of the Central Highlands, passed through the green pastures of Bu Prang and entered the bamboo forests in Bu Gia Map. Atop a mountain pass where the east and west Truong Son routes converged, Comrade Phung The Tai, deputy chief of the General Staff, and cadres of the engineer, transport and military police forces worked day and night to guide the various military units in taking the right route and following the set timetable. They quickly sorted out traffic jams and issued orders to give priority movement to certain units, types of vehicles and armed branches. Comrade Phung The Tai and these cadres worked for weeks on end beside a large poster which read "Lightning speed, more lightning speed; boldness, more boldness" to insure the smooth movement of tens of thousands of vehicles carrying hundreds of thousands of tons of supplies and thousands of items of war materiel of different types to the battlefield before the rainy season arrived in the Central Highlands.

Some driver combatants did not know who Comrade Phung The Tai was, knowing him only as a hard-working and determined man who gave strict orders to disentangle traffic jams. What they knew about him they passed on to others in the form of a folk song:

If you meet Mr Lightning Speeder  
Who is making our movement better,  
Be sure to accelerate your truck,  
Or else dead you will be struck.

And from then on, Comrade Phung The Tai was nicknamed by the combatants Mr Lightning Speeder or Mr Operation Supervisor.

Speeding along Route 1 there were not only our military vehicles and captured enemy vehicles but also passenger buses and cargo trucks of both the state and the people which had been mobilized in the north and those from the provinces and cities just liberated. To promptly support activities on the Nam Bo battlefield, the 5th Military Region organized a special convoy of trucks to send directly to Nam Bo the most necessary types of weapons and munitions which had just been seized from the enemy and that surplus equipment and materiel which had not been used for the liberation of Danang and the provinces to the south of this city. This convoy, under the direct command of Comrade Vo Thu, deputy commander of the 5th Military Region, left the military region for the Central Highlands and then proceeded toward eastern Nam Bo.

Meanwhile, Gia Lam, Vinh Thu, Dong Hoi, Phu Bai, Danang and Kontum airfields were unusually busy. Various types of light and heavy helicopters, transport planes and even our commercial airliners were mobilized to fly not only troops, weapons and munitions but also tons of Saigon-Gia Dinh maps which had just been printed at the printing shop of our General Staff in Hanoi.

Various types of supplies were also loaded and unloaded at the Red, Gianh, Ma and Han river wharves and the Haiphong, Cua Hoi, Thuan An and Danang ports so that the various fleets of civilian cargo vessels of the Ministry of Communications and Transport and navy ships could promptly move them south; our sea routes were extended to newly liberated ports such as Qui Nhon and Cam Ranh.

Thus, we used all these routes and means to move to the battlefield at lightning speed a great number of troops and an equally great amount of materials unprecedented in the history of the revolution in our country. All our people's endurance against difficulties and hardships, all their efforts of thrift and diligence as well as all our patience in preparing forces over the years resembled thousands of small streams which today formed into turbulent currents massively bearing down to sweep away the last strongholds of neocolonialism in our country. The mythical hero Phu Dong of Vietnam who flexed his muscles and stood up in 1975 had an earth-shaking strength; once vaulting onto his horse, he kicked it into a gallop at lightning speed, knowing that the opportunity was right and that time meant strength.

#### Part XII Continued

Hanoi NHAN DAN in Vietnamese 29 Apr 76 p 3 BK/WA

[Part XII: "Lightning Speed"]

[Text] The General Staff firmly controlled the situation regarding all ammunition dumps throughout the country and closely guided and intensively supervised the rapid movement of various types of munitions to promptly and adequately meet all the demands of various units operating on the Saigon front.

It especially concentrated on providing adequate munitions for the army I Corps and the army corps-sized 232d Wing under the command of comrades Le Duc Anh and Le Chan, comprising independent divisions and regiments of the 8th Military Region. At that time artillery, DKZ, mortar and antiaircraft shells were in great demand throughout the front.

Meanwhile, engineer forces and the people in Nam Bo urgently repaired and enlarged various road sections leading to Dong Xoai, Cay Gao and Ben Bau, and repaired the Nha Bich bridge, the Ma Da tunnel, and the Ben Bau tunnel to prepare for the movement of artillery forces which would close in on Saigon, and of military forces which would launch deep thrusts into the city's center.

On 25 March the army I Corps, commanded by Comrade Nguyen Hoa with Comrade Hoang Minh Thi as political commissar, was ordered to move south by mechanized means to join in combat with the tank, antiaircraft and engineer armed branches while the corps personnel were reinforcing dikes in Ninh Binh. The corps' armored cars, artillery vehicles and troops took Route 9 and then split up to move along routes 12, 13 and 14, passing through Fleiku and Ban Me Thuot. After covering 1,700 km, the army corps arrived in Nam Bo early in the second half of April.

Meanwhile, the army II Corps, commanded by Comrade Nguyen An and with Comrade Le Linh as political commissar, after liberating Danang began moving at lightning speed down the coastal routes toward eastern Nam Bo. Covering a distance of 900 km along which many bridges had been destroyed--six in all on the section between Danang and Quang Ngai--and attacking the enemy in Phan Rang and Phan Thiet on its way south, the army corps had been ordered to report in Bien Hoa and Ba Ria in 18 days.

It required ingenious organizational and leadership ability for all 2,000 vehicles of the army corps to cross six big rivers while having to fight the enemy en route. In 1962, during an exercise with only 400 vehicles, the 308th Division had encountered so many traffic jams that it had not been able to advance. This time the army II Corps formed its forces into separate columns for the trip southward. Moving in the lead, engineer forces were in charge of repairing damaged bridges and roads; they were followed by tanks which fought whatever enemy forces appeared. Each column of forces was protected by an antiaircraft artillery regiment; infantry and artillery forces took the rear. The army corps brought along enough rice and food for a month, and adequate munitions for immediate action upon arriving at its destination.

The High Command had sent comrades Le Trong Tan, Le Quang Hoa and many other high-ranking cadres to move ahead of the army corps and discuss the local combat situation and measures to supply the corps with gasoline, oil, rice and food with those localities along its route of advance. Many elderly persons, mothers, sisters and children turned out to welcome the corps personnel along the route. They offered refreshments to our troops and threw gifts onto the moving trucks. Moving with the sign "Lightning speed, boldness" on their helmets and their trucks, our troops did not have time to stop and chat with the people for even a minute. They could only wave back and continued to move on hurriedly toward the battlefield.

On 15 April the army corps approached Phan Rang, which the enemy was preparing to defend to the end. A friendly unit had been laying a siege on Thanh Son airfield and the puppet 6th Air Force Division for more than a week. That night the corps' long-range artillery detachments set up their battleground along Route 1 and stood ready for action. Meanwhile many detachments of ground troops supported by tanks formed many spearheads to close in on the airfield and the provincial capital, Phan Rang.

At 0500 on the morning of 16 April our tanks rumbled right into the provincial capital as the artillery batteries of the corps opened up with continuous barrages onto the airfield and other enemy positions. The 3d Division of the 5th Military Region also opened fire from the west and northwest of the airfield. Enemy troops panicked when a big force of our tanks suddenly materialized. They sent every armored car available toward Route 1 in a bid to check our attack. Moving in from different directions, our tanks followed by ground troops drove through the airfield and battled their way into the center of the provincial capital. Enemy rangers and paratroopers, together with their officers, took flight. Confused puppet pilots discarded their flying suits and joined the fleeing puppet infantrymen.

Surrounded in all four directions, puppet Lt Gen Nguyen Vinh Nghi, commander of the III Corps forward command, ordered his forces to retreat southward and regroup in Ca Na. However, when his car reached the main entrance of the command post our troops had already arrived there. Both Nguyen Vinh Nghi and puppet Brig Gen Pham Ngoc Sang, deputy commander of the puppet 6th Air Force Division, were captured.

Knowing that the army II Corps, which the enemy called the coastal army, was moving south along Route 1, the enemy tried by all means to check its advance. Coming in one formation after another, enemy aircraft dropped bombs, and enemy warships from offshore bombarded our route of advance while an enemy special force company landed ashore and entered Tuy Phong district to the north of Phan Thiet. Ground troops of the army II Corps and the 6th Military Region immediately launched a search operation and neatly captured the enemy special force company after only 2 hours. The corps gunners trained their artillery pieces toward the sea and set enemy warships ablaze while our antiaircraft guns fiercely returned fire at the strafing enemy aircraft. In the flush of victory the army corps joined forces with military units of the 6th Region to attack Phan Thiet and subsequently move further south to liberate Ham Tan.

We left the Central Highlands for eastern Nam Bo at noon on 2 April 1975. Earlier I had visited the 316th Division and held a meeting with the cadres of the division command. Comrade Dam Van Nguy, army hero and commander of the division, was not present that day. Comrade Toan, the division political commissar, and Comrade Hai Bang, deputy commander of the division, reported to me on the preparations the division had made for its new mission. This division would depart in advance together with a light command body of the army III Corps command. After hearing situation reports by the division command cadres and meeting the various units I was pleased to see that the division was well equipped and had rapidly grown big and strong. I then assigned some urgent tasks for the division to accomplish before its departure. Before the opening of the Central Highlands campaign I had been quite worried about this division. I wondered if it could fulfill its mission because the battlefield was new to it and this was the first time it had operated with large-scale combat coordination among the various armed branches and with different types of modern weapons to attack a big city. Events showed that the division had successfully fulfilled its mission. The entire division departed for eastern Nam Bo this time with high spirits and firm determination. It was confident of certain victory and equipped with all necessary weapons; it had matured fairly quickly.

The 316th Division left Ban Me Thuot, taking Route 14 heading toward Saigon from the northeast. After liberating Tuy Hoa and all of Phu Yen Province, the 320th Division, commanded by Comrade Kim Tuan and with Comrade Bui Huy Bong as political commissar, was ordered to move back along Route 7 and then follow Route 14 toward eastern Nam Bo.

The 10th Division in particular was plagued with difficulties and hardships during its movement toward Nam Bo. After liberating Phuong Hoang and Mo Drak and attacking Nha Trang and Cam Ranh, the division followed provincial Route 11 and subsequently turned south along Route 20 toward Saigon from the northwest. On this rugged route an engineer unit had to lead the way, working hard to build one bridge after another. Meanwhile, the movement of the 10th Division had been detected by the enemy who tried by all means to check its advance. Enemy aircraft fiercely bombed and strafed all along the route; enemy warships opened up artillery barrages from the sea. Under the command of division commander Ho De and political commissar La Ngoc Chau the cadres and combatants of the 10th Division had to fight their way south to arrive in time.

Comrade Dinh Duc Thien spent many nights supervising the organization of logistics in support of the operations of army III Corps, and especially of the new campaign. Clad in a baggy cotton shirt and trousers he repeatedly toured the various storage depots and units to check work performance and give encouragement. Upon sighting two sloppily clad drivers repairing their vehicles in a parking area near Duc Lap, he asked: "Hey, you two, which unit do you come from? Since when do victorious troops dress so slovenly and disgracefully?" The two drivers replied: "We're POW's, sir."

At this time our armed forces belonging to the various units throughout the battlefield were already using many puppet soldiers to drive command cars, trucks, armored cars, artillery trucks and construction vehicles, including technical workers formerly serving in the puppet army. Our troops had studied to master the various types of U.S. artillery pieces as well as other modern U.S. weapons and materiel. Puppet technical personnel had been ordered to report in detail on the characteristics, effectiveness and operation of this modern equipment. Spotted in the moving columns of our forces now were M-113 armored personnel carriers, M-48 and M-41 tanks, 105 and 155mm artillery pieces and U.S.-made tactical PRC-25 field radios. In particular, our MIG fighter pilots had begun flying A-37 and F-5 jet fighters captured from the enemy. Never before had we been able to use so much captured materiel to fight the enemy. This great development made our firepower even more superior to that of the enemy and facilitated our gathering offensive.

Following the Central Highlands victory, the routes leading to eastern Nam Bo were changed. Now we could follow Route 14 passing through Ban Me Thuot, Duc Lap, Bu Prang and Bu Gia Map to reach Loc Ninh. The Bu Prang-Bu Gia Map section was in fairly good condition, permitting the passage of all types of vehicles. It was named Route 14A. After Gia Nghia, district capital, and the whole Province of Quang Duc were liberated, our vehicles of various types could move from Duc Lap, pass through Kien Duc and reach Don Luan before entering Route 13 in Chon Thanh. It would take a day or more for our vehicles to move from Ban Me Thuot to Loc Ninh.

During the first years of the anti-U.S. struggle our troops had experienced extreme difficulties and hardships operating on this route: the enemy's artillery made movement difficult; B-52 bombers rained destruction and various types of mines were planted along the route. On this route drinking water was scarce, and this area was infested with very dangerous fever mosquitos.

Bomb craters lining both sides of the route, wrecks of vehicles and artillery guns bearing the U.S. trademark seen here and there and broken rolls of barbed wire lying on abandoned enemy posts reminded us of the military operations conducted by the United States and vassal troops which were thwarted by our forces in 1965, 1968 and 1970. On some bare hills or in some grass-covered areas on the edge of the forest were graves in which our comrades had peacefully lain in rest. In this fertile but fierce and difficult land countless of our beloved comrades, cadres and combatants had opened the way and sacrificed their lives to contribute to creating a large route for the offensive on vast Nam Bo and destroying all enemy camps, so that today we would be able to march forward for the last decisive strategic battle. The armed exploits and heroism of these comrades served as a shining example for us and encouraged us to embark on the coming certainly victorious battle with the determination to be worthy of those who had fallen.

Spring was jubilantly coming to the sun-drenched grassy hills. Trees in the rubber forests which stretched for dozens of kilometers were sprouting new leaves. The stately old trees were in bloom. We stopped our vehicles on both sides of the route where trucks, tanks and artillery-towing vehicles were safely covered by a canopy of green leaves. On the banks of the stream mess personnel were busily carrying out their activities. Rows of hammocks had been strung up and our combatants were taking a rest after a tiring march through the night. To conceal technical material and weapons and reduce activities on both sides of the route, command posts and control stations were set up along the route to remind the moving troops about their formations and camouflage and to remind them to watch for enemy aircraft. At crossroads and intersections there was a "forest" of signs showing the direction to be taken by the various units, organs and columns. No outsiders could know the true purpose of these direction signs or guess who would be looking for these signs at the crossroads. Hastily strung telephone lines ran through the forests and across the route. They carried countless secret orders concerning the coming decisive strategic battle.

Scenes of military vehicles massively moving southward and of our forces bivouacking on both sides of the route leading to Nam Bo reminded me of the years when we had fought the French colonialist army behind the enemy line in the Bac Bo delta. At that time the combatants of the delta division and I, clad in dark brown fatigues, wearing straw hats and holding sticks in our hands, walked barefoot for kilometers along muddy paths in "dragon" formation which stretched for kilometers along the ricefield embankments and rows of bamboo trees in Ha Nam and Ninh Binh; or used sampans at night to pass through enemy-controlled villages, moving on the flooded ricefields of Thai Binh and Nam Dinh under fiery flashes of enemy artillery shells or random gunfire salvos from enemy troops, while listening to the sound of the sea rushing against the shore.

During the day our units broke into teams and went to villages and hamlets where resistance organizations had been operating. They sank their boats, made preparations for combat and worked side by side with the local guerrillas. Our troops asked old women in these villages to prepare meals for them so they could rest and continue their southward march at nightfall.

Over the past 3 decades our people had witnessed or directly participated in countless military operations conducted in the interest of the fatherland's independence and freedom. There had never been a single day when our people and troops stopped their military activities. Moving from north to south and vice versa, our combatants and people had traversed the entire length of the country--going wherever they were needed by the fatherland and wherever the enemy was.

In the spring of 1975 there were no differences between northerners and southerners moving along the massive military convoys heading toward the Saigon battlefront, at wharves and in combat trenches in the south. They were all Vietnamese storming toward the last battle against U.S. imperialism and its henchmen in order to regain independence, freedom, peace and complete national reunification.

The entire country was moving toward the battlefront at lightning speed. The whole nation was entering the battle. Nature's spring was in complete harmony with the nation's spring in that historic month of April 1975.

Part XIII: "The Campaign Bearing Uncle Ho's Name"

Hanoi NHAN DAN in Vietnamese 30 Apr 76 p 3 BK/WA

[Text] On the afternoon of 3 April 1975, at a place about 50 kilometers north of Bu Gia Map, we met Comrade Tu Phuc, deputy head of the zone rear service staff department. Standing on top of a hill of scattered pine trees bearing the numerous traces of fierce border-crossing battles launched by the U.S. troops in 1970, we shook hands with great joy reflected in our eyes. I was very moved because this was the first time I set foot on Nam Bo soil, a stalwart land, the heroic frontline which is far from the central government, and the brass bastion land which Uncle Ho cherished so much that he had ordered all our party, armed forces and people to devote everything to liberating it.

We looked at the scenery around us: our respectful salutations to the fatherland's battlefield which has experienced the greatest hardships--the south which was the first to start the resistance and the last to reach the goal. Our respectful salutations to all the Nam Bo comrades, combatants and compatriots who, over the past several decades, have firmly, bravely and continuously fought against the cruelest, wealthiest and most powerful enemy, thus setting an example of resistance, revolutionary optimism and a relentless offensive.

We took a noon rest at the quarters of Unit 770, a rest station of the B-2 rear service department. The path to the station bore no imprints of the wheels of vehicles and was bordered by well camouflaged, sturdy houses with vegetable gardens, banana trees and flowers, pergolas of blooming song lan flowers and a herd of domestic animals. Around the houses were communication trenches, shelters and guard stations. All these things, though small in size and number, symbolized the spirit of remaining in and defending the operational areas and the spirit of self-reliance and self-sufficiency and combat-readiness of the organs and units in eastern Nam Bo, the steadiest base area of the south which experienced the greatest hardships.

In the afternoon, while on way to the command post, we traversed rubber plantations, many areas of which were seriously struck by enemy aircraft, gardens of black pepper plants, durians, jackfruit trees, and freshly-grown coconut trees. Loc Ninh town was before us. Although it still bore traces of war, we could see changes in it after 3 years of liberation. Roads had been broadened. Many thatch houses had been built. Along the two roadsides were fields of manioc and green ricefields. In the rubber plantations, many laborers were weeding and digging the soil at the foot of the rubber trees or gathering latex. After being liberated in 1972, Loc Ninh had become an important base and was now an operational area favorable for the spring general offensive and uprisings.

Along the road we saw many trucks transporting the cheerful B-2 unit troops wearing broad-brimmed hats to the battlefield. At the intersection of roads, the comrade guerrillas of both sexes were carefully checking all types of vehicles before letting them enter the base area. Salutations to all stalwart comrades and combatants! During the years of fierce fighting, your resounding feats of arms had provoked our admiration and pride. While contemplating the vast grasslands, rubber plantations, orchards and red-soiled hills in Loc Ninh, I recalled the following verses of Comrade To Huu's poem entitled, "My Far-Away Country."

O my Binh Long Province in Nam Bo!  
 This was the first time I met you this morning.  
 As I held a clod of red earth in my hand,  
 My heart suddenly seemed to be inebriated with strong wine.  
 And while I was hugging the liberation combatant,  
 I was dreaming of a trip throughout the plains of Ca Mau.

On 3 April 1976, before dark we reached the zone command's organ west of Loc Ninh township. Comrade Dinh Duc Thien proceeded directly to the rear service organ of the zone command. The majority of comrades of the central office of South Vietnam were already there. After washing my face, I hastily called on Comrade Pham Hung, secretary of the southern party organization, who was in a house behind a tree. I saw him sitting at a desk by the light of an air defense lamp. His shirt was unbuttoned, and his hand was waving a fan made of parachute material. As soon as he saw me, Comrade Hung stood up and cheerfully said: We are waiting for you here. We shook hands and hugged each other with indescribable joy. I told him that I arrived here earlier than the date prescribed at a meeting in Hanoi because we had scored outstanding victories very quickly.

Saigon would surely be liberated on schedule as planned by the Political Bureau. I talked generally about the victories in the western highlands and about the situation of our regular forces en route to this front. Then, we exchanged views on the program of action for the days to come before Comrade Le Duc Tho's arrival. The zone command office had arranged beforehand the place for the work and activities of Unit A-75. A number of wooden houses with thatched roofs had been built. Many more air defense trenches and shelters had been dug. A number of tents had been pitched for the use of the cadres who would arrive later.

At night, there was much bustling in the forest. The noise of generators and engines of various types of vehicles plying to and fro was mixed with the sound from loudspeakers in the villages. It was the first night I had spent in eastern Nam Bo.

Comrade Tran Van Tra, who had gone to the 4th Army Corps to supervise the implementation of the plan of attack on Xuan Loc, had just returned in the evening. At daybreak, he came to see me. We cheerfully told each other about the recent happenings on the battlefields and had a preliminary discussion of the way to coordinate the operations of Unit A-75 and the zone command.

On the morning of 4 April, we succeeded in contacting Hanoi by telephone. This was a great effort of the signal and communication battalion coming from the western highlands. There was a close coordination among the signal and communication units of B-2 army unit. This signal and communication battalion was organized early in 1975. In the military operations in the western highlands it could insure the activities of the command headquarters during the campaign for liberating the western highlands and fulfilled all tasks.

All its cadres and combatants were presently ordered to proceed to Nam Bo to support the final strategic decisive battle with all other signal and communication units and means of the zone.

Comrade Hoang Niem, deputy commander of the signal corps, worked hard day and night to organize liaison for the command and to train signal combatants who had just entered this new battlefield.

Motorbikes, a typical means of transportation in B-2, operated around the clock. The comrade riders took us to various places in the area under the control of organs subordinate to the South Vietnamese command dispersed over a large area as a preventive measure against enemy air raids.

When we were still in the Central Highlands, the command of B-2--Nam Bo and Sixth Region-- dispatched a motorbike unit to help us. This unit was now returning to eastern Nam Bo with our motorcade. The comrade riders, with checkered scarves around their necks and automatic rifles with foldable butts on their backs, remained close to our motorcade to provide guidance on the itinerary. Now they moved ahead at high speed to get in touch with the motorbike riders leading the convoy and now they remained behind to look for motorbike riders who failed to keep abreast on the correct route. Riding on rough, winding paths running through the forest area, these comrades took messages to radio-communications vehicles, which usually operated at night because they had to be on the move in the daytime. These vehicles were always stationed far from us so as to insure safety and secrecy for the command post and the radio-communications network against electronic reconnaissance by enemy planes and commandos.

The comrades in the COSVN and South Vietnamese Military Party Committee, who had operated for many years on the Nam Bo battlefield, thoroughly understood the situation-- the enemy's, ours and Saigon's--and therefore, quickly helped us to understand the situation on the Nam Bo battlefield in general and the situation in Saigon in particular.

After many days of hearing reports by the comrades in the South Vietnamese staff, we met with the COSVN and the South Vietnamese Military Party Committee on 7 April 1975. Attending this meeting were comrades Pham Hung, Muoi Cuc, Tran Van Tra, Hoi Van, Sau Dan, Tran Nam Trung, Hai Xo and other comrades in the COSVN and South Vietnamese Military Party Committee. Also attending were Comrade Le Duc Anh, deputy commander and concurrently chief of staff of the South Vietnamese command; Hai Le, deputy political officer of the South Vietnamese command; Dong Van Cong, deputy commander of the South Vietnamese command; Dinh Duc Thien; Le Ngoc Hien and Hai Nha.

Comrade Pham Hung, COSVN secretary, and the other comrades were always calm, highly optimistic and imbued with an ironlike "determined to win" willpower. The conference hall constantly resounded with laughter reflecting easiness and relaxation.

When Comrade Pham Hung asked about our ammunition situation, Comrade Dinh Duc Thien reported on the amount of ammunition already received and being sent from various areas, saying: I would like to report to you comrades that we have enough ammunition to scare the enemy for generations. When ammunition needed for the campaign was received--we had nearly enough of some types while we seriously lacked others-- Comrade Pham Hung gave directives on how to overcome the difficulties.

Occasionally, he repeated Comrade Dinh Duc Thien's sentence--we should rapidly get enough ammunition to fight the enemy and scare him for as many as three generations--which aroused roaring laughter from among those attending the meeting.

COSVN met in an ebullient, enthusiastic atmosphere that reigned throughout the south. Districts and provinces in the 8th and 9th regions repeatedly reported on combat and construction achievements in early April 1975. A report from Tra Vinh said the province then had 5 regional force battalions instead of 2 as before. Some 200 were recruited in a day in Rach Gia to form an additional battalion for the province. A guerrilla company existed in each village of the province. The liberated area in Cho Gao, Long An Province, was enlarging rapidly. The regional troops in the 9th Military Region attacked and seized Cai Von stronghold, cut off a section of Route 4 in Ben Tre and so forth.

On the afternoon of 7 April while we continued our meeting in a house, a motorbike came to a stop on the courtyard bringing in a rather tall comrade wearing a light blue shirt, khaki trousers, and a 'staff troops' hat; he had a big black leather sack slung over his shoulders. We immediately recognized that he was Comrade Le Duc Tho. We embraced each other, laughed, and were happy. This was Comrade Le Duc Tho's third mission in Nam Bo in the anti-U.S. resistance war. During the first two he walked through rugged paths across forests, crossed areas previously hit by B-52's, bringing with him rice balls and dried food. This time, he boarded planes, went by cars, and even used motorbikes to come here. He joyfully talked about what had happened in our country and the world during his trip. He said that prior to his departure, the Politburo and Uncle Ton told him that he would not be allowed to return if he was not successful in his mission.

On 8 April, at a full meeting of COSVN, the South Vietnamese military party committee, the B2 command, and cadres from the South Vietnamese command, Comrade Le Duc Tho disseminated the content of the resolution of the VWP Central Committee Politburo adopted at a meeting on 25 March in Hanoi. He talked about the Politburo's assessment of the enemy situation and course on the battlefield and about the U.S.-puppet schemes as they had suffered recent setbacks, their imminent collapse, and their difficulties. He then talked at length about the Politburo's new strategic determination, stressing the guidance aimed at realizing this determination at all costs.

Toward the end of the meeting, Comrade Le Duc Tho disseminated a Politburo decision concerning the establishment of the command for the campaign to liberate Saigon which consisted of me, commander; Comrade Pham Hung, political officer; and comrades Tran Van Tra and Le Duc Anh, deputy commanders. Comrade Le Duc Anh was also responsible for commanding the troops coming from the area southwest of Saigon, that is, Group 232. Comrade Le Trong Tan, who was then commanding a unit in the area east of Saigon, was later appointed deputy chief of the command of the campaign to liberate Saigon. Comrade Dinh Duc Thien, who was a deputy commander in charge of logistics for the campaign, was appointed assistant to Comrade Bui Phung, chief of the South Vietnamese rear service department; Comrade Le Quang Hoa, who was secretary of the coordination and operation committee in a unit located east of Saigon, would be transferred to serve as deputy political officer and concurrently as head of the political affairs section of the campaign's command. Comrade Le Ngoc Hien was appointed acting chief of staff in charge of combat.

The campaign's command utilized the available South Vietnamese staff, political and logistic organs in carrying out its mission with the assistance of a number of cadres from Group A-75 who had just come from the Central Highlands and cadres sent from the General Staff, including Comrade Doan Tue, artillery commander; Comrade Nguyen Kien, armored deputy commander; Comrade Nguyen Chi Diem, commander of crack troops; and Comrade Quang Hung, deputy commander of the air defense-air force troops. Thus, COSVN and the South Vietnam Military Party Committee still continued their work for the entire south. Only a number of comrades from these organizations were appointed members of the command for the campaign to liberate Saigon. And this time, in the last decisive strategic battle to liberate Saigon, three comrades, members of the VWP Central Committee Politburo, were assigned to provide direct leadership on the battlefield and received directives directly from the Politburo.

Each day from 8 April to approximately 20 April, the Politburo and the Central Military Party Committee, as well as we on the battlefield, kept track of the movement of each infantry division, each rear service convoy, each artillery regiment and each anti-aircraft battalion approaching the assembly area. During daily meetings, these questions were often raised: Where is this division now? How many trucks do we have? Along which route is that regiment that brought scores of artillery pieces moving? How many 130-mm artillery shells do we have? How many batches of 100-mm shells for tanks have been transported? And so forth.

On all operation routes were posted groups of cadres assigned to supervise units going on operations, welcome logistic convoys and direct them to already designated storage areas, and provide guidance to recruits coming to reinforce units before they embarked on the campaign.

Early rains in the forested Loc Ninh area prevented us from sleeping at night. We worried about infantry troops, tanks, artillery trailers, and logistic vehicles which had to stop or delay their advance while moving along the Truong Son mountain area because of the rain. We also worried about the health of our cadres and combatants which would be affected by the rain before they started the battle. In particular, the 10th Division, which was still in the Cam Ranh area, had to move during this operation to eastern Nam Bo through enemy-held areas along a long, rugged route. We wonder if it could arrive on schedule. I sent a message to Comrade Hoang Minh Thao in the 5th Region, telling him to rapidly send troops to Cam Ranh to replace the 10th Division. I also cabled the command of the 10th Division, telling it to report three times daily on the troop formation and the operation schedule for the day and the following day and problems they must handle during the move. I sent a message to Comrade Dong Si Nguyen, telling him to send down more trucks to rapidly and neatly transport all the 10th Division and, in case of lack of vehicles, to suggest that the headquarters of the 5th Military Region try to utilize the region's vehicles or borrow vehicles from the people to help the 10th Division.

Time was pressing. The Politburo's directive demanded that we carry out our work quickly so as to launch the general offensive against Saigon as soon as possible. Through its review of the situation, the Politburo realized that the mainforce division would be unable to reach the south during the prescribed time.

So that the attack would be launched vigorously right from the beginning and so that sufficient reserve forces would be available to develop the attack until complete victory, the Politburo gave us more time for preparations. It demanded that the general offensive against Saigon be launched during the last 10 days of April 1975 at the latest.

Observation of the enemy's situation and ours at that time was particularly concentrated on hourly and daily political changes. Political developments within the internal ranks of the Thieu administration and in the United States could occur at any moment. Of course, enemy military activities were thoroughly understood by our side not only in the Saigon area, but also in the entire Nam Bo region, in the Southeast Asian area and, particularly, in Thailand, the Philippines, and the United States.

Military development on the Cambodian battlefield in early April 1975 was closely watched. Unexpectedly, there was close coordination regarding strategic and campaign fields between us and our friend. Comrade Le Duan sent us a message saying: "The comprehensive offensive plan must be insured. Once the offensive has been launched, strong, continuous and repeated attacks must be made until complete victory is won. Attacks must be made on the outer perimeter of Saigon while forces must be available so that when the occasion arises, they can direct spearheads against the center of Saigon from various directions. Attacks must be carried out from within and without so as to create conditions for our compatriots to rise up. This is the way to carry out lightning, bold and surprise attacks in the current situation. This is a basic plan that insures victory. In the meantime, plans and preparations must be made to cope with a situation in which the battle may be prolonged."

People from the commands of army corps and armed services and branches gradually came to the headquarters for the campaign to be assigned missions. The command for the campaign assigned Comrade Hai Nha, who was then deputy chief of staff of the command, to transmit orders to the II and IV army corps and the Third Division in the Fifth Military Region, which were fighting east of Saigon, a fairly long way from the headquarters. Comrade Hai Nha brought an order of the command for the campaign and gave it directly to Comrade Le Trong Tan. This order bore my signature and that of Comrade Pham Hung. It was clearly pointed out in the order that all army units belonging to this force were placed under the command of Comrade Le Trong Tan and would fight according to a unified plan of the command of the campaign to liberate Saigon.

The mission of Group 322, the force located southwest of Saigon, was directly accepted by Comrade Le Duc Anh after discussion and after a decision had been made at the headquarters of the command. Comrade Vu Lang, commander of the III Army Corps, and Comrade Nguyen Hiep, political officer of this army corps, arrived on 12 April at the headquarters of the campaign's command to receive missions. On 14 April, Comrade Nguyen Hoa, commander of the I Army Corps, and Comrade Hoang Minh Thi, deputy political officer of this army corps, also arrived in time to receive their missions after receiving messages. According to reports by Comrade Nguyen Hoa and Hoang Minh Thi, on 9 March the III Army Corps received an order to engage in fighting. On 2 April, the 320-B Division set out first. Subordinate armed branches gradually set out after this division's departure. On 7 April, the last unit of the III Army Corps set out. It was estimated that all the III Army Corps units would arrive in the assembly area.

After pointing out the enemy's characteristics and what must be overcome in a new decisive battle on a new battlefield and after assigning missions to each army corps, I further emphasized that the comrade commanders must rapidly take their units to the assembly areas on schedule, satisfactorily organize command and communications activities and keep all their units' actions secret before they opened fire. I particularly told them to pay attention to educating their troops on the decisive significance of the campaign so as to insure victory in this war and to insure that they strictly observed discipline and correctly implemented policies when they entered the city.

In a sincere and affectionate tone, Comrade Pham Hung addressed the comrade corps commanders before their return to their units to implement the plan. He said: "Dear comrades, we in B-2 are very happy about our great victories in the Central Highlands and central Trung Bo. We realize that we have the opportunity to liberate the whole of South Vietnam this year. Once South Vietnam is liberated, we will move forward toward reunification, and the imperialists will never be able to come back. You will fulfill the nationwide national democratic revolution mission with us in COSVN and the South Vietnam Military Party Committee and with the South Vietnamese armed forces and people.

"Since the founding of the party, this is the most glorious historic moment. In the past, [Vietnamese king] Quang Trung attacked Chinese aggressors at lightning speed; but his troops halted in their drive. Today our troops have come from the north to cooperate with the armed forces and people in this southern region but do not have to stop anywhere because our troops have won victory everywhere they have attacked. They have launched swift attacks and have won great victories.

"The strength of our party, patriotic people, and people's army is great indeed. Our party has a traditional sense of unity, and our people and the army also have a tradition of unity: The south and north are one and the same household, and Vietnam is one country. This is a basic factor which insures our victory.

"On behalf of the central Political Bureau, I congratulate you, comrades, for your recent victories, your timely presence on the South Vietnamese battlefield and your readiness to participate in this last historic, decisive, strategic battle to be launched against the last den of neocolonialism in our country. I wish you complete victory. Complete victory will be ours."

In an emotional tone, Comrade Pham Hung added: "We must manage to be in Saigon to celebrate Uncle Ho's birthday."

Comrade Le Duc Tho told the corps commanders: "The party has entrusted the southern party organization, all the southern armed forces and people, and all our armed forces with fulfilling the task of liberating the south. Each corps--which is a strong force operating in large-scale combat coordination with the various armed branches, is equipped with modern weapons and enjoys the support of local forces and the assistance of other armed branches and services--must fulfill its mission in the most satisfactory manner. We will attack Saigon when the enemy is disintegrating and in a weak position. However, since that city is his last stronghold, he will strike back because he has no escape route. The enemy has 5 divisions against our 15, excluding the strategic reserve forces. Thus, we cannot fail to win victory. This has been the view of the party Central Committee.

"Upon my departure, other brothers of the Political Bureau said: 'You must win; otherwise do not return.' This is the determination of the Political Bureau.

"The U.S. imperialists definitely will not intervene again. At present, all official U.S. statements have ruled out the possibility of renewing U.S. intervention. The situation is very favorable, and our capabilities are great. We must firmly grasp the opportunity and quickly and firmly do our job."

Comrade Le Duc Tho also urged the corps commanders: Carefully study the terrain, because the newly-arrived corps are unfamiliar with this battlefield; study the complex layout of Saigon itself; and formulate methods for maintaining communications during combat, for organizing air defense while moving or camping and so forth.

He stressed the factor of surprise, instructing all units to deal as many surprises to the enemy as possible, and to strike at vital points and key organs of the enemy. Comrade Le Duc Tho presented the vivid example of two persons engaging in a fight: no matter how strong the adversary may be, he will be knocked out immediately if we strike right at his nerve center.

He did not forget to remind the corps commanders that the people of Saigon with their struggle movement and tradition of revolutionary struggle, though temporarily coerced by the enemy, would be very likely to rise up if they were supported by the military forces with their rapid, vigorous and continuous offensive from the outside.

Concerning timing, the comrade said that the rainy season was now approaching, that we must act quickly to successfully fulfill our mission before it arrived, and that it would be more meaningful if we could fulfill our mission in May 1975.

Lying awake and thinking one night in a forest in our Loc Ninh base area amid the deep rumbling of moving tanks and artillery prime movers, the call signs of radio-telephone operators and the voices of members of the staff, political and logistical sections who were engaging in discussions, we recalled what Uncle Ho had said during his lifetime as well as what he had said in his testament. We also recalled the life he had devoted to the revolutionary cause and the fact that Saigon had been named after him. The campaign command then unanimously decided to send a message to the Political Bureau suggesting that the general offensive for the liberation of Saigon be named the Ho Chi Minh campaign in accordance with the great significance and large scale of the campaign.

At 1900 on 14 April 1975 the Political Bureau sent a message numbered 37/TK to the battlefield, which read in full as follows: "Agree that campaign for Saigon be named Ho Chi Minh campaign." The message was signed by Comrade Le Duan, our respected and beloved first secretary of the party Central Committee.

#### Part XIV: "Battle Positions Are Taking Shape"

Hanoi NHAN DAN in Vietnamese 1 May 76 p 3 BK/WA

[Text] Saigon-Gia Dinh is a large municipality with 3.5 million people and 1,845 square kilometers including suburban districts. It has many high buildings of rather solid and sophisticated architecture. This was the enemy's last den where all the leading agencies of the puppet army and administration including important storage and rear bases were concentrated; it was the most important military, political and economic center of the enemy.

The terrain of the Saigon area is somewhat complex with rivers, canals and swamps crisscrossing the southern area of the municipality and swampy fields abounding in the southwestern area, while the terrain of bordering areas is dry and passable with Routes 9 and 10 leading directly into Saigon. In the northern and northwestern areas and especially the eastern area there are many large bridges leading into the municipality, such as the Bong, Jang, Binh Phuoc, Binh Trieu, Ghenh, Dong Nai and Saigon bridges. It was reported that the enemy had planned to blow up these bridges to prevent our troops from advancing. If these bridges were not promptly taken over, it would be difficult for our tanks, artillery and other heavy tactical equipment to enter Saigon, and our major troop units would encounter many problems if they had to move away from the main lines of communications since the rainy season would start by mid-May.

Having lived for more than 100 years under the French colonialist regime, then under the U.S. neocolonialist regime, the Saigon people had enjoyed independence and freedom under the DRV regime for less than a month. Since the day the U.S. imperialists sent their troops directly to South Vietnam, they had transformed Saigon and South Vietnam into a neocolony and, through their brazen, sophisticated and insidious schemes and policies, had poured massive amounts of weapons and dollars into South Vietnam to enslave the people ideologically, politically and culturally. They and their henchmen had completely destroyed the traditional foundation of good morals and customs of the society. Drug addiction, prostitution, gambling, hooliganism, robbery and murders spread everywhere. Nearly all families had one of their members directly or indirectly lured, forced or induced into their people-repressing and coercing war machinery. They circulated money and commodities lavishly to create a wealthy class of militarists and bureaucratic comprador bourgeoisie who licentiously lived off the people's blood and bones, and they created a consumer economy and society entirely dependent on foreign capital. Their CIA and psychological warfare apparatuses resorted day and night to distortion, deceit and terrorism in order to make the people shrink from or at least fear the revolutionary resistance.

However, the traditionally patriotic Saigon-Gia Dinh people opposed the imperialists and their henchmen. The streets and canals in Saigon-Gia Dinh record many imposing feats of arms and heroic deeds of the various strata of the people. The Saigon party organization, which operated on a battlefield of fierce fighting that consumed many cadres, and the base of the movement, which had been repeatedly persecuted by the enemy, were still holding out. This reflected our party's reputation and exploits. The leaders of various movements in Saigon whom we met symbolized the hard and dangerous yet glorious struggle of the Saigon people. Their eyes and words reflected the people's desire to rise up to smash the U.S. lackey regime and gain independence and freedom. The Saigon-Gia Dinh people, stalwart, indomitable, brave and loyal during their glorious struggle against the U.S. imperialists, assumed the responsibility for coordinating with the regular armed forces in composing a great epic resounding through the streets. The farces being staged by the U.S.-puppet clique and the scenes of the people's misery which we watched on a television set in the campaign command post made us impatient and made us long for the start of the battle.

The command post had recently received a new directive from Comrade Le Duan, who, after discussions with the Central Military Party Committee members, told us to make preparations for a few more days and wait until most of the I and III corps forces, including infantry and support units, arrived to launch the offensive. [paragraph continues]

From now until the launching of the general offensive, it was necessary to intensify the operations of the columns in the western and southwestern areas and to sever Route 4, forcing the enemy to disperse his forces for counterattacks and making it difficult to guess our intentions. This would sow confusion and fear among the enemy ranks in Saigon. At the same time, special units would promptly infiltrate Saigon, and columns from other directions would also intensify their operations to create favorable conditions for the great offensive.

While the major units from the north, Central Highlands and central Trung Bo were gradually moving south, a huge volume of materiel and equipment was being moved day and night to storage areas and units which were preparing for the decisive attack on Saigon. The southern combat units took this good opportunity to vigorously intensify their operations with a new spirit and with new experiences and made great efforts.

Units of the 8th and 9th military regions as well as saboteur and special units within and on the outskirts of the municipality continually caused the enemy many casualties and won much war materiel from the enemy; liberated a large number of important areas linking various enclave bases located deep behind enemy lines in Long An, Go Cong, Ben Tre and My Tho; opened new corridors from eastern Nam Bo through Dong Thap to western Nam Bo; completely controlled portions of many canals on the outskirts of the municipality and used them as transportation routes to move in more reinforcements of personnel and equipment. The provincial units were building forces while fighting. Recruiting of new troops was intensified in provinces and districts to activate more provincial groups and district companies of local armed forces. Platoons of militia were developing in villages. Some villages had a company of guerrillas. Newly activated units were promptly equipped with weapons and ammunition from base areas, mostly with those seized from the enemy. These activities had convinced some enemy units in the 4th Region to desert and partly obstructed operations of the enemy air and naval forces.

The IV Corps of our regular armed forces since 10 March had closely coordinated with the Central Highlands forces in launching several successive attacks to eradicate many enemy troops and liberate Dau Tieng subsector, An Loc city and Chon Thanh district and had fully taken advantage of the area north of Saigon to contain the enemy's 25th Division in Trang Lon, Tay Ninh Province, and to exert pressure on the enemy 5th Division defending Lai Khe, Ben Cat district.

From late March to early April 1975, IV Corps swiftly moved its forces from the areas northwest and north of Saigon to Dinh Quan to liberate Lam Dong city and Di Linh town, then concentrated its forces on launching a major attack on the enemy's 18th Division in Xuan Loc city, Long Khanh Province.

Xuan Loc city in early April 1975 became a vital defense area for the enemy in the 3d Military Region to protect the eastern side of Saigon. This city was a defensive outpost of the U.S.-puppet clique. Therefore, the enemy made every effort to sustain the defense of Xuan Loc city so as to prevent our troops from advancing on Routes 1 and 20 to Saigon. On Route 1, our troops had approached Phan Rang, while on Route 20 they had moved to Kiem Tan after having liberated Lam Dong, Dalat and Tuyen Duc. The enemy strove to defend Xuan Loc and Long Khanh to secure a river route between Saigon and Vung Tau to move U.S. aid goods by sea to Saigon along the Long Tau river and Route 15, which were later used by the enemy as his withdrawal route.

As long as Xuan Loc and Long Khanh were maintained, the Bien Hoa-Nuoc Trong-Nhan Trach-Ba Ria-Vung Tau frontline would not yet be threatened, and it would still be possible for the enemy to continue activities at the Bien Hoa and Tan Son Nhut airfields.

Therefore, the enemy intended to defend Xuan Loc and Long Khanh at all costs. The enemy III Corps, in general, and the 18th Division, in particular, were still intact because they had not yet been mauled as units of the enemy's 1st and 2d military regions had been. Moreover, the Saigon puppet armed forces and administration and the United States were strenuously supporting Xuan Loc with the hope of prolonging their agony and finding a solution through which they might survive without suffering complete loss, collapse and defeat.

On 9 April 1975, IV Corps, comprising the 7th, 341st and 6th divisions and 7th Region forces under the command of Comrade Hoang Cam and with Comrade Hoang The Thien as political commissar, opened fire and attacked Xuan Loc. For the first time the units of IV Corps, which were full of enthusiasm and experienced in combat, confronted a desperate, diehard enemy.

In fact, the enemy mobilized all the forces of the 18th Division, strengthened the 3d Cavalry Brigade, took part of the 5th Division which was in a defensive position along Route 13, the supporting artillery battalions, the multibattalion Ranger units of the 3d Military Region, and also the badly mauled multibattalion Ranger units of the 1st and 2d military regions which had not yet been reorganized and reinforced, and poured all these troops into Xuan Loc. That was a desperate move of the U.S.-puppet regime, which was ready to sacrifice its troops and officers when it was on the verge of collapse.

That was not enough. The enemy sent the 1st Paratroop Brigade into Xuan Loc and mobilized to the highest degree his remaining air forces in Bien Hoa, Tan Son Nhut and Can Tho in an attempt to prolong his agony. That also was not enough. The Saigon puppet armed forces and administration also mobilized the whole apparatus of the domestic and Western propaganda and psywar media for Saigon and Xuan Loc in order to "boost the morale" of their troops and commanders. Le Minh Dao, commander of the puppet 18th Division, boastfully said: "We must fight a resounding battle to win world admiration and more U.S. aid." He suddenly became a "strong man," a savior of the Thieu regime, thanks to articles written by journalists who placed dollars above honor by signing their names in disreputable newspapers. Right at the outset, the fight in Xuan Loc became fierce. Our 7th, 6th and 341st divisions had to launch repeated attacks on that city to annihilate targets one by one and to repel numerous counterattacks of the enemy. The enemy's 43d Regiment suffered heavy losses. It was necessary for our artillery assigned to the campaign and our divisions' regular artillery to use an extra amount of ammunition. A number of our tanks and armored vehicles were out of order, while others had to return to staging areas to replenish their gasoline, lubricant and ammunition.

#### Part XIV Continued

Hanoi NHAN DAN in Vietnamese 3 May 76 p 3 BK/WA

[Part XIV: "Battle Positions Are Taking Shape"]

[Text] At the outset, the IV Corps plan to attack Xuan Loc did not fully take into account the complex development of the situation; nor did it fully assess the enemy's stubbornness and the see-saw nature and fierceness of this battle, which was caused neither by the enemy's 18th Division nor the scope of the Xuan Loc-Long Khanh battle itself but by the fact that the Xuan Loc battle would determine the collapse or survival of the Saigon puppet administration and the prolongation of the Thieu regime's agony. It was, therefore, impossible for us to organize, command and conduct the fight as was initially planned, so we had to change our fighting method according to the situation.

During the days that IV Corps attacked Xuan Loc, the campaign command on the one hand had to urgently draw up and complete the plan to attack Saigon and, on the other, had to direct the regional command and the IV Corps command to modify their fighting method. While the enemy was strenuously regrouping his troops and pouring them into Xuan Loc, we were strengthening the 95th Infantry Regiment and supplying additional fuel and ammunition to IV Corps.

Comrade Tran Van Tra once again went from Loc Ninh to IV Corps to teach the new fighting method and urge its implementation.

After the enemy had poured troops into Xuan Loc to organize its defense, we deemed it no longer necessary to concentrate forces to continue the direct attack on Xuan Loc. We decided to shift forces to attack enemy units coming to counterattack which had not yet firmly established their positions in the outer perimeter and still lacked fortifications and close coordination with one another. At the same time, we directed our corps units to use long-range artillery to shell Bien Hoa airfield day and night to prevent enemy fighter planes from taking off.

Then we attacked and occupied Tuc Trung and Kiem Tan, annihilated the 52d Regiment of the 18th Division, took Route 20 and headed to Dau Giay, firmly blocked a stretch of Route 1, destroyed a number of tanks, and repelled the enemy's 3d Cavalry Brigade which came from Bien Hoa--thus isolating Xuan Loc from Saigon.

Meanwhile, IV Corps continued to use artillery to destroy the enemy artillery forces one by one and to annihilate one after another the units of the 48th Regiment and the 1st Paratroop Brigade which came out as reinforcements.

On 16 April, our troops liberated Phan Rang, annihilating the forward command of the enemy's III Corps and capturing Gen Nguyen Vinh Nghi. Our eastern column moved forward en masse and, together with 6th Region troops, liberated Phan Thiet on 19 April. Its forward units reached Rung La, near Xuan Loc, on 20 April. Running the risk of annihilation, all the enemy forces in Xuan Loc fled in disorder on the night of 20 April by provincial Road 2 in the direction of Ba Ria. Intercepted and attacked en route, the enemy forces left behind a large quantity of vehicles, artillery and ammunition. Some Western journalists had to cable their editorial staffs requesting that the reports they had just filed be forwarded immediately that night so as to catch up with developments in the situation. However, the Saigon army radio station brazenly continued its efforts to boost the morale of the remnants of the 18th Division hiding in forests in the Ba Ria area.

The liberation of Xuan Loc opened the eastern door to Saigon welcoming the forces of the II and IV Corps and the 3d Division of the 5th Military Region for the final decisive strategic battle.

The 3d Division prepared to advance to Ba Ria and Vung Tau.

Before launching a general offensive on Saigon-Dia Dinh, the eastern column created a very favorable position for attack.

Southwest of Saigon we had directed our forces to the Ben Luc and Long An areas, thrust through the Tay Ninh-Kien Tuong corridor, cleared the areas of Ben Cau, Ben Soi and Queo Ba, controlled part of the Vam Co Tay River, continued advancing toward Tan An and Thu Thua, advanced toward and attacked traffic on Route 4, and destroyed small adjacent posts, thus developing a liberated region for use as a base area for the forces of the Group 232 command to prepare to launch an offensive against Saigon from the southwest.  
[paragraph continues]

Tanks, amphibious vehicles, 85mm low trajectory guns, 122mm and 130mm artillery units, antiaircraft battalions, the 5th, 3d, 9th and 8th infantry divisions, the 16th, 88th and 24th independent regiments were ready, and hundreds of tons of gasoline and oil had reached the units. Rocket and mortar battle positions were rapidly setup around the Can Tho airfield, waiting for the moment to attack the last den of the enemy airforce once Tan Son Nhut and Bien Hoa came under our control.

The setting up of battle positions southwest of Saigon was a marvelous exploit of the western Nam Bo armed forces and people because topographic conditions made it very difficult to deploy a large force, especially one with heavy weapons and technical equipment, as thousands of artillery shells of various types had to be carried on shoulders or by small boats. Roads on which vehicles and artillery could move were rare, and sometimes there was only one road crossing swamps and barren areas. Artillery battle positions had to be set up along roads.

Radio was the only means of communication from the campaign command to the southwestern column.

The nearer the deadline, the more urgent it was for the southwestern column to establish its battle position. It was very important to maintain the utmost secrecy in securing bridges, ferry-boats, and logistic movement routes so as to spring a great surprise on the enemy from this important direction.

One enemy division was drawn in this direction and the southwestern defense line of Saigon became thinner and more vulnerable.

Northwest of Saigon, the enemy's 25th Division was still firmly clinging to the Tay Ninh area. This showed that the enemy was stalemated. The police and administrative organs of the puppet administration in Tay Ninh burned papers and documents and stealthily fled to Saigon.

We refrained from attacking and annihilating Tay Ninh but had to pin down the 25th puppet Division forces there to prevent them from retreating and regrouping in areas adjacent to Saigon. Our III Corps sent a regiment of the 316th Division to cross the Saigon River and cut off a stretch of road from Tra Vo and Bau Nau to Go Dau Ha to prevent the enemy from using it. The regional armed forces units of eastern Nam Bo, Tay Ninh and Binh Duong surrounded and annihilated regional and popular forces posts and shelled Trang Lon, firing some 20,000 105mm shells and nearly 5,000 175mm shells. The enemy's 25th division was stretched along Routes 1 and 22.

Our special action units assigned to carry out activities inside Saigon city and our sapper units had already advanced into areas close to the city and were secretly deployed to attack fixed targets.

Meanwhile, our sapper units, mortars and long-range artillery shelled Bien Hoa airfield every day without interruption so that at night enemy aircraft had to move from Bien Hoa to Tan Son Nhut to avoid our shelling. We thus gradually controlled and paralyzed Bien Hoa airfield. Then, we hastily prepared our firepower to shell the last two enemy airfields--Tan Son Nhut and Can Tho--in order to reduce the combat capacity of the enemy airforce, to shake the enemy's morale, to check his evacuation plans, and to create favorable conditions for the general offensive against Saigon-Gia Dinh.

On the morning of 8 April, we were working when we heard the news that a patriotic pilot flying an F-5E of the puppet airforce had just safely landed on Phuoc Long airfield in the liberated areas after bombing Independence Palace. [paragraph continues]

He was airforce Lt Nguyen Thanh Trung, a native of Ben Tre and one of our party members who had long carried out secret activities within the enemy airforce. He was the son of a district party committee member who sacrificed his life during the revolutionary struggle.

Nguyen Thanh Trung disclosed that the puppet airforce had only 120 A-37's and 70 F-5E's, that only two-thirds of the fighting capacity of these aircraft could be used, that they could make at most 120 sorties daily, and that it was not necessary to continuously shell the Bien Hoa airfield--we need only pump in one shell every 30 minutes because pilots would get out of their shelters and board their aircraft half an hour after each shell explosion, and such a shelling method would be effective and economical.

An idea suddenly came to us, and we requested the high command's authorization to immediately send Nguyen Thanh Trung to Danang to instruct a number of our MIG fighter pilots how to fly the many U.S.A-37 planes which we had seized and to form an A-37 squadron for use if the need arose.

#### Part XIV Continued

Hanoi NHAN DAN in Vietnamese 4 May 76 p 3 BK/WA

[Part XIV: "Battle Positions Are Taking Shape"]

[Text] Prior to joining the campaign, the Saigon front sapper units, comprising intelligent, resourceful and courageous fighters whose exploits were well-known throughout the country, were reorganized into six groups under a unified command:

Group 10 was assigned to the Nha Be and Long Tau areas to attack ships and cut off the enemy route from the Long Tau River to the sea; Group 116 was stationed in Nuoc Trong-Long Binh; Group 113 was put in charge of the Bien Hoa area; Group 115 was stationed in Lai Thieu and Quan Tre to wait for the order to advance into Saigon; Group 117 was stationed in Vuon Thom and Ba Vu to wait for the order to attack the western area of Saigon; Group 429 was assigned to prepare to attack artillery battle positions in the 8th and 9th precincts.

The Saigon special action combatants had long been renowned for their calm and valiant struggle which had repeatedly struck fear into the Americans and their puppets. These combatants had earlier attacked U.S. hotels in Saigon such as the Caravelle, Brink, Victoria and Metropole, attacked the puppet police general directorate and the U.S. embassy, sunk the ship Card in the Saigon River, and shelled the Independence Palace, Tan Son Nhut airport and the puppet "national day" ceremony; their strength increased greatly now, they occupied strong positions both in and outside the city. There were also four battalions and many special action units outside the city, and we had 60 special action teams as well as 300 armed persons and the forces of the masses organized and commanded by the special action forces within the city. The armed forces of the Saigon-Gia Dinh municipal unit were also rather strong.

On joining the campaign the armed forces in Nha Be, Binh Chanh Nam, Binh Chanh Bac, Tan Binh, Hoc Mon and Go Vap, which had earlier consisted of one platoon in each of these districts, now increased to one or two companies. In Thu Duc in particular, there was a battalion, and our forces in Cu Chi were also strengthened. The municipal unit also included the main force regiments which had already been deployed in Gia Dinh, not to speak of our cadres and combatants who for many years had been carrying out special activities in the municipality or working in enemy organs and who were supplying us with timely and vital information as they awaited the arrival of the great army.

The Saigon-Gia Dinh municipal party committee printed and disseminated hundreds of thousands of leaflets and set up propaganda assault units. The seething impetus of the masses made the perplexed enemy even more baffled and agitated and further weakened the enemy's coercive apparatus at the grassroots level. In a few days, we introduced into the center of the municipality many hundred more cadres and armed unit members. Present in Saigon were scores of municipal party committee members and cadres of equivalent ~~rank~~ members of district party committee standing committees, hundreds of party members, thousands of mass organization members and tens of thousands of people whom we could mobilize to take to the streets. We also had political organizations in the various wards, controlled scores of big and small printing shops, prepared hundreds of vehicles equipped with loudspeakers and used thousands of meters of cloth to make flags. Large numbers of cadres whose job it was to take over the administration of the city were sent to the outskirts of the city.

In order to implement the directive of the party Political Bureau, the Central Office for SVN and the Central Military Party Committee had discussed and approved plans for the general offensive and uprising throughout B2. Comrade Sau Dan (Vo Van Kiet) was appointed secretary of the Saigon-Gia Dinh municipal party committee and concerned himself solely with matters pertaining to the mass uprising in order to coordinate it with the general offensive of the regular army corps in the city--the last stronghold of the enemy.

In short, before the signal shot for the general offensive on Saigon was fired, we had already set up a siege on this city from different directions. From the eastern direction, we had cut off Route 1 and reached Trang Bom and were ready to cut Route 15, block Long Tau River and control Vung Tau while paralyzing all activities in Bien Hoa airfield.

From the western and southwestern directions, military units of the 9th Military Region had already moved into the area stretching from Cai Von to southern Can Tho, and more important still, they had already entrenched themselves along Route 4, the main artery leading from Saigon to the Mekong River delta. Meanwhile, military units of the 8th region had extended their operations to southern Long An and stood ready to cut Route 4 and Cho Gao canal.

At that time, the big forces of the campaign had gradually moved into their staging positions. The IV Corps, after capturing Xuan Loc, had closed in on Trang Bom.

From the southeast, the II Corps had already closed in on Long Thanh, Vung Tau, Nuoc Trong and Ba Ria.

The 232d Group had already reached the Vam Co Dong River and Hau Nghia. The 5th and 8th divisions had taken up positions along Route 4 from Tan An to Cai Lay close to My Tho. In particular, two infantry regiments had moved into Can Duoc and Can Giuoc close to Saigon's 8th Precinct.

From the northwestern and northern directions, we already had an expanded liberated area stretching from Loc Ninh to Phuoc Long; and the I and III corps had already closed in on Dong Du, Cu Chi, Phu Loi, Binh Duong, Lai Khe and Ben Cat.

All corridors linking the various units in different directions were open, and campaign and strategic communications lines were linked together satisfactorily, insuring high-speed traffic for various types of vehicles. [paragraph continues]

For the first time in decades of resistance in Nam Bo, trucks of the transport branch of the logistical departments of the south and the various military regions could now move smoothly from the eastern region to interprovincial Route 26 in northern Cu Chi, to Binh Co and Binh My in northern Tan Uyen, and to Long Khanh and Ba Ria.

While our leadership force and revolutionary administration had already moved to the city suburbs, some elements had infiltrated the city itself to make preparations for the uprising of the masses and for taking over the city administration.

The situation inside Saigon was carefully studied and reported daily to the campaign command.

Right in Tan Son Nhut during the days of seething activities throughout the south, a body of our cadres and combatants constantly maintained their communications. This was our military delegation to the Two-Party Joint Military Commission headed by Comrade Ho Xuan Anh, which regularly transmitted daily situation reports. During these days, the delegation members firmly believed that we were going to attack Saigon even though this information had been kept from them. These comrades had been living for almost 3 years within a blockade set up by the enemy, but they firmly maintained their stand of unmitigated struggle against the enemy, promptly and strictly carried out all instructions given by the higher echelons, and promptly reported to us all information concerning the opinions of the people of various strata and enemy activities, which they gathered through various means, including their own observations. Seeing that so many enemy aircraft had flocked to Tan Son Nhut and that some of them were parked near the complex housing the delegation, they sent a message suggesting that artillery strikes should be launched on the airfield. The message said in part: "We will dig trenches and hold on to our combat position here. If the enemy remains stubborn, our artillery forces should continue to rain fire on him. Do not worry about us. We are proud and ready to make sacrifices for the total success of the campaign and our revolutionary cause."

The housing complex of the delegation members had been built by the puppet administration with corrugated iron roofs, earth floors and wooden walls. It was surrounded by a barbed wire fence. It was very difficult for them to dig individual foxholes and communications and combat trenches without being seen by enemy guards, but our comrades started digging during the night. Having no picks and shovels, they had to use fence posts and daggers. The earth they dug up was either packed onto the floor, stuffed into gunny sacks, wrapped in clothing or hidden in the storehouse. Having an opportunity to exchange a number of Joint Military Commission personnel, who were trapped the day we attacked Ban Me Thuot, we decided to bring out several comrades who were truly needed for the campaign and had the others, including the head of the delegation, remain behind. And, while making plans for the shelling of Tan Son Nhut, we instructed the comrades in charge of the artillery many times so that they knew where our delegation was living and could avoid harming them.

As preparations were being made for the Ho Chi Minh campaign, our comrades at Tan Son Nhut took up a stalwart and valiant offensive position. This position not only represented the revolution and the just cause in the political field, but also helped the party further understand the people's feelings toward the cause of liberation as well as the enemy during the enemy's final days. It is certain that in these seething days and nights, our comrades at Tan Son Nhut awaited the coming of our forces more anxiously than did anyone else.

After the Mau Than Tet offensive on Saigon in 1968, the enemy had arrogantly boasted that the Vietcong would never be able to attack Saigon again. [paragraph continues]

Now, looking at the battle positions already arranged with the close coordination of our forces inside and outside Saigon city and at the areas now firmly under our control, and determining the targets at which we would strike right at the beginning of the gathering offensive while working out the timing and finishing the remaining tasks before H hour--the last H hour of the war and also the greatest H hour in our nation's history for the past century--we felt happy, elated and proud.

Part XV: "Boldness, Surprise, Sure Victory"

Hanoi NHAN DAN in Vietnamese 5 May 76 p 3 BK/WA

[Text] When I was still in the Central Highlands and we learned that the Political Bureau had made a new decision to attack Saigon before the arrival of the rainy season with lightning speed, boldness, surprise and sure victory as guiding principles--we began thinking about methods for the attack. By then, even though we did not yet have a firm understanding of the enemy's actual situation in Saigon or of the whereabouts or movements of revolutionary forces within that city, all necessary initial preparations and plans had been made on the basis of the mission assigned. Noticing the enemy's strategic confusion and decline in morale, we tried to think of a fighting method that would bring about a result similar to that achieved in Ban Me Thuot. Nevertheless, it was certain that with complex organizational conditions requiring a higher organizational form, the coming campaign would have to be conducted on a very large scale. Because of the decisive impact this campaign would have on the revolutionary war, on changes in the balance of forces between our side and the enemy and on the emergence of new factors deriving from victories already won as well as the vast size of Saigon city and the urgency concerning timing, various preparations would have to be made quickly. In particular, it was necessary to closely organize, lead and effect coordination among all forces which would participate in the offensive in order to insure certain victory. Of course, in attacking Saigon this time, we could not simply again use the old fighting methods in a mechanical manner; it was necessary to further develop our military art in a more creative manner. Nevertheless, all these problems--such as how we could creatively develop the military and how we should organize forces--could be solved only by taking into consideration the multifaceted developments in the current situation.

These questions, thoughts and calculations were nagging at us, especially after the day we got a map of Saigon from the enemy map storage in Ban Me Thuot.

Recalling the weekly and monthly reports that had been submitted by the southern command and the Saigon party committee on the military, political and economic situation and on the struggle by people of all walks of life for a decent life, democracy, peace and national reunification, and recalling the reports submitted by the various units that had attacked Saigon in 1968 and the recent report by Comrade Vu Long, cadre of the southern staff, on the southern command's plan for the spring-summer campaign, we had the necessary additional knowledge of Saigon to prepare a plan to attack Saigon.

Contemplating fighting methods while riding in a car to B2, I questioned Comrade Hoang Dung about various details which had slipped my mind: How large and how deep are the rivers around Saigon? Has the city population grown to 4 million yet? Is the puppet 25th Division under the command of Ly Tong Ba? and other questions. I also instructed him to cable the 6th Region to send personnel immediately to the Dalat geographical directorate to procure maps of Saigon that would be sent to the A-75 group in B2 as soon as possible.