

maintained and developed more and more broadly. It defeated the enemy's counter-attacks and forced the enemy into an increasingly weak, passive position. In order to rescue their lackeys, the U.S. imperialists assumed de facto military command in the South, increased the supplying of equipment, and brought in some armed forces to support the lackeys so that they could continue to wage their war of aggression in the South, and took another step in their policy of intervention, the first one in which they used U.S. armed forces.

Faced with that situation, in February 1962 the Political Bureau met to discuss the immediate tasks of the revolution in the South.

The Political Bureau determined that the stronger intervention by the U.S. imperialists would create many additional difficulties for the revolution in the South and cause the war to become increasingly fierce, but that, in actuality, there had essentially been no changes in the comparison of forces between ourselves and the enemy and in the objectives of the revolution in the South. The U.S. imperialists not only could not prevent the revolutionary movement of the people of the south from increasingly developing but would, on the contrary, cause the contradictions between our people and the U.S. imperialists to become increasingly deep.

The Political Bureau adopted the following policy for the immediate future: "Resolutely promoting the political and military struggles, winning and maintaining the initiative, forcing the enemy into a more passive state, positively build up our forces in all regards, destroying the Staley-Taylor plan, further expanding the national liberation movement, further strengthening the national solidarity bloc, exacerbating the enemy's internal contradictions, winning the support and sympathy of the forces of peace, democracy, national independence, and socialism in the world against the large-scale armed intervention of the U.S. imperialists in South Vietnam, and advancing to the winning of even greater victories."

The Political Bureau also stressed "Consolidating and expanding the base areas and strengthening the people's forces in all respects -- politically, militarily, economically, and culturally -- in order to advance to building a large, strong armed force which can, along with all the people, defeat the enemy troops and win ultimate victory."

Between the February 1962 resolution of the Political Bureau and the end of 1962 we won many great victories and the enemy's plan to "pacify" the South in 18 months was essentially defeated. We annihilated and routed hundreds of thousands of enemy troops, wiped out thousands of outposts, and destroyed nearly 3,000 strategic hamlets. Our forces, such as the base-level Party organizations, the armed forces, and the mass forces, were much stronger than in the past and the liberated area was maintained and in some places expanded. As for the enemy, although they were heavily defeated they continued to obstinately continue to strengthen their forces and wage an increasingly fierce "special war" against our people in the South.

In view of that situation, on 10 December the Political Bureau met and issued a resolution on the situation, direction, and immediate missions of the revolution in the South.

The Political Bureau observed that the great victories of the political struggle and the armed struggle, which depleted and annihilated more of the enemy's manpower than in the past, along with the victories won in destroying strategic hamlets and maintaining and developing the movement, which had caused the population in the area we controlled to increase, had very great importance in the situation of the enemy using all of their forces to "pacify" the South in 18 months. Those victories demonstrated that we were capable of maintaining and developing the movement.

"The struggle between ourselves and the enemy in the South has in fact been a war. The role, forces, and requirements of armed struggle must be further increased," and "the war in the South is in nature both a civil war and an anti-aggression war, but it is in actual fact an anti-aggression war."

The Political Bureau also set forth the specific features of the mission of promoting political struggle: our absolute superiority and the mobilization of the entire Party and the entire population in building armed forces, strongly and broadly developing guerrilla warfare, endeavoring to destroy the enemy's "strategic hamlets," and, in the immediate future, defeating the enemy's offensive plan for 1963. Organizing activity cycles in which the main-force troops, local troops, guerrillas, and sappers would coordinate in destroying the enemy's "strategic hamlets" bit by bit in certain areas, or launching attacks to paralyze the enemy's communications, expand our bases, oppose sweeping operations, and oppose encroachments, would be modes leading to future guerrilla campaigns. The general scale would be a battalion wiping out an enemy company. When there were favorable conditions for doing so we would concentrate and coordinate two or three battalions.

The Political Bureau resolutions of February 1962 and December 1962 had reached important conclusions regarding the nature of the struggle between ourselves and the enemy and delineated the developmental direction of that struggle to serve as a basis on which to guide all of our activities and push the U.S.-puppet "special war" deeply into a status of defeat.

16 February and 3 March: First Congress of the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam.

Since its formation at the end of 1960 the National Liberation Front, because of its correct action program, which met the aspirations of the broad masses, had broad influence among all strata of people in the South.

Because of the great victories of the revolution in the South, a Congress of the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam, met to delineate the missions of the Front in the new situation and elect an official Central Committee, in order to advance the revolution to the winning of new victories.

On 16 February 1962 the First Congress of the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam was convened. It remained in session until 3 March 1962 and was attended by more than 100 delegates representing all social strata, religious, and ethnic groups of many different political tendencies.

The Congress approved a resolution regarding the missions of the Front in the new situation, the major policies of the Front regarding peace, neutrality, ethnic groups, and land, and the policies regarding the bourgeois class, intellectuals, compatriots abroad, religions, and the soldiers and personnel of the puppet administration in the South.

The Congress elected the official Central Committee of the Front, of which lawyer Nguyen Huu Tho was elected Chairman.

The Congress issued an important declaration which affirmed the over-all missions of the Front as being: "Uniting all the people, resolutely struggling against the U.S. imperialist aggressors and warmongers, overthrowing the ruling clique of Ngo Dinh Diem, a lackey of the U.S. imperialists, the formation of a broad democratic national alliance administration in the South, the achievement of national independence, freedom, and democracy, the improvement of living conditions, the maintenance of peace, implementation of a policy of neutrality, the eventual peaceful unification of the homeland, and positive contribution to maintaining peace in Indochina, Southeast Asia, and the world."

After the Congress the Front made public four urgent stands to save the nation in the situation of the U.S. imperialists steadily escalating their armed aggression in our country:

1. The U.S. imperialists must end their war of aggression in the South.
2. The "strategic hamlets" must be disbanded.
3. A national coalition government must be set up in the South.
4. A diplomatic line of peace and neutrality must be implemented.

The Congress enhanced the Front's prestige. It had a great significance in bringing the various forces into the ranks of the Front to oppose the aggression of the U.S. imperialists, and with regard to foreign relations in that it helped win the sympathy and support of the justice-loving and peace-loving people of the world.

1962: Formation of the Air Defense-Air Force Armed Forces Branch.

After the victorious conclusion of the anti-French resistance war, in 1962, in accordance with the resolution of the 12th Plenum of the Party Central Committee and the policy of the Military Commission of the Party Central Committee, our Air Force was formed and the air defense forces were detached from the field artillery.

The Military Commission also decided to combine the air-defense force and the air force into a single armed forces branch: the Air Defense-Air Force Armed Forces Branch. That was a new developmental step of the Vietnam People's Army on its path of advance to becoming a professional, modern army with many technical combat arms and armed forces branch.

Under the conditions of our forces being few in number and our material bases being weak, the merging of those two forces into an armed forces branch under the unified command of a single Command had a very positive significance. It enabled those two forces to coordinate more closely in defending our skies. The use of a radar system and the ensuring of material-technical bases enabled both forces to operate more economically and conveniently, and contributed greatly to strengthening the homeland's air defenses, twice defeated wars of destruction waged by the U.S. imperialists, and contributed worthily to the enterprise of liberating the South and unifying the nation.

May 1962: Formation of the first main-force group in Military Region 5.

By mid-1962 the revolutionary armed forces of Military Region 5 had become quite large and strong. The local troops of the provinces and the militia and guerrillas of the hamlets and villages had all developed, and there were dozens of mobile battalions. Because of the requirement of increasing the concentrated operational scale in Military Region 5 and creating a strong main-force fist to fulfill the mission of annihilating the enemy on a larger scale, in May 1962 the Party Committee and Command of Military Region 5 decided to form the first three regiments (then called "the work sites" of the Military Zone.)

-- Regiment 1, operating in Quang Nam, consisted of the 60th and 91st infantry battalions.

-- Regiment 2, operating in Quang Ngai and Cong Tum provinces, consisted of the 90th, 95th, and 80th battalions and a cadre group.

-- Regiment 3, operating in Binh Dinh, Phu Yen, and Gia Lai provinces, consisted of the 50th, 30th, and 32d battalions and a cadre group.

Although at first we continued to emphasize the use of individual battalions, the regiments gradually came of age with regard to both development and concentrated combat, in order to carry out the policy of transforming the Central Highlands battlefield into an enemy-annihilating battlefield, a main-force battlefield.

1962: The soldiers and people of Laos are victorious at Nam Tha. The second coalition government is formed in Laos and the Geneva Agreement on Laos is signed.

During the first part of 1962 the Laotian revolution continued to win many victories, especially on the upper Laos battlefield. Between January 1962 and April 1962 the Pathet Lao troops liberated nearly all of the northern part of Luang Prabang Province.

On 8 May, after a long, rather large-scale operation, with the coordination of the volunteer Vietnamese troops, liberated Nam Tha Province, a province in northernmost Laos which had a very important position, bordering on China, Burma, and Thailand. The enemy suffered their greatest defeat ever in Laos: more than 1,600 members of the strategic mobile forces of the Lao puppets were annihilated (GM.11 was totally annihilated or routed, and GM.18 and GM.15 were heavily damaged). The liberated area in northern Laos was expanded by 8,000 kilometers, with a population of more than 76,000.

The victories on the Laotian battlefield, especially the Nam Tha victory perplexed the U.S. and its lackeys. The U.S. imperialists had to accept a setback in Laos in order to concentrate their capabilities on coping with the situation in South Vietnam.

On 7 June 1962 a conference of the three parties in Laos was held in the Plaine des Jarres, and on 12 June an agreement on the formation of a coalition government was signed.

The coalition government decided to effect a ceasefire throughout Laos on 24 June.

In the second Coalition Government, Prince Souphanouvong was named Vice Premier and the Pathet Lao gained two new seats -- the Ministry of Economics and Planning and the Ministry of Communications, Propaganda, and Tourism -- and two Vice Ministries.

On 2 July 1962, 14 nations participated in the Geneva Conference on Laos, and on 23 July the Geneva Treaty on Laos was signed. For the first time in its history Laos won an international commitment to "honor its independence, sovereignty, unity, and territorial integrity."

On 17 September U.S. troops who had supported the rightist army began to withdraw from Laos and by 6 October all 666 of them had been withdrawn.

The 1962 victories of the Laotian revolution were very great, with regard not only to the Laotian revolution but also to the world revolution. The lessons of the Laotian revolution were especially important with regard to the revolution in the South. They allowed us to evaluate the war of aggression of the U.S. imperialists and enabled us to see the difficulties of the U.S. imperialists in resolving complicated international problems, while at the same time contributing to further illuminating the prospects of the enterprise of resisting the U.S. for national salvation by the people of Vietnam and Laos, the capabilities for resolving such problems as a coalition government, the method of simultaneously fighting and negotiating, the possibility of gradually restraining and defeating the enemy, etc.

1963

2 January: The Ap Bac victory.

By the end of 1962, although the enemy had been heavily defeated the U.S. imperialists still believed in the efficacy of the technical equipment they had supplied the puppet army. Although we had won many victories we had not yet defeated the enemy's tactic of achieving mobility by using armored vehicles and helicopters. They were still causing us many difficulties and losses. Defeating the "armored vehicle mobility" and "helicopter mobility" tactics became an urgent requirement of our armed forces if we were to develop our armed activities and armed forces. Carrying out the Party's policy, many local units made preparations and carried out studies to fulfill that requirement.

Upon learning that a new unit of the revolutionary armed forces had arrived at Ap Bac, a small hamlet in the village of Tay Phu, Cai Lay District, My Tho Province,

located about 20 kilometers from the city of My Tho, the U.S.-puppet forces immediately mobilized a large force with airplanes, amphibious vehicles, and supporting artillery to sweep through Ap Bac, in hopes of wiping out our unit and bolstering the declining morale of the puppet army.

The enemy used three battalions of the 7th Division, the 8th Airborne Battalion, 8 Civil Guard companies, and 3 civil guard commando companies, a total of 25 infantry companies totalling more than 2,000 men along with 13 M.113's, 13 boats of the various kinds, 8 fighter-bombers, 20 helicopters, 11 transport and observation planes, 6 105mm artiller pieces, and 6 106.7 mm mortars, under the direct command of the 7th Division Commander, who was also Commander of the Military Region, and under the supervision of U.S. advisers.

Our forces included a reinforced company of the 261st main-force battalion of Zone 8, a provincial company, a support platoon, a platoon of local troops from Chau Thanh District, and local militia and guerrilla forces, under the command of a battalion commander.

The battle lasted from 0600 to 1700 on 2 January 1963. The enemy attacked five times with boats, helicopters, and M.113's carrying troops and with the support of airplanes and artillery. But all of their attacks were broken up. After suffering heavy losses the enemy had to accept defeat and called off the operation.

The results were that we killed or wounded 450 of the enemy (including 19 American), damaged 8 helicopters, 3 M.113's and 1 boat, and completely defeated the enemy's sweeping operation.

Ap Bac was a good anti-sweeping battle in which the three types of troops coordinated their forces in the anti-sweeping zone with the forces of the surrounding villages, and combined military struggle with political struggle.

The victory at Ap Bac had an important historical significance. It signified the coming of age of the new revolutionary armed forces in the South. It opened the way for the bankrupting of the "helicopter mobility" and "armored vehicle mobility" tactics, the trump cards of the U.S.-puppet forces in the "special war." At the same time, it shattered the confidence of the puppet army in modern, advanced equipment and technical facilities, and in the mobile support forces and firepower of the U.S., and the confidence of the U.S. in the ability of the puppet army to stand up against the attacks of our troops.

In evaluating the battle of Ap Bac, comrade Le Duan said, "After the Ap Bac battle the enemy realized that it would be difficult to defeat us."

The victory at Ap Bac inspired our armed forces and people in the South and gave rise to a movement to study and surpass Ap Bac, and advance to winning even more brilliant feats of arms.

April 1963: The Party Central Committee holds its 8th Plenum.

Following the 5th Plenum of the Party Central Committee (July 1961) regarding the development of agricultural production and its 7th Plenum (June 1962) regarding

industrial construction and development, the 8th Plenum of the Party Central Committee met in April 1963 to discuss the first five-year plan (1961-1965) for the development of the national economy.

The Plenum made a profound analysis of the situation and characteristics of the great undertaking of constructing socialism in the North, and more fully evaluated the advantages and difficulties.

It criticized the incorrect tendencies regarding the Party's policy of constructing an independent, autonomous socialist economy in our country, in order to develop and fully utilize our country's existing and latent capabilities, relying principally on our own efforts while benefitting from international cooperation. In that undertaking, total dependence on the assistance of the fraternal nations was entirely contrary to the principle of proletarian internationalism.

When approving the norms of the first five-year state plan, the plenum clearly analyzed the line, path of advance, and rate of socialist industrialization in the North, while also developing, concretizing, and further enriching a number of matters regarding the direction of the construction of the initial material-technical bases of socialism, such as the relationships between industry and agriculture, between economic construction and the strengthening of national defense, and between accumulation and consumption, the direction of investment and capital construction, etc. The state plan was drafted on the basis of developing the spirit of relying principally on ourselves, frugally developing our country, and endeavoring to develop the latent capabilities, in order to overcome the remaining weaknesses of our country's economy, with the objective of "endeavoring to build the initial material-technical bases of socialism, making progress in carrying out socialist industrialization, and successfully completing the socialist transformation."

The resolutions of the 5th, 7th, and 8th plenums of the Party Central Committee had an important significance in socialist construction and in completing the socialist transformation in the North. Implementing the correct policies of the Party, our people have continually developed production, stabilized and in some ways improved living conditions, and strengthened the capability of the North to effectively aid the great front line in the South and fulfill our international missions.

December 1963: Party Central Committee holds its 9th Plenum.

The Party Central Committee held its 9th Plenum to discuss a number of matters regarding the international situation and the revolutionary situation and missions in South Vietnam.

With regard to the revolution in the South, the Plenum analyzed and compared the forces development capabilities, and prospects of the movement and concretized the strategic mottoes and activity mottoes set forth by the January 1961, February 1962, and December 1962 resolutions of the Political Bureau.

The resolution defined the mission of our Party, population, and army as being "endeavoring to advance to the winning of new victories," and clearly delineated

the necessary developmental direction of the revolution in the South to win ultimate victory: "winning partial victories, advancing step by step, and advancing to a general offensive-general uprising."

On the basis of analyzing the "special war" of the U.S. imperialists, the resolution declared that "We must be capable of restraining the enemy in the 'special war' and of defeating them in that kind of War," and that we must "fully understand the motto of protracted conflict will also taking advantage of opportunities to win victory in a relatively brief period of time," and "flexibly combine political struggle with armed struggle, with both political struggle and armed struggle playing a very basic, very decisive role" but with "military struggle playing the direct decisive role" in smashing the enemy's military forces -- the base of support for their rule -- and enabling the revolution to win victory." In order to fulfill that requirement, "the most important, decisive matter in all cases is to continue to strengthen our forces -- especially our military forces -- in all regards."

31 December: The 32nd "Black Panther" Ranger Battalion annihilated in the Duong Long-Ben Cat battle.

Duong Long is a hamlet in the village of Thanh Tuyen, Ben Cat District, Thu Dau Mot Province, about 10 kilometers from the town of Ben Suc.

On 31 December 1963 the U.S.-puppet forces launched a large sweeping operation designated "Dai Phong 35" in Tay Ninh and Thu Dau Mot provinces.

The 32nd "Black Panther" Battalion, a battalion of the puppet 5th Division, which consisted of bullies and hooligans from that division's infantry regiments and specialized in commando raids and in probing the guerrilla bases, and which was commanded by U.S. advisers, was assigned to spearhead a sweeping column advancing along the Ben Suc-Duong Long road.

Our forces in the Duong Long area consisted of an understrength infantry regiment made up of two infantry battalions and an infantry company.

Although the launched strong bombing and strafing attacks, and even used napalm, the "Black Panther" Battalion suffered heavy losses and had to retreat. Our troops pursued and surrounded it and struck it with one blow after another, so only 30 of the enemy escaped. The U.S. advisers and the wounded battalion commander had to be evacuated by helicopter during the retreat. We captured large quantities of weapons and ammunition.

The Duong Luong-Ben Cat battle was an anti-sweeping battle in which our troops took the initiative, resolutely attacked the enemy, had good fighting methods, and won a smashing victory.

That battle, in which for the first time a puppet battalion was wiped out on the southern battlefield, victoriously concluded the year 1963 and opened the way for enemy-annihilating battles on an increasingly larger scale.

1964

9 January: First All-North People's Air Defense Conference.

At the end of 1963, because of the serious U.S.-puppet defeats in South Vietnam and in order to intensify their war of aggression in South Vietnam, the U.S. imperialists adopted the policy of stepping up their attacks on North Vietnam in order to prevent the North from aiding the South.

In view of that situation, in order to take the initiative in defending the North and to continue to actively aid the South, in accordance with the stand of the Party the High Command convened the first People's Air Defense Conference to discuss specific methods to defeat the enemy's air raids.

Attending the conference were representatives of local governmental administrations, military organs, and other organs, representatives of government ministries, and representatives of some organs, armed forces branches, and combat arms of the armed forces.

After the conference people's air defense organizations were set up in all localities under the authority of the chairmen or vice chairmen of the administrative committees. A number of key municipalities and cities with many material-technical bases and large populations constructed airplane observation posts, evacuated stocks of valuable or dangerous materials, organized the digging and construction of many air raid shelters and trenches, organized air defense drills, etc.

The air defense troops were deployed to defend the large cities and the industrial zones, and a small number of mobile units were used to ambush airplanes on reconnaissance missions and parachuting U.S.-puppet commandoes. The militia and self-defense forces were trained to shoot down airplanes with infantry weapons and were organized into many low-altitude firepower clusters.

Evasion, evacuation, and dispersion were carried out step-by-step and in accordance with plans, which both ensured production and other work and ensured the safety of the people, the organs, and the warehouses.

The convening at an early date of the All-North People's Air Defense Conference proved that our Party accurately and promptly foresaw the U.S. imperialists' plot to attack the North and was a creative application of the people's war viewpoint in opposing the enemy's war of destruction waged mainly by their air force. Therefore, our soldiers and people in the North took the initiative and deservedly punished the U.S. Air Force beginning with its very first attack against the North, and was able to limit the damage caused by their attacks.

27 March: President Ho Chi Minh convenes a special political conference.

In 1964 the Vietnamese revolution was in an extremely complicated and urgent situation. The "special war" of the U.S. imperialists in the South of our country was developing to a high level, and at the same time the U.S. continued to escalate and expand the war on an increasingly larger scale. There was a serious lack of solidarity in the international communist and workers movement, and the U.S. imperialists were seeking all ways to take advantage of that to oppose the Vietnamese revolution.

In view of that situation, in accordance with the constitution of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam President Ho Chi Minh convened a special political conference on 27 March 1964 which was attended by 325 official delegates of the political parties, mass organizations, ethnic groups, religions, regrouped compatriots from the South, and compatriots returned from abroad. More than 500 observers from among the various strata of people in the capital were also present.

At the conference, President Ho Chi Minh read an important report. After reviewing the major events in our country and in the world during the past 10 years, he clearly expressed our people's attitude toward the plot of the U.S. imperialists and their lackeys to commit aggression against the North. "If they recklessly attack the North they are certain to suffer a disastrous defeat. Our people in all parts of the country will resolutely defeat them, the people of the socialist countries and the progressive people of the world will give us their all-out support, and the people of the U.S. and its allies will oppose them."

He also said, "For the common benefit of the world revolutionary movement and the enterprise of opposing imperialism, we continually endeavor to contribute to maintaining and strengthening solidarity in the socialist camp and in the international communist movement."

He made the following appeal: "Everyone must do the work of two for the sake of our compatriots in the South."

The special political conference convened by President Ho Chi Minh expressed the iron-like solidarity and fighting will of our people in the North, manifested our country's tradition of unity in order to defend the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, defend the accomplishments of the revolution and our peaceful labor, endeavor to help our compatriots in the South to completely defeat the U.S. imperialist aggressors and their lackeys in order to liberate the South and unify the nation, and unite with the working class and people of the world in the struggle against imperialism, headed by the U.S. imperialist.

27 May 1964: The second Laotian Coalition Government collapses, the Pathet Lao troops and the volunteer Vietnamese troops attack and liberate the Plaine des Jarres.

After the formation of the second Coalition Government in Laos the Laotian revolution adopted the slogan of struggling for peace, neutrality, national reconciliation, and national unification.

The U.S. imperialists and the Phumi Nosavan lackeys, unwilling to admit defeat, sought all ways to sabotage the tripartite coalition government, to paralyze it and then carry out a coup d'etat and overthrow it. Furthermore, the U.S. endeavored to coerce, inveigle, and bribe Kong Le and had its hirelings monopolize, murder, and arrest people who were neutralist and progressive.

Because of the enemy's sabotage activities, the Pathet Lao ministers in the coalition government had to withdraw to Khang Khay (Xiang Khoang Province) and a number of neutralist ministers had to flee. The second Laotian Coalition Government all but collapsed. Kong Le increasingly leaned toward the reactionary rightists.

In December 1963 the U.S. and Phumi Nosavan concentrated five battalions and the Vang Pao bandit forces occupied the southern part of the Plaine des Jarres, then organized the troops of Phumi and Kong Le into combined GM's [Groupe Mobile] in order to take the defensive area of the Pathet Lao in the northern part of the Plaine des Jarres.

On 19 April 1964 the U.S. ordered Kuprasit to carry out a coup d'etat to completely eliminate the Pathet Lao from the coalition government and make the Phumi government completely subservient to the U.S.

At the beginning of 1964, a month-long joint operation by volunteer Vietnamese troops and Pathet Lao troops wiped out, captured, or routed an important part of the enemy's manpower (899 were killed or captured), liberated the entire Na Xay-Nam Thon area to the northern part of Pakhinhun, and completely smashed the plot to permanently occupy central Laos and transform southern Laos into a U.S. military base.

In February 1964 our Military Commission reached an agreement with the Laotian Military Commission regarding the policy of stepping up dry-season activities all over Laos, especially in the Plaine des Jarres and Xieng Khoang, in order to improve the military-political situation in Laos. In the Plaine des Jarres we concentrated forces to annihilate the GML3 and GML8 units of Phumi Nosavan, then annihilated Kong Le's GML7.

In mid-May 1964, taking advantage of the mutual suspicion of the Phumi Nosavan and Kong Le forces in the Plaine des Jarres, and of dissention with Kong Le's ranks, we and our friends agreed to combine a military offensive with enemy proselyting, caused a revolt in airhorn battalions 4 and 6, rapidly liberated the Plaine des Jarres-Xieng Khoang-Muong Sui-Tha Thom area encompassing 3,000 square kilometers and connecting the Plaine des Jarres with the Sam Nua, northern Laos, and southern Laos base areas; cleared Rt.7 to Vietnam; and wiped out an important part of the enemy's manpower (2,500 of the enemy were put out of action.)

The victory on the Plaine des Jarres resulted in the elimination of the traitorous, pseudo-neutral troops of Kong Le, the weakening of the rightist army, and the winning over of the progressive neutralist forces of Colonel Duon, who joined the Pathet Lao. The revolution mastered a very important strategic area, a battlefield which would draw in, tie down, and annihilate the enemy's manpower in future years. It would be the battlefield which determined the victory of the revolutionary war in Laos.

2 August: Harassment and aggressive activities lead to the U.S. imperialists' "Gulf of Tonkin Incident."

In mid-1964, because of their increasingly heavier defeats in South Vietnam, the U.S. imperialists began to use their air force and navy to attack the North more brazenly and stepped up their aerial reconnaissance and their sending in of commandoes to carry out sabotage.

In March 1964 Johnson approved the De Soto plan to use U.S. destroyers to patrol in the Gulf of Tonkin to prevent us from sending supplies by sea, while also

harassing and reconnoitering our coast and supporting the activities of puppet commando ships, which captured our fishermen at sea in order to interrogate them. In mid-1964 the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff drafted a plan to bomb the North and approved a list of 94 targets to be attacked when the order was given.

On 12 June puppet commandoes blew up the Hang Bridge in Thanh Hoa, and on 30 June they sabotaged the Dong Hoi waterworks.

On 30 July U.S. warships violated our coastal waters and fired on Hon Ngu Island (Nghe Tinh Province) 4 kilometers from the coast, and Hon Me Island (Thanh Hoa Province), 12 kilometers from the coast.

On 31 July the U.S. destroyer Maddox entered the zone south of Con Co Island to begin its "tour" of reconnoitering and threatening along our coast.

On 31 July and 1 August 1964 U.S. airplanes based in Laos bombed the border defense post at Nam Can and Nong De Village in Nghe Tinh Province, which were situated 7 to 20 kilometers from the Vietnamese-Laotian border.

Faced with that situation, our naval forces adopted the policy of striking back at and punishing pirates who violated our waters and our people's security.

At noon on Sunday, 2 August 1964, our navy's Squadron 3, consisting of three torpedo boats, was ordered to set out to resolutely punish the "acts of piracy" of the U.S. imperialists, and to attack the destroyer Maddox, which had penetrated deeply into our coastal waters in the area between Hon Me Island and Lach Truong in Thanh Hoa Province.

Our boats both launched torpedoes and fired on the bridge on the deck of the Maddox, which caused that ship to panic and turn around. It fired back with its guns and called in air support, but in the end it had to flee out of our country's coastal waters.

But on 4 August 1964 the Johnson administration again invented a story of our navy attacking U.S. warships for the second time in international waters in the Gulf of Tonkin and used that as an excuse to bomb four of our naval bases and an oil depot in the North on 5 August 1964.

On 7 August 1964 the U.S. Congress approved the "Gulf of Tonkin Resolution," a resolution which the U.S. press regarded as being "equivalent to a declaration of war" and which Westmoreland regarded as "a decisive turning point with regard to morale and the course of the war in Vietnam." It enabled Johnson to "take all steps necessary to repulse any armed attack on U.S. forces ... including the use of armed forces to help any ally in need of aid to defend its freedom."

With the "Gulf of Tonkin Resolution" the U.S. imperialists hoped to break out of their situation of passivity and stalemate in South Vietnam, but in fact the succeeding years demonstrated that that new act of adventurism could not save them from even heavier defeats.

5 August: The first battle in which the soldiers and people of the North deservedly punished the U.S. Air Force for attacking the North.

Having concocted the "Gulf of Tonkin Incident," Johnson used it as an excuse to launch air attacks against the North of our country.

In the afternoon of 5 August, 64 airplanes, including the propeller-driven A1 "Skyraiders," A4 "Skyhawks," F4 "Phantoms", and F8 "Crusaders," took off from the large Seventh Fleet carriers Ticonderoga and Constellation off the coast of Da Nang to attack many objectives in the North: Vinh, Ben Thuy, the mouth of the Thanh River, the city of Hon Gai, and Lach Truong (in Thanh Hoa Province).

Our soldiers and people, who had prepared in advance, fought very heroically. Eight modern U.S. planes were shot down and many pilots were killed. We captured the first pilot -- Everett Alvarez -- at Hon Gai.

On 6 August the government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam issued the following declaration: The U.S. imperialists are being defeated and stalemated in the Vietnam war. In order to extricate themselves from that defeat and stalemate the U.S. imperialists are escalating their war of aggression in South Vietnam while feverishly provoking and attacking the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and threatening to expand the war to the North."

On 7 August the High Command held a ceremony to praise the people's armed forces for having achieved outstanding merit on 2 August and 5 August 1964. President Ho Chi Minh participated in the ceremony and gave the following advice: "You have won a glorious victory but do not be self-satisfied over your victory or subjectively underestimate the enemy. We must realize that the U.S. imperialists and their lackeys will never change their ways; they have many more barbarous plots."

5 August 1964: The Vietnamese People's Navy makes the date of its first merit in defeating the U.S. navy and air force in the North as its tradition day.

On 2 August 1964 one of our torpedo squadrons chased the destroyer Maddox from our coastal waters, which is regarded as our first victory over the U.S. navy. On 5 August 8 our People's Navy, along with the air-defense forces and people of Song Gianh, Cua Hoi, Lach Truong, and Hon Gai defeated the U.S. Air Force in a very glorious battle, shooting down many airplanes, capturing pilots, and defeating the first bombing raid by the U.S. Air Force in the North of our country.

For that reason, 5 August 1964 is regarded as the tradition day of the Vietnamese People's Navy.

In a period of 20 years (1955-1975), dating from its formation on 7 May 1955, our People's Navy fought thousands of battles with the U.S.-puppet navy, air force, and infantry, sank 353 warships, boats, and military cargo ships, killed 2,000 of the enemy, destroyed hundreds of thousands of tons enemy weapons and war facilities, heavily damaged 45 ships of the various kinds, including such ships as the cruiser Newport News, the destroyer Washington, etc., shot down 118 airplanes, knocked out 34 tanks, and dismantled or destroyed thousands of enemy torpedoes and bombs. In the second war of destruction of Nixon (1972), it detected and destroyed nearly 900 torpedoes, and kept the principal channels open to traffic. It transported nearly 300,000 tons of cargo of the various kinds to the battlefields.

In the General Offensive and Uprising of the Spring of 1975, the People's Navy fought independently or in coordination with other units to liberate the islands and archipelagoes, from the Paracel Islands to Phu Quoc, achieved very brilliant feats of arms, and fulfilled its missions of transporting materiel, combat, taking control of the enemy naval bases, patrolling, and being prepared to fight to defend the liberated waters.

In a letter sent to the naval cadres and enlisted men on the occasion of the armed forces branch's 10th birthday, President Ho Chi Minh praised them as follows: "Our navy has fought heroically, positively annihilated the enemy, shot down U.S. airplanes and chased away U.S. warships, united in achieving merit, defended the people, and defended the homeland's skies and seas."

The armed forces branch as a whole was awarded 2,305 medals of the various kinds, including a Second-Class Independence medal and 42 Military Merit medal. Fifteen units and 13 cadres and enlisted men were awarded the honorific designation Hero of the People's Armed Forces.

September 1964: Formation of the Central Highlands Front.

The Central Highlands were a theater of extreme strategic importance with regard to the liberation war in the South and to the entire southern Indochina region.

The notice of the Supreme Military Party Committee of the Political Bureau on 27 November 1953 included the following statement: "Only by developing into the Central Highlands is it possible to obtain the most important strategic position in the South. If the enemy controls that strategic zone, it will be very difficult to improve the situation in the South."

In 1961 the Party Central Committee issued the following directive: "The common long-range base areas for entire southern region are the Central Highlands jungle-and-mountains region and eastern Nam Bo," and set forth the mottoes for the three regions, including the following: "In the jungle-and-mountain region the emphasis must be on military struggle. In that region the missions are annihilating enemy manpower and building up our forces."

By mid-1964 guerrilla warfare had been expanded on the Tay Nguyen battlefield. There were requirements that we gradually develop regular warfare, maintain an offensive posture, annihilate large enemy forces, and liberate territory.

In view of those urgent requirements, on 1 May 1964 the Political Bureau of the Party Central Committee decided to set up the Western Subregion of Military Region 5, which was changed to the Central Highlands Front (B3) in September 1964.

When they were first formed, and during the initial period, the Command was a detachment of the Military Region 5 Command. The Front Command was gradually supplemented and its organization was relatively complete by 1966.

The armed forces of the Front were formed and developed from two sources: local armed forces which came of age in the local mass struggle movement and main-force troops sent south from the great rear area by the Ministry of National Defense.

The formation of the Central Highlands Front was an objective requirement resulting from the geographical, cultural, and economic conditions of the Central Highlands and its important position with regard to South Vietnam and southern Indochina. It was an inevitable development of the anti-U.S. liberation war for national salvation in order to meet the requirements of fighting large annihilating battles and promoting the development of regular warfare.

In the course of 11 years of combat and victory, there were many times when there were very great changes in our forces and times that were so difficult that they were seemingly insurmountable, but with its nature of a heroic army that was very close to the local ethnic minority groups, the Central Highlands Front stood firm, became increasingly strong, made extraordinary efforts, and did a good job of fulfilling the missions assigned by the Party Central Committee. Its victories at Plei Me, Ia Drang, Dac To, Cong Tum, and Buon Ma Thuot will live in history forever.

In the Spring of 1975, the Central Highlands began the historic strategic general offensive, which concluded the national liberation war, liberated the South, and unified the homeland.

18 November: The order to "Aim straight at the enemy and fire!" and the example of Nguyen Viet Xuan inspire a high tide of shooting down U.S. airplanes among the entire army and the entire population.

After their first defeat on 5 August the U.S. bandits continued to carry out aerial reconnaissance, attacked a number of places Military Region 4, and sent in commando ships and warships to operate in the Gulf of Tonkin.

On 18 November they launched air attacks in western Quang Binh. In that battle Anti-Aircraft Company 3 shot down an RF.101 and two T.28's. During that battle, on a battlefield full of smoke, fire, and enemy bombs and shells, company political officer Nguyen Viet Xuan shouted out the order, "Aim straight at the enemy and fire!" When his foot was shattered he had his men cut it off so that it wouldn't get in the way and continued to direct his unit in combat. That act manifested limitless loyalty to the homeland, profound hatred for the enemy, and resolute determination to annihilate the enemy to the end. During the final minutes of his life he continued to devote all of his thoughts and sentiment to his unit, to his comrades in arms, and to fulfilling his mission.

"Aim straight at the enemy and fire!" was an offensive slogan which manifested a revolutionary spirit and inspired everyone to be resolved to fight and defeat the U.S. sky bandits. It also was the generalization of the method of fighting the enemy airplanes and began a high tide of competition to shoot down enemy airplanes among the people's armed forces and our people, in order to defeat the air force of the U.S. imperialists.

7 and 8 December: The An Lao victory.

An Lao is a district in Binh Dinh Province 96 kilometers northwest of the provincial capital of Binh Dinh. It is situated in the midlands region in a valley 4 kilometers long and 22 kilometers long.

The enemy believed that An Lao was a safe area so there were only Civil Guard forces deployed at the district seat in fortified positions on a hill. There were two posts, along with 13 Civil Guard platoons in 18 strategic hamlets scattered throughout the district.

For our part, the activity campaign of July 1964 achieved good results. The most significant battle in that campaign was the battle of Ky Sanh, fought on 8 July 1964 in Nam Tam Ky District, Quang Nam Province. For the first time a reinforced main-force battalion of Military Region 5, under regimental command, fought in broad daylight. Opposing it was a regular battalion and an M.113 squadron of the puppet army, with air and artillery support. We won a resounding victory which signified a turning point in the progress of the main-force troops of Military Region 5. The Military Region Command then decided to use a full-strength infantry regiment, in coordination with local district troops and militia-guerrilla forces, to launch an offensive campaign in the An Lao Subsector, in order to annihilate part of the enemy's manpower and liberate a corridor to connect with the Binh Ngai guerrilla base in order to create a staging area from which to descend into the lowlands and coordinate with the Nam Bo theater.

During the night of 6 December we wiped out the enemy deployed on the hill and in the two Civil Guard posts. The people in the hamlets arose, smashed 18 strategic hamlets, and routed the 13 Civil Guard platoons, but at the district seat we only inflicted heavy casualties on the enemy. On the morning of 7 December we changed over to surrounding the district seat and prepared to attack the reinforcements.

On 7 and 8 December we continued to attack the reinforcements, knocking out six M.113's and killing a number of the enemy, held the places we had taken, propagandized our policies among the people, and created a guerrilla base in the newly liberated area. Heavily defeated, on 15 December the enemy completely withdrew from that area.

The results were that we killed or captured 618 of the enemy, captured 300 weapons (including 2 106.7mm mortars), destroyed 6 M.113's, smashed 18 strategic hamlets, routed Civil Guard platoons, and liberated an area with 15,000 people.

The An Lao victory, along with the Binh Gia campaign and the guerrilla warfare movement throughout the South, forced the puppet army and administration into a situation of imminent collapse in the winter and spring of 1964-1965 and greatly bolstered the morale of the masses.

On the part of Military Region 5, the An Lao victory signified a new transformation in advancing the guerrilla warfare movement to mobile warfare. "For the first time there has appeared in Military Region 5 the new operational mode of combining local troops with militia-guerrilla forces in the campaign form on a regimental scale" (Excerpt from a campaign recapitulation report of Military Region 5).

5 December 1964 to 8 March 1965: The Binh Gia campaign.

At the end of 1964 we had a very great opportunity: the enemy no longer could fully control their army, there were serious internal contradictions, and the morale of the lackey army was becoming weaker and weaker. But the enemy could temporarily

remain intact, mainly because they still had concentrated forces. At that time, furthermore, we were not yet sufficiently strong, especially militarily, because we did not yet make good use of our concentrated armed forces and thus were not yet able to annihilate a significant part of the enemy's main-force troops.

In order to take the strategic initiative and win a decisive victory, the Military Commission, launching our strong activities in 1965, decided to begin an activity campaign all over the southern theater in the first part of 1965.

The Central Office, South Vietnam [COSVN] launched an activity campaign throughout the South. The principal zone of operation, in which the region's main-force troops were concentrated, was an area which bordered four provinces in eastern Nam Bo -- Bien Hoa, Phuoc Tuy, Long Khanh, and Binh Tuy -- and was nearly 500 square kilometers in extent. It was situated about 60 kilometers south and southwest of Saigon and Bien Hoa and connected Nam Bo with Trung Bo.

The policy of the Regional Military Party Committee was: "Concentrating the armed forces of the region, along with the people and the local armed forces, in launching an activity campaign to carry out the first relatively large mobile warfare campaigns of the region during the winter and spring of 1964-1965 in the jungles-and-mountains area along the eastern Nam Bo coast."

The objectives of the activity campaign were to annihilate an important part of the enemy's manpower, consolidate and expand the base area and guerrilla area along the coast, promote a movement to selectively destroy the enemy's control network and pacification plan, and gain experience in all regards in order to provide operational guidance in the future and develop the concentrated combat style of the main-force troops.

That was a long-range activity campaign which utilized many operational forms, especially mobile warfare, military proselytization, and coordination in a large area of operations.

The forces that were used included the 1st and 2nd regional main-force regiments, in coordination with the local troops and the on-the-spot militia and guerrillas.

The campaign, which began on the night of 5 December 1964 and ended on 8 March 1965, was divided into three phases and included attacks on the Binh Gia strategic hamlet, the Dat Do Subsector, the Lo O and Rung La strongpoints, many ambushes of reinforcements and supply shipments on the Duc Thanh-Ba Ria road, and two battles against troops landed by helicopter around Binh Gia.

The results were that our troops annihilated 1,731 of the enemy (52 Americans were killed and 4 were wounded); captured 300 (including 3 Americans); wiped out two battalions (the 4th Marine Battalion and the 33rd Ranger Battalion), 2 armored squadrons, 2 Civil Guard companies, 2 commando platoons, and a number of Popular Force and Combat Youth units, and decimated 2 battalions (the 1st Battalion of the 37th Regiment and the 35th Ranger Battalion).

Shot down 35 helicopters, an L.19, and 2 Skyraiders.

Knocked out 22 M.113's, 5 tanks, 2 A, vehicles, 18 GMC trucks, and 2 Jeeps.

Captured 2 GMC's, 611 weapons of the various kinds, and 50,000 rounds of ammunition, and destroyed many weapons.

After that campaign, the enemy withdrew from Hoai Duc, Tanh Linh, and Vo Duc. We expanded our base area southeast of Rt. 20 in an area with a population of more than 20,000 and linked up the BaRia-Long Khanh and Binh Tuy guerrilla bases.

The Binh Gia victory not only had a great military significance but signified a great leap forward with regard to our main-force units' capability to fight with concentrated forces but had an important over-all effect on the war in the South.

Comrade Le Duan said, "In the developmental process of the liberation war in the South there have occurred such great leaps forward as the Binh Gia campaign during the winter and spring of 1964-1965," "After the Ap Bac battle the enemy realized that it would be difficult to defeat us" and "After Binh Gia the enemy realized that they could lose to us."

Comrade Vo Nguyen Giap observed that "The Binh Gia victory signified the essential defeat of the special war strategy."

The activity cycle of the winter and spring of 1964-1965, during which the Binh Gia campaign was the greatest victory, along with the An Lao, Song Be, Dong Xoai, and other victories and the guerrilla warfare movement all over the South, created an extremely favorable opportunity for the revolution in the South at the end of 1964 and the beginning of 1965. Our repeated victories forced the U.S. to send a U.S. expeditionary army into South Vietnam and change over from the "special war" strategy to the "limited war" strategy in hopes of rescuing the puppets from the peril of complete collapse.

1964: The first U.S.-annihilating battles.

While the U.S. was increasing its forces in the South the revolutionary armed forces carried out many surprise attacks on U.S. lairs, above all those of the advisers and technical forces in the cities, especially in Saigon. Most noteworthy were the following attacks:

-- On 16 February there was an attack on the Kinh Do Theater in which 150 Americans were killed.

-- On 2 May the 15,000-ton aircraft carrier Card was sunk at the port of Saigon, killing 55 Americans and destroying 19 airplanes.

-- On 3 July we attacked the Play Mo Rong post, wiping out the first ranger battalion in the Central Highlands, killing 500 of the enemy including 9 U.S. advisers.

-- On 25 August we destroyed the fifth floor of the Caravelle Hotel, killing 100 Americans.

-- On 7 October we attacked three U.S. tankers on the Nha Be River, destroying 700,000 liters of gasoline.

-- On 1 November we mortared Bien Hoa Air Force Base, killing 4 Americans and destroying or damaging 13 B.57 bombers.

-- On 18 November we detonated a bomb in the Air Force club at Tan Son Nhut airfield, killing 27 Americans.

At the end of 1964, on 25 December, there was an attack on the Brinks Hotel, a six-story building in downtown Saigon. According to Westmoreland, 2 Americans were killed and more than 100 of the enemy were wounded, including 66 Americans.

First Half of 1965

7 February: The North launches a people's war against the war of destruction waged by the U.S. imperialists.

At the beginning of 1965 Johnson, having won the U.S. presidential election, was faced with the prospect of the complete collapse of the puppet administration in the South and plunged deeper along the path of direct aggression in our country. The U.S. imperialists strengthened their forces in the South while carrying out a war of destruction in the North, which they regarded as an indispensable part, a "supplement of, and not a replacement for, the U.S. land war in the South" (quote of McNamara). The specific U.S. objectives were:

-- Preventing all external aid from reaching the North and all aid from the North from reaching the South.

-- Destroying our economic and national defense potential and sabotaging the socialist construction in the North.

-- Threatening the morale of our people and shaking their determination to resist the U.S. for national salvation.

If it could attain those specific objective, the U.S. could bolster the puppet army and the puppet administration while also striking a blow against the socialist camp and intimidating the developing national liberation movement.

On 7 February 1965 Johnson, making the excuse of retaliating for our attack on a U.S. military camp at Play Cu, ordered the U.S. Air Force to begin operation Rolling Thunder and bomb the city of Dong Hoi, followed by the bombing of the Chap Le area north of Dong Hoi on 8 February. On 11 February the enemy, making the excuse of retaliating for our attack on a U.S. barracks in Quy Nhon, bombed our military camps at Chnh Hoa and Chap Le.

On 13 February Johnson decided to expand the attacks against the North into a war of destruction because "occasional one-for-one retaliatory strikes will lack the persuasiveness of continuous pressure."

In order to oppose the large-scale war of destruction launched by the air force and navy of the U.S. imperialists the soldiers and people of the North, under the leadership of the Party, waged a people's war based on the all-round strength of the superior socialist system. Many air defense units were urgently organized.

The various kinds of anti-aircraft guns, the air force units, the modern air-defense missiles, and the widely deployed low-altitude anti-aircraft teams of the self-defense militia, with determination to annihilate the enemy, fought very resourcefully and were victorious beginning with the very first battle.

We reoriented our economy. Many industrial bases evacuated their valuable machinery and important materials; the task of ensuring communications and transportation received special attention; the people's air defense task in the cities and industrial zones was carried out urgently and included such integrated measures as evacuation, dispersion, the building of additional air-raid shelters, the organization of air-defense sentries and alarms, etc.

Under the resolute, timely leadership of the Party Central Committee and its Military Commission, our people fought back, coped with the war of destruction of the U.S. imperialists very calmly, heroically, and resourcefully, won resounding victories, and limited damage to the minimum.

Although the enemy airforce and navy were far superior to ours numerically and were more modern, within only the first 3 months after the enemy escalated their attacks against the North from the 17th Parallel to the 20th Parallel, the soldiers and people of the North shot down more than 300 U.S. airplanes, captured many enemy pilots, and sunk or set afire 7 enemy warships and commando ships. During the first two days, 7 and 8 February 1965, Quang Binh and Vinh Linh shot down 9 U.S. airplanes. On 11 February they shot down 3 airplanes and damaged 4 others, and captured the "space pilot" Major Schumacker. On 15 March 1965 the militia of Dien Hung Village, Dien Chau District, Nghe An, shot down a U.S. A.4 aircraft with infantry weapons, thus beginning a movement among our people's armed forces to use infantry weapons to shoot down U.S. jets.

When they began their war of destruction against the North, the U.S. imperialists were clearly subjective with regard to the strength of their air force and its savegry. As Air Force General Le May said, "The air force is decisive, the instrument of victory; by means of our victory we can reach any target in the world. North Vietnam should be scared to death. If not, we will bomb them to smithereens and push North Vietnam back into the stone age. North Vietnam cannot bear up for more than a few weeks under U.S. bombs."

But the final results were entirely contrary to their aspirations. They could attain none of their objectives. They not only could not extricate themselves from their disaster on the southern battlefield but caused our people to hate them even more, to fight back with determination, and to quickly weaken the war-making potential of the U.S. imperialists. The U.S. Air Force suffered very heavy losses, the myth of the "unimaginable strength" of the U.S. Air Force was shattered, and its limitations, and weaknesses were exposed to the people of the world.

For our part, although the U.S. imperialists war of destruction created many difficulties and inflicted many losses on our people's resistance war in general and the soldiers and people of the North in particular, we won a heroic, glorious victory. As comrade Le Duan said, "We will emerge from this war not shattered but stonger and more solid. An army of workers will take form and science,

technology, and engineering will be developed in the rural areas because of our evacuation policy, for we are not evacuating and dispersing in order to flee but in order to produce and to fight the enemy."

25 to 27 March: Party Central Committee holds 11th Plenum.

During the first part of 1965 the patriotic war of our compatriots in the South won many victories.

In hopes of avoid the possibility of total defeat the U.S. imperialists obstinately sent U.S. and vassal fighting forces into South Vietnam, while also expanding their air force activities and their bombing attacks in the North, thus elevating the "special war" to a new level, so that it had the characteristics of a "limited war."

In view of that situation, the Party Central Committee held its 11th Plenum and issued a resolution on the situation and the urgent, immediate missions.

The Plenum observed: "Because of the plots and activities of the U.S. imperialists, the situation of half the country being at war and the other half being at peace has been transformed into a patriotic revolutionary war of the people of the entire nation against the U.S. imperialists. The South is still the great front line and the North is still the great rear area, but the mission of the North is to build while directly engaging in combat and aiding the front in the South.

"The most recent plots and acts of the enemy are intended to rescue them from their perilous situation in the South. Therefore, for our part, the most positive way to defeat those plots and acts of the enemy is to concentrate the forces of the entire nation and attack and defeat the enemy in the South."

The resolution confirmed that "our basic mission is to positively restrain and defeat the enemy in the 'special war' at its highest level in the South, endeavor to take advantage of opportunities, concentrate the forces of the entire nation to win a decisive defeat in the South in a relatively short period of time, while also making preparations to cope with and defeat the 'limited war' if waged by the enemy in the South, continuing to build the North, closely combining economic construction with the strengthening of national defense, resolutely protecting the North, defeating the war of destruction and blockade by the enemy's air force and navy, preparing to defeat the enemy in the event that they double the intensity of their present war of destruction or transform it into a limited war in both the South and the North, endeavoring to mobilize the forces of the North to aid the South, assisting the Laotian revolution, using all of our strength to attack the enemy in the South, defending the North, and fulfilling the enterprise of national liberation throughout the nation."

The resolution of the 11th Plenum of the Party Central Committee made very important decisions. It both expressed determination to restrain and defeat the enemy in the limited war and prepared the country to wage a large-scale war against the U.S. expeditionary army, delineated the basic missions and the specific missions of the country as a whole and of each region, maintained the initiative of the soldiers and people of our entire nation, and expressed readiness to

fight and defeat the enemy when they transformed their war of aggression into a limited war in the South and expanded their war of destruction in the North.

1 to 9 March: Indochinese People's Conference expresses a spirit of anti-U.S solidarity.

In order to express solidarity against the U.S. and the plot of the U.S. imperialists to divide the people of the three Indochinese countries, the Indochinese People's Conference met in Phnom Penh, the capital of Kampuchea, from 1 March to 9 March 1965.

The conference included the participation of delegations of the Vietnam Fatherland Front, the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam, the Kampuchean Common People's Social Community, the Neo Lao Hac Xat, the Laotian Patriotic Neutral Forces, and other associations and organizations of the three countries. The conference approved a joint resolution which clearly stated the solidarity of the people of the three Indochinese countries in resolutely struggling against the U.S. imperialists, and three separate resolutions regarding Vietnam, Kampuchea, and Laos which expressed ardent support for the struggles of the people of the three countries for independence, the right of self-rule, and territorial integrity and vigorously condemning the U.S. imperialists for having trod upon the Geneva Agreements, started a criminal war of aggression against the Vietnamese people, intervening militarily in Laos, and carrying out provocations and aggressive plots against Kampuchea. The conference stressed "the necessity of strengthening the true, lasting solidarity of the Indochinese people" in the struggle against the common enemy: the U.S. imperialist aggressors.

The Indochinese People's Conference was an important event in the political life, and in the struggle for independence and freedom of the people of Vietnam, Kampuchea, and Laos. The victory of the conference was a victory of the militant solidarity of the people of the three Indochinese countries. The conference signified an important development in the history of the struggle of the three Indochinese countries against foreign aggression, and also signified a heavy defeat for the U.S. imperialists' plot to divide the Indochinese peoples in order to annex each of those countries.

3 April: Vietnamese People's Air Force makes the date of its first battle its tradition day.

In accordance with the policy of gradually developing our armed forces to a professional, modern status, our air force, a modern, young combat arm of the Vietnamese People's Army, was formed to fulfill the strategic missions of defending the North and liberating the South.

On 3 April 1965, during a battle against U.S. airplanes in the sky above Do Len-Ham Rong, our air force, in coordination with the anti-aircraft forces, shot down 10 enemy airplanes. The team led Pham Ngoc Lan shot down two F.8 jets in the first battle fought by our air force.

The next day, on 4 April, the team led by Tran Hanh shot down two F 105 jets in the same area.

President Ho Chi Minh sent a congratulatory letter to the People's Air Force units which had achieved the first feats of arms.

April 3rd, 1965 has become the tradition day of the Vietnam People's Air Force.

During 10 years of contending with the modern air force and navy of the U.S. imperialists, our People's Air Force built a glorious tradition: "Be limitlessly loyal, attack resolutely, fight together, and achieve collective merit." In more than 300 battles it shot down 320 U.S. airplanes of 19 types (including 2 B.52's), destroyed 24 airplanes, sunk or set afire 6 warships or commando ships, heavily damaged 3 enemy military bases, and contributed worthily to smashing the perestige of "American air power," along with the soldiers and people of the entire nation defeated two wars of aggression waged by the U.S. imperialists against the North, and contributed to the defeat of their neocolonial war of aggression in the South. One regiment shot down more than 100 airplanes, one company shot down more than 60 airplanes, and many pilots achieved outstanding feats of arms. Most outstanding was the feat of arms of 27 and 28 December 1972, when the People's Air Force shot down five enemy airplanes (including two B.52's shot down on the spot), thus contributing to smashing the enemy's large-scale air raids on Hanoi and Hai Phong.

In the General Offensive and Uprising of the Spring of 1975 the People's Air Force, overcoming many difficulties, transported a large quantity of weapons and military cargo to the battlefield in order to promptly serve the fighting. It quickly took over, studied, repaired, restored, and use the various kinds of airplanes and technical equipment of the enemy.

On 28 April 1975 the Quyet Thang squadron, with 5 A.37 jets, carried out a bold surprise attack on the area in which enemy airplanes were parked at Tan Son Nhat airbase, destroyed 24 airplanes and contributing to the total victory of the historic Ho Chi Minh campaign. It effectively supported the infantry and naval units in the fighting to liberate the islands in the South China Sea.

The National Assembly and Government awarded the Vietnam People's Air Force the designation Hero Unit of the People's Armed Forces on 3 June 1976. Ten units and 22 cadres and men in the Air Force were awarded the noble designation Hero of the People's Armed Forces.

22 March and 8 April: National Liberation Front of South Vietnam makes public its Five-Point Stand and the Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam makes public its Four-Point Stand.

At the beginning of 1965, in addition to beginning to send U.S. expeditionary troops into South Vietnam and expanding the war of destruction in the North, Johnson expanded his "peace offensive" to conceal the brazen crime of aggression committed by the U.S. and send out a smokescreen of lies regarding their "good will" in order to both deceive world opinion and threaten our people.

Johnson continually spoke of "negotiations without any prior conditions" and said that "America does not want a wider war We have acted and will continue to act to reduce tension."

In 7 April 1965 Johnson read a speech at Baltimore in which he said, "We will seek ways to prevent the conflict from spreading We will do anything necessary to attain that objective." In that speech he both appealed for negotiations and offered a bribe in the form of \$1 billion in aid if the war ended, i.e. if it ended in accordance with the conditions set by the U.S.

In view of that situation, on 22 March 1965 the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam issued an important declaration. After exposing the bogus offer of the U.S. to "negotiate without any preconditions," the Front brought out its just Five-Point Stand of the People of South Vietnam:

1. The U.S imperialists sabotaged the Geneva Agreements and are extremely crude warmongers and aggressors. They are the irreconcilable enemies of the Vietnamese people.
2. The heroic people of South Vietnam are determined to expel the U.S. imperialists in order to liberate the South, achieve an independent, democratic, neutral Vietnam, and advance to national unification.
3. The people of South Vietnam and the heroic Liberation Army of the South are determined to fulfill their sacred duty as fully as possible and expel the U.S. imperialists in order to liberate the South and defend the North.
4. The people of South Vietnam express their deep gratitude for the ardent support of the peace loving and justice loving people of the world, and declare their readiness to accept all assistance, including weapons and all other military equipment, from our friends all over the world.
5. Our entire population is united and armed, will continue to heroically rush forward, and are determined to fight and defeat the U.S. and the Vietnamese traitors.

Then, on 8 April 1965, Premier Pham Van Dong announced the Four-Point Stand of the Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam:

1. The U.S. is the aggressor and must withdraw from South Vietnam.
2. The U.S. must respect the Geneva Agreements.
3. The affairs of the South must be handled by the people of the South, and the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam is the only true representative of the people of the South.
4. The peaceful unification of Vietnam must be brought about by the people of the two regions.

The declaration of the Five-Point Stand of the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam and the declaration of the Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam were resolute, just responses of our people which exposed the reactionary, wily arguments of the U.S. imperialists regarding Vietnam.

They affirmed the iron determination to oppose the U.S. for national salvation of the people of North and South Vietnam. We were unwilling to yield to the strength of the enemy aggressors and could not accept negotiations according to the U.S. conditions.

The people of the South and North responded ardently to the two declarations by means of bolts of lightning struck directly against the enemy. They also received the wide support of progressive world opinion, which regarded our stands as manifesting the most patriotic and heroic attitude and as being in accord with the truth of the era.

10 and 11 May: Taking of Song Be City, capital of Phuoc Long Province.

The city of Song Be, also called Ba Ra, was the capital of Phuoc Long Province in eastern Nam Bo.

On the basis of the favorable topography afforded by Mt. Ba Ra and the Ba River, the U.S. and its puppets constructed a solid defensive system which extended from Mt. Ba Ra, through the provincial capital to the airfield, and on to the Phuoc Bin Binh military subsector headquarters, a distance of more than 10 kilometers, which formed a rather strong complex of strongpoints.

On the night of 10 March and the morning of 11 March our troops smashed the enemy's defensive line along the Be River, wiped out the Phuoc Binh military headquarters and the Phuoc Long sector, annihilated 1,389 of the enemy (including 30 Americans and the puppet province chief), shot down 14 airplanes, and captured 700 weapons.

The Song Be victory was the first battle of the Song Be-Dong Xoai campaign. For the first time we had taken a city occupied by the enemy in the south. The battle panicked the U.S. and its puppets and opened the way for the campaign to win a great victory.

28 May: The Nui Thanh victory.

At the end of March 1965 U.S. troops occupied Da Nang-Chu Lai and U.S. Marines began to arrive to set up a base camp in Military Region 5 in order to make preparations for the U.S. troops to expand their sphere of operations on land.

On 7 May, a battalion of U.S. Marines occupied the An Tan area in Tam Ky District, Quang Nam Province.

During the night of 27 May and the early morning of 28 May two Military Region 5 battalions, in coordination with a battalion of sappers, carried out an attack against the U.S. Marine battalion. In that battle at Nui Thanh a company of U.S. Marines was wiped out and 180 Americans were killed or wounded.

The battle at Nui Thanh was the first battle in which our revolutionary armed forces wiped out a U.S. company on the southern battlefield. Military Region 5 had the honor of being praised by the Party and government for: "Heroically and steadfastly leading the way in annihilating U.S. troops." There followed the

victories at Van Tuong and Play Me, in which the U.S. troops suffered a terrible beating.

29 to 31 May: The Ba Gia Victory.

Ba Gia was a small town in Son Tinh District on Route 5, more than 10 kilometers from Quang Ngai City.

The Ba Gia victory lay within the summer 1965 activity cycle of Military Region 5, which was aimed at the enemy's weak points and had the objectives of annihilating part of the enemy's manpower, effectively support the people, further promote the political struggle movement, develop the guerrilla war, continue to destroy the enemy's control, and consolidate and expand the liberated area.

We used an infantry regiment, a 75mm pack artillery company, and an anti-aircraft company, to attack a larger puppet brigade consisting of the 51st Regiment of the 2nd Division, two Marine battalions, and three Ranger battalions.

Our troops attacked the enemy continuously, from 0100 hours 29 May to 0400 hours 31 May. The attacks included many ambushes, both daytime and night time surprise attacks, attacking posts in order to annihilate reinforcements, and annihilating reinforcements in order to attack larger reinforcements.

The results were that our troops wiped out four enemy battalions (the 1st and 2nd battalions of the 51st Regiment, a Marine battalion, and the 39th Ranger Battalion), killed or wounded 915 of the enemy (including 6 Americans), captured 270, captured 307 weapons of the various kinds, shot down 2 airplanes, and destroyed 2 105mm artillery pieces and 14 trucks.

Ba Gia was a rapid and efficient annihilating battle. It was a new step in the maturation of the revolutionary armed forces of the South with regard to the level of concentrated fighting and the use of relatively large forces, in a period in which the enemy's "special war" strategy was reaching the point of bankruptcy and in which the puppet army, because of the repeated blows struck by our main-force troops at such places as Binh Gia, An Lao, and Dong Xoai-Song Be, was threatened by collapse and disintegration.

Comrade Nguyen Chi Thanh wrote of the Ba Gia battle: "For the first time, on unfavorable terrain and, especially, under the circumstances of the enemy having manpower and firepower, we not only dared fight, but annihilated all of the enemy, captured many prisoners, and captured many weapons and much military equipment, while our side suffered only very light casualties." "The Ba Gia victory has not only the ordinary significance any victory but also has another important significance: it was an exemplary annihilating battle."

The Ba Gia battle demonstrated our troops' ability to annihilate brigades of the puppet army and signified the complete bankruptcy of the U.S.-puppet "special war" strategy. On 1 June 1965 Johnson, the U.S. President, had to bitterly admit that "That was a serious defeat" for himself and his lackeys.

June 1965: Formation of the "Anti-U.S., National-Salvation Assault Youth Unit."

In mid-1965 the war spread throughout our country.

In order to strengthen our forces, in June 1965 the Premier recommended the formation of an "Anti-U.S., National Salvation Assault Youth Unit" to mobilize hundreds of thousands of young men and women to set out to fulfill combat and combat support missions. Most of them would work in the communications-and-transportation units in order to carry out the October 1965 directive of the Political Bureau and the Military Commission of the Party Central Committee: "Ensuring unimpeded communications and transportation in the present situation is a central, ad hoc mission of the entire Party, the entire army, and the entire population."

During the anti-U.S. resistance war for national salvation, on all of the key battlefields, especially in Military Region 4 and along the strategic north-south corridor, the "Anti-U.S. National Salvation Assault Youth Unit" played a positive role in fulfilling combat and combat-support units, alongside the regular armed forces. Those accomplishments reflect the patriotic tradition of our youths: when the homeland appeals to them youths are willing go anywhere, do anything, and overcome all difficulties.

11 May to 22 July: Dong Xoai-Song Be campaign.

During the winter and spring of 1964-1965 we had won a great victory and had to attack rapidly and strongly so that the enemy could not recover.

The Regional Military Committee decided to launch a campaign to:

- Annihilate an important part of the enemy's elite main-force manpower (the quota that was set was the complete annihilation of four battalions and eight companies).
- Attacking, and interdicting for a certain period of time, the enemy's strategic routes: route Nos. 13, 14, 20, 1, and 15 and the railroad.
- Stepping up guerrilla warfare and fighting small-scale attrition and annihilation battles, in combination with the political struggle movement of the masses.

The principal mission was to annihilate enemy manpower.

That was the first time we concentrated relatively large main-force units (four regiments and two battalions), in coordination with the local forces, to carry out an operation in a large area which focused on Binh Long and Phuoc Long provinces. The area of coordination was made up of five provinces: Lam Dong, Binh Tuy, Long Khanh, Bien Hoa, and Ba Ria. During the period between 11 May to 22 July 1965 we attacked a rather strong defensive zone defended by relatively large forces (nine regular battalions, three Ranger battalions, two Civil Guard battalions, seven independent Civil Guard companies, and 21 ranger companies, not to mention the puppet general reserves).

The campaign was divided into three phases, during which we fought 16 battalion-sized or regiment-sized battles, including 4 victorious battles against enemy in strong fortifications, 4 battles against reinforcements (2 of which were successful), five battles to interdict roads, and 3 victorious surprise attacks.

The results were that we wiped out 4 enemy military subsectors, knocked out of action 4,459 of the enemy (including 73 Americans), wiped out or nearly wiped out 4 battalions (the 1st and 2nd battalions of the 7th Regiment, the 7th Airborne Regiment, and the 4th Armored Battalion), 24 companies, 6 mechanized squadrons, and 4 artillery or combat engineer detachments. We captured 1,652 weapons of the various kinds and destroyed 390 weapons and 60 vehicles, 6 locomotives, and 12 railroad cars. We shot down 34 airplanes and destroyed 3 helicopters.

We also achieved good results in stepping up guerrilla warfare and in interdicting roads. Most noteworthy was the coming of age of the main-force troops, especially with regard to attacking the enemy in strong fortifications. The level of our campaign guidance was raised. The enthusiasm and confidence of the troops were higher after the campaign.

The Dong Xoai campaign, which followed the Binh Gia and Ba Gia victories, proved our troops' ability to attack the enemy on an increasingly larger scale and to annihilate increasingly larger numbers of the enemy.

The Dong Xoai victory pushed the puppet army a step further toward the peril of collapse and disintegration. It also proved the correctness of the assessment that the jungles-and-mountains battlefield is a battlefield on which we were capable of fighting and winning large annihilating battles and of limiting the strengths, and exacerbating the weaknesses, of the enemy.

1965: The Chinese rulers give the green light to U.S. aggression in Vietnam.

In January 1965, via the U.S. journalist Edgar Snow Mao Zedong informed Washington: "The Chinese army will not cross its border to fight. That is something that is absolutely clear. The Chinese will fight only if the U.S. attacks. Is that not clear? The Chinese are very busy with their internal affairs. To fight outside their borders would be criminal. Why would they have to do so? The people of South Vietnam can handle the situation."

After that, in many ways China made effort to enable the U.S. to understand Mao's saying, "We won't bother anyone who doesn't bother us."

Therefore, in February 1965 the Johnson administration began to use the enormous U.S. war apparatus in Vietnam. It sent U.S. troops into the South to wage a "limited war," while at the same time using its air force to wage a war of destruction against the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.

Thus the Chinese rulers exposed their intricate, insidious scheme of instigating the U.S. to become bogged down in its war of aggression in Vietnam so they could be free to carry out their cultural revolution. They also wanted to prolong the Vietnam War to weaken the Vietnamese revolutionary forces. At the same time, they wanted to take advantage of their so-called "aid to Vietnam" as long as

possible so that they could raise the flag of "absolute revolution" and rally the people of Asia, Africa, and Latin America against the Soviet Union and the socialist system.

Chapter III

From Mid-1965 to the End of 1968

Mobilizing the Forces of the Entire Nation and Carrying Out the Strategic Decision to Defeat the U.S. Expeditionary Army in the "Limited War" and Force the U.S. Imperialists to Deescalate the War

Last 6 months of 1965.

24 July: The missile troops fight and win their first battle.

The air-defense missile combat arm, a young, modern technical combat arm of the Vietnam People's Army, was born and grew up in the anti-U.S. resistance war for national salvation.

After expanding the war of destruction to most of the provinces in the north the U.S. imperialists, although heavily defeated, continued to be very subjective and blind regarding the "unimaginable strength" of "U.S. airpower."

In mid-July 1965 the High Command decided to transfer two missile battalions to join three anti-aircraft regiments in carrying out a surprise attack to shoot down enemy airplanes in the area of Bat Bat, Ha Tay Province. That was the first battle fought by our anti-aircraft missile army. The results were that on 24 July our missile troops, with resourceful, brave, and resolute fighting methods, won a glorious victory, shooting down a flight of three enemy F-4 jets. Since then, 24 July 1965 has been regarded as the tradition day of our army's missile arm.

Between 1965 and 1972 our missile troops shot down more than 800 airplanes of many types of the U.S. strategic and tactical air forces, including 57 B-52's. In one battle one missile brought down two airplanes, in another battle three missiles shot down three airplanes, and on one day eight strategic B-52 bombers were shot down.

Especially, between 18 and 28 December 1972 they fought very skilfully, bravely, and creatively, achieved one glorious feat of arms after another, won a very great victory -- shooting down 37 U.S. airplanes, including 32 B-52's, most of them on the spot -- and contributed very importantly to defeating the large-scale strategic raids against the North carried out by the strategic and tactical air forces of the U.S. imperialists.

Our missile troops contributed importantly to, along with our soldiers and people, completely defeating the two wars of destruction waged by the U.S. imperialists in the North.

On 11 January 1973 the National Assembly and the Government bestowed the Heroic Unit of the People's Armed Forces commendation on the missile combat arm. Twelve

units and 10 cadres and men were awarded the Hero of the People's Armed Forces designation.

1965: The U.S. imperialists impetuously send in U.S. expeditionary troops to directly wage an aggressive "limited war" in South Vietnam.

By March 1965 "the revolutionary patriotic war of our compatriots in the South had advanced very rapidly and had won increasingly larger victories. The 'special war' of the U.S. imperialists was undergoing an increasingly deeper crisis and is suffering a serious defeat." (Resolution of the 11th Plenum of the Party Central Committee.)

Faced with the peril of complete defeat, the U.S. imperialists sought all ways to create a "position of strength." They gradually sent U.S. and vassal forces to South Vietnam, while also expanding their air force activities and bombings in the North in order to create pressure, in hopes of weakening our offensive capability in the South, limiting the North's aid to the South, and forcing us to make concessions.

On 8 March 1965, after sending a squadron of F105 aircraft to Bien Hoa and a battalion of "Hawk" anti-aircraft missiles to Da Nang, the U.S. sent two battalions of the U.S. 9th Marine Brigade from Okinawa to Da Nang. Thus for the first time U.S. combat troops were sent to South Vietnam.

On 1 April 1965 Johnson decided to send 18,000 to 20,000 U.S. support troops and two additional Marine battalions to South Vietnam. He urgently explored the possibility of rapidly deploying South Korean, Australian, and New Zealand combat forces and continued to step up the war of aggression waged by the U.S. Air Force in the North and in Laos.

In view of the weakening situation of the puppet army, on 26 June 1965 Westmoreland was authorized by the U.S. government to send U.S. troops into battle "when deemed necessary." Between 26 and 30 June the 173rd Airborne Brigade, an Australian battalion, and puppet forces carried out a joint operation northwest of Saigon. That was the first operation conducted by U.S. troops in the South. With that decision (according to a classified Department of Defense document), "The strategy was finished, and the debate from then on centered on how much force and to what end."

On 17 July 1965, Johnson announced his decision to send 44 U.S. battalions to South Vietnam and approve Westmoreland's "search and destroy" strategy. That decision (according to a classified Department of Defense document), was "perceived as a threshold-entrance into an Asian land war," and the war of aggression of the U.S. imperialists entered a new phase: the limited war phase.

The U.S. imperialists, waging a gradually intensifying limited war, thought that they would be able to squash us and win victory. The ultimate developments were entirely contrary to their desires.

Of course, that period presented an extremely serious challenge to the soldiers and people in both the North and South of our country, as well as for our Party. By means of their extraordinary courage our people proved that although our country

was not large and our population was small, our people were united. Under the wise, correct leadership of the Party, they carried out a broad people's war and defeated that fierce, cruel war waged by the U.S. imperialists.

1965: Main-force divisions organized in Nam Bo and Military Region 5.

During the last half of 1965 our main-force troops on the Nam Bo and Military Region 5 battlefields developed greatly with regard to organization and operational ability, formed clusters of main-force units which stalwartly held their ground in the important strategic areas, launched a number of multi-regimental operations under unified command, and operated in areas of their choosing, such as Binh Gia and Dong Xoai. Now our operational objectives were different from those of the past. In addition to the puppet troops there had appeared regular U.S. divisions with modern equipment. That situation made it necessary for us to have main-force divisions if we were to meet the requirements of the battlefield.

According to the September 1965 resolution of the Political Bureau and the directive of the Military Commission of the Party Central Committee, a number of main-force infantry divisions were formed:

--In Nam Bo the 9th Division (three regiments) was formed in September 1965 and the 5th Division was formed in November 1965.

--In Military Region 5 the 3rd Division (three regiments) was formed in September 1965 and the 2nd Division (two regiments and one battalion) was formed in November 1965.

The formation of main-force infantry divisions on the southern battlefield was a strong developmental step of our nation's anti-U.S. resistance war for national salvation and represented the great-leap-forward maturation of the revolutionary armed forces, which were now capable of creating strong, highly effective fists which, along with the local troops, the militia, and the guerrillas, transformed the war situation.

1965: We win resounding victories over the U.S. expeditionary troops when they begin their aggressive limited war in our country.

18 August: The Van Tuong victory.

After occupying the Chu Lai area in Quang Nam Province, at dawn on 18 August 1965 the U.S. Marines launched Operation Starlight against the hamlet of Van Tuong, in Binh Hai Village, Binh Son District, on the coast in northern Quang Ngai, 17 kilometers from the Chu Lai base. Its objectives were to annihilate one of our main-force units, win a military victory in order to enhance the prestige of the U.S. Marines, encroach upon the liberated area, and expand the secure area around the Chu Lai base.

The enemy force, amounting to about 9,000, consisted of the headquarters of the 7th Regiment of the 1st Marine Division, four Marine battalions, two puppet infantry battalions, a tank-amphibious vehicle battalion, and a number of artillery, engineer, and other support units. They mobilized six landing craft, five combat

support ships, 105 tanks and armored vehicles, 100 helicopters, and 70 fighter-bombers in that sweeping operation.

We had one regiment in the Van Tuong area which was training, consolidating, and preparing to fulfill its missions. It had a contingency plan for countering a sweeping operation launched from many directions.

A few days previously the enemy had made preparations by the use of airplanes, artillery, and small exploratory mopping-up operations. We predicted that the enemy would attack and decided to remain in place to fight the enemy's mopping-up operation.

The U.S. troops carried out the attack with four columns: one advanced directly along the road in amphibious vehicles, two were landed by helicopter, and one came ashore from landing craft. After a day's fighting our troops, along with the guerrillas and the people, completely defeated the mopping-up operation, killing 919, set afire 22 tanks and armored vehicles, and shot down 13 airplanes.

Van Tuong was the first battle in which the U.S. expeditionary troops engaged directly in large-scale combat in South Vietnam and used naval, land, and air forces, but they took a beating and suffered heavy losses.

Van Tuong may be regarded as the Ap Bac of the U.S. Army. It began a high tide of the annihilation of U.S. troops all over the south. The Van Tuong victory also demonstrated that the soldiers and people of the south were determined to fight, knew how to fight, and were entirely capable of defeating the limited war of the U.S. imperialists.

Comrade Le Duan evaluated the Van Tuong battle as representing both a tactical defeat and a strategic defeat of the U.S., on the basis of which we could continue to victoriously attack the U.S. mobile forces. When it is compared to the situation when the German troops invaded the Soviet Union or when Japan attacked China during World War II, or when the U.S. troops landed in South Korea, the significance of that smashing victory over the aggressor troops becomes even clearer.

19 October to 26 November: The Play-Me Campaign.

In September 1965 the enemy stationed the entire 1st Air Cavalry Division at An Khe. It was the first U.S. military unit to be sent to the Central Highlands and was the first modernly equipped U.S. army unit to carry out tactical experiments in the South of our country.

The enemy forces included one U.S. air cavalry division, a puppet airborne brigade and a puppet armored squadron, and a South Korean regiment (the first Park Chung Hy soldiers to be sent to the Central Highlands).

Our troops included three main-force infantry regiments, a sapper battalion, an artillery battalion, and a 12.7 mm machinegun battalion. The campaign took place in the Bau Can-Play Me-Duc Co area, about 1,600 square kilometers in extent, 30 kilometers south of Play Cu City.

Between 19 October and 26 November our troops surrounded the area to force the puppet army to send reinforcements, concentrated on annihilating the puppet reinforcements, and forced the U.S. troops to come to the rescue of the puppets. We then concentrated on inflicting heavy casualties on the U.S. troops.

The results were that we killed 2,964 of the enemy (including 1,700 Americans), wiped out three infantry battalions, including a U.S. battalion, and annihilated a puppet armored squadron. We shot down 59 airplanes, inflicted heavy casualties on the U.S. 3rd Brigade, destroyed five 105mm artillery pieces, and captured 73 weapons and 58,000 rounds of ammunition.

That was the first time the U.S. sent troops to the Central Highlands and also a time when they had to call off an operation. The air Cavalry Division was defeated in its first engagement.

The High Command sent a message congratulating the soldiers and people of the Central Highlands. The Government decided to award the soldiers and peasants of the Central Highlands two First-Class Military Merit medals.

8 November: Victory at Dat Cuoc.

Dat Cuoc, 30 kilometers north of the city of Bien Hoa, lay within the sphere of War Zone D in eastern Nam Bo.

The U.S. 173rd Brigade, which had been stationed at Bien Hoa since May 1965, sought to win a victory by carrying out a "search and destroy" operation and probing into War Zone D.

On 6 November they landed troops at Hieu Liem. After 2 days of fruitless searching for us, when they were beginning to tire, they entered our ambush zone. The fighting lasted until 8 November.

The results were that a U.S. battalion was wiped out. That was the first large U.S.-annihilating battle fought in Nam Bo.

12 November to 27 November: The Dau Tieng battle.

Dau Tieng is an area in Thu Dau Mot. The enemy forces included a U.S. infantry division and the 7th Regiment of the puppet 5th Division. Our 9th Infantry Division and a battalion of local Thu Dau Mot troops carried out an operation in which they fought many battles -- all of them victorious -- in a 15-day period. Two of those battles, in which we annihilated many of the enemy, had a great effect: Bau Bang and Dau Tieng.

The Bau Bang victory:

On 11 November U.S. forces, consisting of a task force made up of two infantry battalions of the 2nd Brigade of the 1st Infantry Division, two battalions of tanks and M.113's, and an artillery battery, totalling more than 2,000 men, conducted an operation from Lai Khe to Bau Bang. On the afternoon of 11 November the enemy stopped at Bau Bang, 25 kilometers north of Thu Dau Mot.

We closely monitored the enemy's situation. During the night of 11 November our troops moved up close and surrounded the bivouac area of the U.S. troops.

At 0530 on 12 November we opened fire. After 30 minutes, most of the U.S. troops had been wiped out. After 3 hours of fighting we completely mastered the battlefield. The results were that we annihilated two U.S. infantry battalions and a mechanized squadron. About 2,040 Americans were killed or wounded. We destroyed 39 tanks and M.113's 6 105mm artillery pieces, and 2 106.7mm mortars, and shot down an L-19 airplane and a helicopter.

That was a daytime attack which resulted in the largest number of Americans killed since U.S. troops arrived in the South and in the wiping out of many battalions, both infantry and armor. That proved our troops' capability to fight battles to annihilate large numbers of U.S. troops.

The Dau Tieng victory:

On 27 November we launched a surprise attack against the command headquarters of the 7th Regiment of the puppet 5th Division and two battalions of that regiment at Village 14 in the Michelin rubber plantation. The entire regiment was wiped out and we killed or captured more than 700 of the enemy, including a Lieutenant Colonel who was the regimental commander.

The results of the Dau Tieng campaign were that we annihilated 4,250 of the enemy (including nearly 3,000 Americans), destroyed 300 vehicles, captured 300 weapons of the various kinds, and knocked out of action three battalions of the U.S. 1st Infantry Division and the 7th Regiment of the puppet 5th Division.

The victory of the Dau Tieng victory was another heavy blow struck against the U.S. puppet forces in the winter of 1965 and buried the prestige of the "Big Red One" 1st Infantry Division of the U.S. Army, which they ballyhooed as being their most "elite" division.

8 to 18 December: The offensive at Dong Duong.

Dong Duong is situated in a lowland area along Route 1 in southern Quang Ngai Province, near such large U.S. bases as Da Nang and Chu Lai.

On 17 November, prior to that campaign, we attacked and wiped out the Hiep Duc. On 18 November the puppet 2nd Division landed three battalions by helicopter to retake Hiep Duc.

We then surrounded Hiep Duc and Viet An, forcing the U.S. and the puppets to relieve the siege and affording us an opportunity to attack the reinforcements. As expected, the enemy mobilized six puppet infantry battalions, four U.S. Marine battalions, two artillery battalions, and an armored squadron, totalling 8,500 men, to rescue the puppets at Hiep Duc and Viet An.

The fighting took place from 8 to 18 December 1965 and included many ambushes, surprise attacks, and attacks on enemy troops landing by helicopter. At first we mainly fought puppet troops, but later we mainly annihilated Americans. The

results were that we annihilated 1,800 of the enemy (including 600 Americans), knocked out of action three puppet infantry battalions and a battalion of U.S. Marines, and shot down or destroyed 21 airplanes and 6 M.113's.

The Dong Duong victory was a great success of the armed forces of Military Region 5 in the application of the slogan of endeavoring to annihilate enemy troops carrying out operations in the lowlands, combining mobile warfare with guerrilla fighting, and closely combining the three types of troops.

4 December: Raid on the Metropole Hotel (Saigon).

In the winter of 1965, along with the concentrated fighting of our main-force troops we used sappers and artillery to attack the enemy's rear-area bases in the Saigon area, the Nuoc Man airbase, the Chu Lai air base, etc. Of those raids by our sappers, the raid on the Metropole Hotel on the night of 4 December, in which 200 Americans were killed, caused the greatest repercussions of all.

The continuous attacks by our soldiers and people during the fall and winter of 1975, including the victories at Van Tuong, Play Me, Dat Cuoc, Bau Bang, Dau Tieng, Dong Duong, etc., the bold attacks of our sappers on the very lairs of the U.S. troops, and our strong activities in the U.S.-annihilating zones at Cu Chi, Lai Thieu, Ben Cat, Chu Lai, Da Nang, and An Khe, inflicted heavy defeats on the U.S. troops. They cockily jumped into the South with 200,000 troops but were unable to transform the situation, prevent the decline of the puppet army and administration, or avoid the bankruptcy of the plan to herd people into "strategic hamlets." Indeed, it was they who were bogged down on the vast battlefield of people's war, were attacked everywhere, and were attacked in many ways they could not foresee.

December 1969: The Party Central Committee holds its 12th Plenum.

After the 11th Plenum of the Party Central Committee in May 1965 the situation in the South changed very rapidly. Faced with the collapse of its "special war," the U.S. obstinately sent U.S. expeditionary troops and vassal troops to the South. By September 1965 the number of U.S. and vassal troops in the South had risen to 200,000, not counting 70,000 U.S. naval and air force personnel at the U.S. bases in Guam, the Philippines, and Thailand and with the 7th Fleet, who also participated directly in the fighting in Vietnam. The U.S. war of aggression became a limited war.

In view of that situation, the Political Bureau of the Party Central Committee met in September 1965 and issued a resolution regarding the major, urgent problems in order to lead the resistance war of our people in the South.

By the end of 1965, despite continuous defeats and heavy losses the U.S. imperialists, because of their extremely obstinate nature, were continuing to promote and expand their limited war in the South and escalate their attacks against the north.

In December 1965 the Party Central Committee held its 12th Plenum to determine missions, policies, and slogans that were appropriate to the new situation, and

to mobilize the entire nation to resolutely defeat the war of aggression of the U.S. imperialists.

The Plenum unanimously approved the September 1965 resolution of the Political Bureau while also, on the basis of the actual events of the half-year test-of-strength between our soldiers and people and the U.S. troops, profoundly analyzed the situation and reached new, extremely important conclusions.

The principal characteristic was that although the U.S. had sent in troops to directly commit aggression in our country, their objective was still to "continue to carry out a neocolonial policy," and the basic nature of the U.S. ~~was~~ in the South was still that of a "new-style" colonial war of aggression in which the U.S. imperialists were "using two forces: the U.S. expeditionary army and the forces of the puppet army and administration." "In the past the war was limited to the sphere of the South, but now the U.S. is both concentrating its forces on the southern battlefield and expanding the war of aggression waged by its air force in the North of our country, thus creating the situation of the entire nation being at war with the U.S., to different degrees."

Due to the important position of South Vietnam and the extremely barbarous, aggressive nature of the U.S. imperialists, in the future they may increase the number of U.S. troops in the South to between 300,000 and 400,000 and intensify their attacks against the North, but their present plot was to "endeavor to expand their attacks in order to annihilate our forces, especially our concentrated armed forces; maintain and consolidate, the important strategic positions, or occupy new ones, then on that basis carry out selective 'pacification', attack the liberated areas, control the masses, retake some of the areas that were lost, and take all steps to stop the aid from the North, and surround and isolate the southern battlefield, while also stepping up the war of aggression against the North of our country. They want to gradually regain the initiative and create a position of strength in order to force us to negotiate in accordance with conditions advantageous to them, while also preparing bases so that, when necessary, they can prolong and expand the war of aggression."

The U.S. imperialists had the strongest economic and military potential in the imperialist camp. They had a large army, strong firepower, rapid mobility, and bases at a number of important strategic positions, but had many weaknesses, the most basic of which had always been political.

The carrying out of a passive, unjust war prevented the U.S. from using all of their economic and military strength. The will to fight of the U.S. soldiers was very weak. The U.S. strategy wavered between offense and defense, between holding land and moving around. Its rear area was far away and supply was difficult, and the fighting was not appropriate to the training, organization, and equipment of the U.S. forces, who were forced to fight in the way dictated by the opposition.

For our part, the Party Central Committee affirmed that "Under the wise leadership of our Party, our people have created forces that are great in all respects and are now in a favorable situation." That evaluation was based on an all-round, profound analysis of the development of the revolution in both the South and the North.

In the world, the just struggle of the Vietnamese people in both parts of our country gained the increasingly positive support and strong assistance of the socialist camp, the nationalist countries, and the peace-loving people, including the U.S. people.

On the basis of that analysis, the Party Central Committee reached the following conclusion: "Even if the U.S. imperialists send hundreds of thousands of expeditionary troops, the comparison of forces between ourselves and the enemy will not appreciably change."

Therefore, the revolution in the South "must maintain and develop its offensive strategic status," and even if the war becomes increasingly arduous and fierce, our people have a firm basis on which to maintain the initiative on the battlefield, with sufficient forces and capabilities with which to defeat the enemy's short-range and long-range plots.

The Party Central Committee set forth the mission of "Mobilizing the entire nation to resolutely defeat the war of aggression of the U.S. imperialists under any circumstances in order to defend the North, liberate the South, and complete the people's democratic national revolution throughout the country." "The present mission of opposing the U.S. for national salvation is clearly a sacred mission of our nation and our people in both the South and the North."

On the basis of the above directions and missions, the Central Committee set forth the following slogan: "Endeavor to limit the enemy's war and defeat the enemy in that limited war, inflict heavy casualties on them, and force them to become bogged down and heavily defeated. If that is done we are certain to win a decisive victory in the South."

Our strategic motto was to fight a protracted war and rely principally on our own strength, while also, on the basis of waging a protracted war, going all-out to highly concentrate the forces of both regions in order to take advantage of the opportunity in order to win a decisive victory on the southern battlefield in a relatively short period of time. At the same time, we still had to prepare to defeat the enemy in the event that the war was prolonged and was extended to the entire nation. We also had to try to win international sympathy, support, and aid, a factor which would contribute decisively to our people's victory. Therefore, we had to carry out a diplomatic struggle.

Regarding the struggle motto, the resolution affirmed that it was necessary to combine persistent military struggle with political struggle, and make full use of the attack columns.

The Party Central Committee made the following appeal: "We are waging the greatest patriotic war in the history of our country, a revolutionary war to liberate the nation, defend and build socialism, and contribute to the struggle of the world's people for peace, national independence, and socialism. Therefore, in the present glorious phase of the history of the homeland we must "have a strong fighting spirit, extraordinary courage, a heroic spirit, and determination to move mountains and fill in the seas, overcome all obstacles, fulfill all missions, and defeat all enemies."

The resolution of the 12th Plenum of the Central Committee was a very important historical document with regard to theory as well as practice in our people's revolutionary struggle against the U.S. imperialists. With an absolute revolutionary spirit, our Party very scientifically evaluated the comparison of forces between ourselves and the enemy, correctly evaluated the weaknesses of the U.S. imperialists, even when they were escalating the war and clamorously sending troops to the South, resolutely set forth an offensive strategy, and affirmed that our people could defeat, and had a way of defeating, the U.S. imperialists, the leader of world imperialism.

Speaking at a conference of cadres studying the Resolution of the 12th Plenum of the Party Central Committee, comrade Le Duan evaluated it as being "a historic resolution. It manifests in a concentrated manner our people's spirit of several thousand years' standing. It crystallizes the resolute will, intelligence, and great creativity of our people in the present phase, and will leave behind for our posterity thousands of years hence one of the most glorious pages of history."

1966

3 to 15 January: The Asian, African, and Latin American People's Solidarity Conference supports the struggle of the Vietnamese people against the U.S. imperialist aggressors.

In order to affirm their resolute support for the just stand and iron determination of our people and promote the enterprise of resistance to the U.S. for national salvation, the Asian, African, and Latin American People's Solidarity Conference met at Havana, the capital of Cuba, a free land in the Western Hemisphere and the leading flag of the anti-imperialist revolutionary movement in that Hemisphere.

The Conference regarded solidarity with Vietnam and "defending the just enterprise of the Vietnamese people as the central missions of the revolutionary struggle of the Asian, African, and Latin American peoples."

It unanimously observed that "The struggle of the Vietnamese people itself directly supports and contributes strongly to the national liberation movements of the people of the countries of the three continents, and is at the same time a brilliant example which strongly inspires all of progressive mankind."

The Asian, African, and Latin American People's Solidarity Conference's support for the Vietnamese people had the great significance of signifying the actual formation of a front of the people of the three continents against U.S. led imperialism, and was a lively manifestation of the solidarity of the people of the three continents with the Vietnamese people, and a precious source of inspiration for our people.

It was also a victory of our Party's correct international line, which won the sympathy and support of the peace-loving, justice-loving people of the world for our people's just struggle against the U.S. imperialist aggressors.

March to May 1966: The people of the cities of Da Nang and Hue oppose Thieu and Ky (the dissident movement).

In March 1966, on the occasion of the political crisis caused by the contradiction between the lackeys in Military Region I and the central puppet administration (Thieu-Ky had dismissed the I Corps commander, Nguyen Chanh Thi), a strong struggle of the people in the cities began in Da Nang and Hue and rapidly spread to many other cities in the South, such as Quang Tri, Hoi An, Quang Ngai, Quy Nhon, and Saigon. It lasted 76 days and included such animated forms as rallies, demonstrations, workers' strikes, merchants' strikes, and students' strikes.

Thieu and Ky sought all ways to threaten, soothe, and deceive, but none of those things worked, so ultimately they had to send six battalions of the "Crazy Buffalo" Marine force bullies to Da Nang and Hue to suppress the people.

The deep-rooted reason for the movement was the continuous victories of our soldiers and people, beginning from the time when the U.S. troops first set foot in Vietnam, which inspired the patriotism of the urban people. The U.S. troops flooding into the South upset the living standards of the various strata of people, especially in the cities. Racial discrimination, the social evils, and poisoning by decadent culture caused the contradictions between the patriotic people on the one hand and the U.S. imperialists and their lackeys on the other hand to become deeper, and the contradictions among the lackeys to become more fierce.

The formation and development of the movement exacerbated the contradiction within the rulers of the puppet army and administration, and became a struggle against the U.S. imperialist aggressors and the traitorous lackeys, as well as a source of strength with which the people could openly attack the aggressive colonial policy of the U.S. and the traitorous activities of the Thieu-Ky clique.

Militarily, McNamara, the U.S. Secretary of Defense, had to admit that the struggle movement of the people in the southern cities during that period weakened their war efforts by from 50 to 70 percent.

Although the U.S. imperialists and the Thieu-Ky clique were able to extinguish the movement, that event gave rise to the capability to the capability to form a worker-peasant-soldier united front and a worker-peasant-intellectual united front to oppose the U.S. imperialists and their lackeys, and created a form of mass uprising in the cities against their neocolonial policy.

Referring to that matter, in a letter to the comrades in Saigon-Gia Dinh dated 1 July 1967 comrade Le Duan observed that "The uprising of the people of Da Nang against the Thieu-Ky clique from March to May 1966, although not ending in victory, taught us a useful lesson about taking advantage of the enemy's internal contradictions. We did not take the initiative in inciting the masses to arise, because we knew how to take advantage of the opposition and conflicts within the ranks of the enemy, exacerbate their contradictions in order to rally the mass forces, and take over the right to lead and mobilize mass struggle, although the Party's forces were few in numbers and its bases in the city were still weak. But

because we were not yet able to fully concentrate our leadership forces, we lost an opportunity to win an even greater victory."

End of 1965 to April 1966: The 1965-1966 Winter-Spring victory breaks up the first U.S. strategic counterattack.

At the end of 1965, by which time they had increased the number of troops on the southern battlefield to 720,000 (including 180,000 Americans and 20,000 South Koreans), with 13 infantry divisions, 5 infantry regiments, and 30 infantry battalions (including 4 U.S. divisions and a U.S. regiment, and 10 South Korean battalions), and more than 2,000 aircraft (including 600 combat aircraft), the U.S. imperialists began to carry out their first strategic counterattack. Its objective was to defeat our main-force units, which would, they boasted, "break the backbone of the Viet Cong," and to bolster the lackey puppet administration. The U.S. and its puppets made feverish preparations beginning at the end of 1965, but the campaign did not actually begin until January 1966. They focused on two principal strategic areas: the lowlands of Military Region 5 and eastern Nam Bo. By the end of April 1966 they had to end the counteroffensive because of large losses.

The U.S. and its puppets launched 450 large and small operations, and there were large-scale battles in which they used between 3 and 21 battalions against our main-force units.

The enemy wanted to concentrate its counteroffensive forces in order to win the initiative and annihilate our main-force units, but we caused them to put up a passive resistance, to disperse, and to resume the defensive against our attacks. By means of many different operational forms we continually attacked the enemy. We won major victories in some of the battles, such as the two battles against sweeping operations in Cu Chi (Gia Dinh), from 9 to 19 January and from 23 January to 5 February 1966, during which we annihilated 2,637 of the enemy (including 2,371 Americans) and shot down or destroyed nearly 100 airplanes; the battle of Phu Yen from 19 January to 10 February 1966; the anti-sweeping operation in northern Binh Dinh between 28 January and 7 March 1966, in which we annihilated 9,116 of the enemy (including 5,160 Americans and 1,255 South Korean soldiers) and shot down 374 airplanes, the surprise-attack at Nha Do-Bong Trang in Thu Dau Mot on 24 February 1966, in which during a few hours of fighting we wiped out two U.S. infantry battalions and two armored personnel carrier battalions totalling 2,500 Americans and destroyed more than 40 tanks and M113's; and the Dong Giap battle in Quang Nam on 4 and 5 March 1966, during which the fighting lasted 40 straight hours and we wiped out 2 U.S. Marine battalions and 4 Marine companies, and shot down 25 airplanes. Those were resounding feats of arms of our people's armed forces, combined with the direct political struggle of the masses.

In addition to defeating the enemy's operations, our people's armed forces shelled and raided airfields (Chu Lai, Tan Son Nhat, and Phu Loi), U.S.-puppet bases (the riad on the Victoria Hotel on 1 April 1966 killed 200 U.S. officers), etc., and inflicted heavy losses on their aircraft, POL and supply depots, and high-class manpower.

The results were that during the 1965-1966 dry season, throughout the South our soldiers and people knocked out of action 104,000 of the enemy (including 42,500 Americans and 3,500 South Koreans), including 34 infantry battalions (14 U.S. battalions and 20 puppet battalions), 4 mechanized battalions (3 U.S. battalions and a puppet battalion), and 178 miscellaneous infantry companies (including 22 U.S. companies).

We shot down or destroyed 1,430 airplanes, and destroyed 600 tanks and armored vehicles, 1,310 trucks, 80 artillery pieces, and 27 ships.

Comrade Truong Son wrote about the significance of the 1965-1966 dry season victory: "The very great significance of that great victory was that we defeated the U.S. limited war from the very beginning. The soldiers and people of the South not only continued to defeat and rout the puppet troops but also defeated the U.S. expeditionary army, one of the most powerful and modern of the capitalist world. We won both a political victory and a military victory, but essentially our victory was a military one. The very important significance of the dry season victory was that it once again demonstrated that our political line defeated, and will completely defeat, the neocolonial aggression policy of the U.S., and that our military line, strategy, and tactics defeated, and will completely defeat, the U.S. limited war strategy and tactics. Our people's war, with its many superior features, proved to be peerless; our heroic people and heroic army are capable, completely capable, of defeating the enemy's limited war and of winning victory, although we must overcome many difficulties and hardships because they must fight more fiercely."*

April to June 1966: Formation of the Tri-Thien Military Region and the setting up of the Route 9-Northern Quang Tri front.

After the victory of the 1965-1966 dry season, the Political Bureau of the Party Central Committee observed that although the movement in Tri-Thien had been able to win a number of victories, but they were only initial victories and in comparison to the developmental momentum of the over-all southern battlefield it had developed slowly although the enemy were weaker than on the other battlefields and our armed forces and corps of cadres were relatively strong.

The Political Bureau realized that in order to advance the revolutionary movement in Tri-Thien strongly and stably, the most fundamental matter was that we continue to step-up our attacks against the enemy and properly apply the slogans of the revolutionary struggle in the South, determine the forms of military attacks against the enemy, and create rich new forms of political struggle that were appropriate to the specific circumstances of Tri Thien.

With regard to organization, in April 1966 the Political Bureau decided to form the Tri-Thien Zone and Military Region. The Tri Thien Zone Party Committee was placed under the direct leadership of the Party Central Committee and the Tri-Thien Military Region Party Committee was placed under the direct leadership of

* The journal QUAN DOI NHAN DAN, May 1966.

the Zone Party Committee, but at the same time was responsible for reporting to, and requesting instructions from the Military Commission of the Party Central Committee with regard to all tasks.

The formation of the Tri-Thien Zone had an important strategic significance and was intended to "annihilate or disintegrate most of the puppet troops, annihilate part of the U.S. troops ... and prepare political forces and armed forces in the cities to serve the general offensive, general uprising plan when conditions are ripe," "... cut the enemy's strategic lines of communication, build our own corridor road, win a great victory in all regards, create a new situation on the Tri-Thien battlefield, and coordinate well with the other battlefields under all circumstances (even the circumstance of the U.S. imperialists expanding the land war to central and southern Laos)." (Resolution of the Standing Committee of the Military Commission of the Party Central Committee regarding the missions of the Tri-Thien battlefield, April 1966).

In June 1966 the Military Commission decided to set up the Route 9-Northern Quang Tri Front. At first, a number of main-force units of Military Region 4 were brought in to create a new offensive strategic area in a place where the enemy were weak. That front forced the enemy to disperse their forces into the jungle to come to grips with strong main-force units of the North, thus creating conditions for the other battlefields -- especially the Tri-Thien lowlands -- to be active, and stopping the enemy's plot to expand the land war to the North, especially Military Region 4.

Our taking the offensive on the Tri-Thien battlefield took the U.S. imperialists completely by surprise. They had to undo their entire strategic deployment. Two U.S. Marine divisions brought in to "pacify" the Mekong Delta had to be sent to the jungle-and-mountains area. Thus they wanted to concentrate forces to attack us in Nam Bo but had to disperse them to assume the defensive in order to cope with northern main-force units. The guerrilla warfare movement in Tri-Thien also advanced strongly, which caused the enemy, who were already passive, to become even more confused and passive.

Between June and September 1966, our armed forces on that front knocked out of action 8,700 of the enemy (including 3,000 Americans), liberated 400 villages and 400,000 people, and defeated many enemy sweeping operations, the largest of which were Operation Hatten in Cam Lo, with 10,000 U.S. and puppet troops (15 to 26 July 1966), and Operation Prairie, in western Do Linh, conducted by seven U.S. Marine battalions (15 to 20 September 1966). We killed nearly 3,000 of the enemy in those two operations.

The opening of the Route 9-Northern Quang Tri Front was a very correct policy -- a strategic victory -- of the Party. It was a new contribution of the North to the enhancement of our offensive posture which upset the enemy's strategic posture on the southern battlefield and served to stop the plot of the U.S. imperialists to expand the land war to the North. It clearly expressed the iron will of our soldiers and people, who were determined to fight until they won final victory.

July 1966: President Ho Chi Minh signs a limited mobilization decree and issues an appeal for the entire population to resist the U.S. for national salvation.

In view of the fact that the U.S. imperialists were recklessly and obstinately expanding their war of aggression in the South and carrying out new, extremely serious escalation steps by expanding their war of destruction in the North by attacking Hanoi and the port city of Hai Phong, in view of the life-or-death situation of the homeland, and in order to manifest determination to defeat the U.S. aggressors, at the beginning of July 1966 our country's Supreme Defense Council met under the chairmanship of President Ho Chi Minh. Then, on the basis of the resolution of the Standing Committee of the National Assembly, President Ho Chi Minh made public a limited mobilization law to "mobilize some of the reserve officers, noncommissioned officers, and enlisted men and some of the citizens in a reserve status who have not yet served on active duty," in order to strengthen our national defense forces and promote the just nation-salvation political struggle of our people.

On 17 July 1966 President Ho Chi Minh appealed for the entire population to oppose the U.S. for national salvation and to be determined to defeat the U.S. aggressors. He pointed out that "Johnson and his "clique must understand that even if they send 500,000, 1 million, or even more troops in order to step up their war of aggression in South Vietnam, and even if they use thousands of ariplanes and intensify their attacks against the North, they cannot weaken the heroic Vietnamese people's iron will and determination to oppose the U.S. for national salvation. The more truculent they are the greater their crimes will be. The war may last 5, 10, 20 years or even longer. Hanoi, Hai Phong, and a number of enterprises may be devastated. But the people of Vietnam are not afraid! Nothing is more precious than independence and freedom. After we are victorious the Vietnamese people will rebuild our country so that it is even better and more beautiful For the independence of the homeland, and for the sake of our obligation toward the countries which are opposing the U.S. imperialists, our entire army and entire population must unite as one, not fear sacrifice or hardship, and fight resolutely until total victory is won."

The state's limited mobilization law and the appeal of President Ho Chi Minh manifested the iron will of the people of our entire nation, who concentrated all of their strength to defeat the enemy aggressors, liberate the South, defend the North, and advance to national unification, for the independence and freedom of the nation.

"Nothing is more precious than independence and freedom." Those historic words were a magnificent truth which strongly inspired the patriotism, revolutionary spirit, and hatred for the enemy of our soldiers and people in both the South and the North, and impelled everyone to rush forward to attack the U.S. aggressors. The words of President Ho Chi Minh directly inspired our people to defeat the second strategic counteroffensive, the largest counteroffensive of the U.S. imperialists in their war of aggression in the South of our country.

October and November 1966: The Political Bureau and the Military Commission of the Party Central Committee decides upon six strategic operational modes in the war against the U.S. imperialist aggressors.

Implementing the spirit of the resolution of the 12th Plenum of the Party Central Committee, in February 1966 the Military Commission of the Party Central Committee set forth six strategic operational modes, which were tested on the southern battlefields in the summer and fall of 1966. In October and November 1966 those six modes were officially approved by the Political Bureau of the Party Central Committee.

The contents of those strategic operational modes were as follows:

1. Stepping up the operational activities of the concentrated units, launching medium and large campaigns, and advancing to fighting battles of strategic importance in order to take advantage of our military superiority in some areas, annihilate U.S. battalions and brigades, and wipe out puppet regiments. Campaigns could occur in the forms of attack or counterattack.
2. Stepping up guerrilla warfare to a high level, annihilating small parts of the enemy's manpower, wearing down and dispersing the enemy, smashing the sweeping operations, defeating the "pacification" scheme, protecting the lives and property of the people, and threatening the cities and the important enemy bases.
3. Attacking the enemy's rear-services bases, depots, airfields, ports, and headquarters organs.
4. Completely blocking the enemy's important water and land routes, creating a status of interdiction, surrounding the enemy, forcing the enemy to take the defensive in each area, on each battlefield, and in each city, and weaken their ability to send reinforcements.
5. Stepping up military activities in the city, in the forms of small operations combined with political struggle or large operations combined with offensives and uprisings.
6. Carrying out combat operations combined with military revolts, and carrying out military proselyting and puppet proselyting, especially puppet proselyting, on a strategic scale, thus creating conditions for bringing about disintegration, dissidence, and military revolts.

The six strategic operational modes were contents of the offensive strategy and manifested positiveness, initiative, and resolute, continuous attacks to annihilate the enemy troops and maintain and expand our mastery in all places and at all times, by means of appropriate forces and operational forms. Those modes were combined with one another on a strategic scale throughout the South and on each battlefield of the liberation war in order to attain the strategic objectives and advance to the carrying out of a general offensive and general uprising.

1967

23 to 26 January: The Party Central Committee holds its 13th Plenum and issues a Resolution on stepping up the diplomatic struggle.

Because of the continuous defeats of the enemy our Party adopted the policy of launching a diplomatic offensive to accompany the military and political offensives, in order to more strongly condemn the barbarous crimes of the U.S. aggressors, expose their bogus peace initiatives, emphasize our just cause, inevitable victory, and reasonable stands (the four points of the Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and the five points of the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam), and win the stronger sympathy and support of the people of the fraternal socialist nations, of the international communists' and workers' movement, of the national liberation movement, and of the peace-loving and justice-loving people of the world, including the American people.

In January 1967 the 13th Plenum of the Party Central Committee met to discuss that matter.

The conference observed that the implementation of the 11th and 12th plenums of the Party Central Committee had resulted in great victories in all regards. On the international front the struggle movement of the world's people against the U.S. war of aggression and in support of our people's just struggle became increasingly widespread and increasingly stronger. Our diplomatic struggle attained initial results.

Our Party's policy was to "On the basis of fully grasping the motto of protracted war, mobilize and concentrate the forces of the entire nation, make all-out efforts, smash the enemy's plots, and win a decisive victory in a relatively short period of time, while also making positive preparations to defeat the enemy in the event that the war is prolonged or expanded throughout the nation."

In order to carry out our strategic decision, on the basis of continuing to build on the victories that had been won we had to step up the military struggle and the political struggle in the South, while also launching a diplomatic offensive, and combining those forms of struggle to win even greater victories.

In our people's anti-U.S. resistance war for national salvation, the military struggle and the political struggle, the principal factors which determined victory on the battlefield, served as the basis for victory on the diplomatic front. We could only win at the conference table what we had already won on the battlefield. However, the diplomatic struggle could not merely reflect the struggle on the battlefield. In the international situation at that time, and in view of the nature of the war between ourselves and the enemy, the diplomatic struggle played an important, positive, and active role.

Attacking the enemy diplomatically at that time was well-timed because we had been and were defeating the enemy, and our position was a position of strength.

The resolution also defined the motto of our diplomatic struggle as exploiting our strengths and victories, taking the initiative in attacking the enemy, and maintaining our independence while cooperating closely with the fraternal nations. On the basis of resolutely defending our independence, sovereignty, unity, and territorial integrity, it was necessary to implement our diplomatic strategy flexibly and cleverly.

For the immediate future we had to concentrate on the slogan of demanding that the U.S. unconditionally and permanently end its bombing of, and all other acts of war against, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. Only then could we begin to participate in official talks with the U.S.

The Resolution of the 13th Plenum of the Party Central Committee once again demonstrated the skilled, wise, all-round leadership of our Party. It appeared at an opportune time and clearly and accurately defined the significance, objectives, missions, slogans, and strategy of our diplomatic struggle and served as the compass for all diplomatic activities. Our close combination of the military struggle, the political struggle, and the diplomatic struggle exacerbated the contradictions between the U.S. and the other imperialist countries, created division within the ranks of the U.S. rulers, weakened the morale of the U.S., puppet, and vassal troops, won additional international support for our struggle goals, exposed the obstinacy of the U.S. imperialists, and contributed to the convening of the Paris Conference on Vietnam and the ultimate victory of that Conference.

19 March: The sapper combat arm makes the date of President Ho Chi Minh's visit its tradition day.

Fully understanding the Party's military line and carrying on and developing our brave, resourceful fighting methods the sappers, who were formed into independent sapper teams and units during the anti-French resistance war, rapidly came of age and achieved outstanding feats of arms from the very first days of the anti-U.S. resistance war for national salvation.

When our Party adopted the six strategic operational modes the sappers were officially recognized as a combat arm of the Vietnam People's Army.

On 19 March 1967 President Ho Chi Minh visited the sapper combat arm. He watched a unit practice tactics and combat techniques and gave very basic instructions regarding the combat arm's development and combat. That date, 19 March 1967, is regarded as the sapper combat arm's tradition day.

In the anti-U.S. resistance war for national salvation the sappers grew rapidly, operated on all battlefields, and became a special, elite combat arm with very brave, creative, resourceful, and unique fighting methods. They used the small to defeat the large and few to defeat many; the more they fought the stronger they became, and the more they fought the more victorious they were. They developed the sapper art to a very high level in the military art of our army and our people.

The sappers participated in killing tyrants and eliminating spies, attacked the enemy's "pacification," defended the local political and armed bases, effectively supported the guerrilla warfare movement and political struggle of the masses, attacked the enemy's headquarters organs military bases, depots, airfields, ports, key roads, etc., annihilated an important part of the enemy's manpower, and participated in the offensive and counteroffensive campaigns of the main-force troops. At times serving as the sharp spearheads of coordinated-combat arms

formations and at times carrying out independent campaigns, they achieved many glorious feats of arms.

The sappers fought tens of thousands of large and small battles, annihilated more than 30,000 of the enemy (including tens of thousands of Americans, vassals, pilots, and technical personnel); wiped out 9 division command posts and 17 brigade or regimental command posts; wiped out 10 enemy battalions and 100 companies; destroyed more than 6,000 aircraft of the various kinds, 1,600 artillery pieces, 30 missile launchers, nearly 9,000 military vehicles (including 1,300 tanks and armored vehicles), 2,7 million tons of bombs and ammunition, and more than 600 million liters of gasoline; sunk or damaged more than 400 ships and combat boats; blew up more than 100 buildings, ranging from three to seven stories, occupied by U.S., puppet, and vassal officers; and destroyed hundreds of bridges.

During the spring of 1978 the sappers, coordinating closely with our soldiers and people in the South, carried out simultaneous surprise attacks on 64 municipalities and large cities in the South; along with the other units and the people took the city of Hue and held it for a long time; took dozens of the most important strategic objectives in Saigon, such as the U.S. Embassy, the Presidential Palace, the puppet General Staff, the radio station, etc.; and contributed to, along with the entire army and the entire population, striking a decisive blow against the "limited war" strategy and upsetting the U.S.-puppet strategic position.

Between 1969 and 1974 the sappers overcame many difficulties; resolutely held their ground on the battlefields, especially in the municipalities and large cities; built infrastructures in the cities and in the outskirts, attacked many enemy regiments and divisions, depots, airfields, subsectors, and district capitals; contributed to, along with the entire army and the entire population, defeating the U.S. imperialists' strategy of "Vietnamizing the war"; and deservingly punished the enemy for violating the Paris Agreements.

During the victorious General Offensive and Uprising of the spring of 1975, all of the main-force sappers, local sappers, rear-area sappers, rangers, and frogmen participated in the fighting from the very first minutes to total victory, participated in the large-scale battles of the regular troops, took many important bridges and staging areas, outstandingly fulfilled the missions assigned them, supported the strong, rapid assaults of the corps which penetrated deeply, annihilated the enemy in the municipalities and large cities, and coordinated with the navy and infantry in liberating a number of islands of the homeland.

In the course of combat and development, the sappers held high the glorious tradition of an elite, special combat arm which was "absolutely heroic, resourceful and bold, and fought effectively and won big victories."

The National Assembly and the Government presented awards to the sapper combat arm on 3 June 1976. Forty-two units and 58 cadres and men in the combat arm were awarded the glorious designation "Hero of the People's Armed Forces."

October 1966 to April 1967: The 1966-1967 winter-spring victory smashes the enemy's second strategic counteroffensive.

After they were heavily defeated during the 1965-1966 dry season and suffered one heavy defeat after another in both parts of our country during the 1966 rainy season, the U.S. imperialists continued to be obstinate and subjective, and still hoped for a military solution on the battlefield. Therefore, during the 1966-1967 dry season, after they increased their troop strength and stepped up their attacks against the North, they launched a new, even larger counteroffensive. The basic strategic objectives of that counteroffensive were similar to those of the first strategic counteroffensive, but it was carried out in different ways. This time, the U.S. was very hopeful of winning important "search and destroy" and "pacification" victories in order to bring about a turning point and win a decisive victory in a short period of time.

During the 1966-1967 winter-spring period the U.S. and the puppets had a very large force totalling 983,000 men (389,000 Americans and 52,000 vassals), with 9 divisions, 9 regiments, and 20 battalions (6 U.S. divisions, 3 U.S. regiments, 2 puppet divisions, and 2 puppet regiments), 3 702 airplanes, 2,676 tanks and armored vehicles, and 1,805 artillery pieces.

During that second counteroffensive the enemy launched 895 large and small operations (31 percent were attacks on our base areas to annihilate our main-force units, 41 percent were sweeping operations in support of "pacification," and 25 percent were siege-relieving and defensive in nature), which were concentrated in eastern Nam Bo. There were three key battles:

In Operation Attleboro, three brigades were used to attack the Duong Minh Chau war zone between the beginning of November 1966 and 24 November 1966.

Operation Cedar Falls, which involved three U.S. brigades and three puppet brigades (18 battalions), was carried out in the Trang Bang-Ben Suc-Cu Chi "Iron Triangle" area from 8 January to 26 January 1967.

Operation Junction City, the largest operation carried out in any one area during the war, was carried out in the Duong Minh Chau war zone between February 1967 and 16 April 1967 with a force made up of seven U.S. brigades and two puppet brigades (26 battalions), with the objectives of wiping out our headquarters organs, annihilating our main-force units, destroying our stockpiles, encroaching on, dividing, and destroying our base area, and blockading the border.

Having gained momentum from their victories during the previous dry season and rainy season, our soldiers and people in the South, taking the initiative and making outstanding efforts, launched one attack after another against the enemy in all places.

At the beginning of the dry season in the Mekong Delta, on 18 October 1966, we attacked Go Quao in Rach Gia; on 15 January 1967 we smashed Operation Deckhouse 5 carried out by the U.S. and its puppets in Thanh Phu (Ben Tre); in the Central Highlands we launched the Sa Thay 1 operation (18 October to 6 December 1966), after which we attacked the enemy continuously in three provinces but continued to concentrate on the Sa Thay River; in Interzone 5 we launched a spring offensive

in northern Quang Ngai from 28 January to 14 March 1967 and many other activity cycles; and in Tri-Thien, on 9 December 1966 our troops wiped out the An Lo strongpoint in Thua Thien, then attacked the enemy at An Cuu, Gio Linh, La Vang, and Tu Ha. On 20 March 1967, for the first time we used heavy artillery in Vinh Linh to shell the U.S. bases at Con Tien and Doc Mieu, killing many Americans and destroying many war facilities.

Meanwhile, in the key area of the U.S. counteroffensive all three of their large operations were broken up, including Operation Junction City, the largest operation carried out by U.S. troops during that counteroffensive. On a battlefield only 400 square kilometers in area they concentrated a force of 40,000 to 50,000 troops, along with many aircraft, artillery pieces, and armored vehicles, in hopes of winning a decisive victory. But they suffered their greatest defeat (nearly 14,000 of the enemy, most of them Americans, were killed, 167 airplanes were shot down or destroyed, and more than 1,000 military vehicles, including more than 300 tanks and armored vehicles, and 90 artillery pieces, were destroyed).

In addition to fighting the enemy on the outer perimeter, the revolutionary armed forces in the South continually attacked the enemy's headquarters organs, such as the attack on the Long Binh depot, the artillery shelling of a U.S.-puppet military parade in the middle of Saigon, the attacks on the enemy bases at Soc Trang, Can Tho, and Vinh Long, and the raids on the Tan Son Nhat, Play Cu, and Da Nang airfields.

The results were that during the 1966-1967 dry season we knocked out of action 151,000 of the enemy (including 68,200 Americans and 5,540 vassals), wiped out 22 infantry battalions (including 9 U.S. battalions and a South Korean battalion), 4 U.S. artillery battalions, 12 mechanized battalions (including 10 U.S. battalions), and 187 miscellaneous companies (including 59 U.S. companies and 7 South Korean companies), destroyed 1,627 tanks and armored vehicles, 2,107 trucks, and 308 artillery pieces, shot down or destroyed 1,213 airplanes, and sank or set afire 42 ships and boats.

The U.S.-puppet "search and destroy" mission failed, so they achieved nothing in their "pacification" mission, although they threw into that effort 90 percent of the puppet troops and many U.S. and vassal troops, tens of thousands of specially trained thugs, millions of dollars, and hundreds of tons of bombs and shells.

The defeat suffered by the U.S. imperialists during that winter-spring period were all-round defeats, both militarily and politically. The defeat was manifested not only in their great losses on the battlefield but, more important, in the complete bankruptcy of the "search and destroy" and "pacification" objectives they had set for that strategic counteroffensive.

Our 1966-1967 winter-spring victory was a victory of great significance in the anti-U.S. resistance war for national salvation. It demonstrated the iron-like revolutionary will of the soldiers and people of the South and the North, who were determined to defeat the U.S. aggressors.

That victory was the result of our Party's correct, scientific political line and military line. It signified the outstanding maturation of our soldiers and

people, and proved that we were certain to win a complete victory over the U.S. aggressors, no matter how many more U.S. expeditionary troops they sent in. The 1966-1967 dry season victory truly created great prospects for our people's anti-U.S. resistance for national salvation.

2 to 13 May and 20 November to 1 December 1967. The International Court of Bertrand Russell conducts a trial of the criminal acts of the U.S. imperialists.

In 1966, while the U.S. imperialists were committing extremely barbarous crimes in Vietnam, at the initiative of the English scholar Bertrand Russell an international court was convened in London on 15 November 1966 to conduct a trial of the U.S. war crimes, in order to stay the bloody hand of the U.S. and support the just struggle of the Vietnamese people.

After sending four court delegations to carry out direct studies in North and South Vietnam and gather witnesses and documents, the Bertrand Russell international court held its first session from 2 to 13 May 1967, with 300 eminent people from many countries in attendance.

The court unanimously concluded that the U.S. government had committed the crime of aggression in Vietnam, and that the governments of Australia, New Zealand, and South Korea were accomplices. The U.S. government had committed war crimes and had systematically bombed civilian targets in the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.

In its second session in Copenhagen, the capital of Denmark, from 20 November to 1 December 1967, the court concluded that the U.S. wanted to practice genocide in Vietnam not only to intimidate the Vietnamese people but also to threaten the people of the world. The genocidal policy and acts of the U.S. were aimed not only at the Vietnamese people but at mankind as a whole. The U.S. deliberately used the most barbarous weapons, which had been prohibited by international law, to murder children, women, and ordinary people in Vietnam. The U.S. had committed aggression in Laos in the form of a neocolonial war, and had maliciously committed aggression against Kampuchea by continually slandering, provoking, and threatening it.

The Bertrand Russell court did not mete out punishment, for it did not represent any particular country, but its conclusions had the effect of a verdict of political and moral guilt which had profound influence in the world and contributed to awakening the conscience of the world's people, especially the American people, in order to promote the struggle of the American people against the acts of aggression of the U.S. imperialists in Vietnam.

The victory of those two court sessions was proof of the isolation of the U.S. imperialists. That was the first time the war of aggression, and the crimes, committed by the U.S. imperialists, had been comprehensively and systematically condemned by a large group of well-known lawyers, historians, scholars, and journalists from many countries, including the U.S., and had great persuasive force with regard to world opinion, especially opinion in the Western countries.