

our country. They used 1,177 U.S. tactical aircraft (1,400 at the greatest point), which was 40 percent of the U.S. tactical air force, and 193 B.52's -- 45 percent of all U.S. B.52's. They mobilized 14 warships, which amounted to three-fourths of the 7th Fleet, and 5 or 6 aircraft carriers, 50 percent of the U.S. aircraft carriers. (Not including the Saigon puppet air force, the U.S. aircraft used in Vietnam equalled the combined total of the three strongest West European air forces: England, 600 aircraft; France, 475 aircraft, and West Germany, 500 aircraft, a total of 1,575 aircraft.)

During the second quarter of 1972 sent 1,500 sorties against the North, including 270 B.52 sorties. During the third quarter of 1972, there were 22,000 sorties, including 910 B.52 sorties; and during the fourth quarter of 1972, there were more than 17,000 sorties, including more than 2,100 B.52 sorties.

In June 1972 the Political Bureau of the Party Central Committee met and concluded that "The U.S. imperialists have brazenly resumed their war of destruction in the North of our country and are carrying out large-scale air and naval attacks. They are plotting to halt our offensive and uprisings in order to limit the victory of our soldiers and people, save the 'Vietnamization' strategy, and prevent the situation on the southern battlefield from worsening. The Nixon clique is going all-out to carry out that plot, in part because of their belligerent, obstinate nature and in part because the international situation is undergoing new, complicated changes. Our people must always be stalwart, heighten their vigilance, positively keep up their guard, and continue to fight and win under all circumstances. Our determination will contribute importantly to encouraging the revolutionary forces and the world movement to intensify their struggle against the U.S. imperialist aggressors and force them to pull back."

When the war was once again expanded to both parts of the country, the soldiers and people of the North, under the leadership of the Party, calmly and rapidly changed over all activities to a wartime footing. Our people's armed forces resolutely retaliated against the enemy air force and navy. The people's air-defense work was carried out urgently, especially evacuation and dispersion in the municipalities, cities, and key communications zones. With a spirit of brave, stubborn combat, and with many resourceful, skilled fighting methods, in a period of only 1 month -- between 6 April and 8 May -- we shot down 90 enemy airplanes, set afire or damaged more than 20 enemy warships, and captured a number of enemy pilots, while also keeping the strategic routes open in order to aid the front. In the first feat of arms in Quang Binh-Vinh Linh, on 6 April, we shot down 10 U.S. airplanes, and on 19 April we used fighter plans to damage an enemy destroyer off the coast of Quang Binh.

In order to defeat the enemy's plot to blockade our coast and strangle the North, we had very strong determination, and shifted most of our import volume from the sea to railroads and roads, while also developing initiatives, detecting and destroying bombs and mines, maintaining maritime transportation on appropriate scales, and urgently building the pipeline systems. Thanks to a whole series of resolute, positive, and creative measures on the communications and transportation front, in 1972 the volume of cargo transported to the battlefields increased 1.7 times over 1971, and the volume to the distant battlefields increased by 1.4 times. At the end of August 1972 the U.S. intelligence organ had to report to Nixon that "despite

very fierce bombing, the sending of people and equipment to South Vietnam has not been appreciably reduced."

After more than 7 months of combat, by December 1972, the soldiers and people of the North had shot down more than 600 U.S. airplanes, including the 4,000th airplane shot down in the North, 20 B.52's, and 5 F.111's captured many pilots, and sunk or set afire nearly 100 U.S. warships.

Because of his heavy defeats in both the South and the North, on 22 October 1972 Nixon had to order a halt to the bombings and shellings north of the 20th Parallel. That act was also intended to win over public opinion at home and abroad and help himself in the presidential election. But at the same time the U.S. used its air force and navy to concentrate on stopping our communications and transportation South of the 20th Parallel. The volume of bombs and shells the enemy used to attack that small area was not smaller than the volume of bombs and shells they had used to attack the entire North. Every day they sent out 250-300 fighter-bomber sorties and 18 to 27 B.52 sorties.

Our air-defense forces, with a strong spirit of vigilance, meticulous combat organization measures, and tight guidance, continued to defeat the enemy in both combat and ensuring communications and transportation. In 56 days and nights, from 23 October to 17 December, we shot down 40 enemy airplanes. Especially, during the night of 22 November air-defense missile troops in Nghe An shot down 2 B.52's and gained much valuable experience in shooting down of B.52's when they were taking strong countermeasures. With regard to transportation, despite fierce interdiction by the enemy the volume of cargo reaching the main battlefields attained the plan norm.

Immediately after the enemy halted their bombing north of the 20th Parallel, the Party Central Committee and its Military Commission reminded our soldiers and people to always be on guard against the enemy. The Military Commission concluded that "The enemy will concentrate on fiercely bombing the area south of Thanh Hoa, and there is a strong possibility they will resume the bombing of the North. Therefore, while continuing to guide the fighting to protect our supply lines to the South, we must maintain our vigilance and always be prepared to fight in the North in order to put up an effective resistance when the enemy resume their bombing."

In view of the enemy's stalling tactics and crooked dealings at the Paris Conference, on 27 November 1972 the High Command ordered the armed forces to step up their preparations for combat and also observed that "There is a strong possibility that the enemy will resume their attacks in all parts of the North at a more intense level, including the use of B.52's to violently bomb Hanoi and Hai Phong," and that therefore "the mission of the air defense-air force armed forces branch is to concentrate all capabilities on annihilating B.52's

Carrying out the directive of the Party Central Committee and the order of the High Command, our air-defense forces stepped up their preparations and urgently deploy forces to defend the key objectives, especially Hanoi. In the municipalities and cities we urgently supervised evacuation and dispersion, the strengthening of shelters, and the organization of observation and warning. By 4 December 1972

our soldiers and people north of the 20th Parallel had essentially completed preparations and were ready to cope with the enemy if they resumed the bombing. The air-defense forces were ordered to maintain a high degree of combat-readiness.

Just as we had predicted, after he was reelected to the presidency (8 November 1972, Nixon and his clique obstinately began to threaten, obstructed proceedings, and caused the talks to be broken off. During the night of 18 December the U.S. imperialists brazenly launched the largest strategic air raids against the North of our country in "Operation Linebacker II." They concentrated a large number of airplanes, used B.52's as the main assault force, and attacked Hanoi, Hai Phong, and a number of other areas, in order to:

-- Devastate a number of populated areas, especially in Hanoi and Hai Phong, in hopes of creating confusion among the people, bringing pressure to bear to force our people to weaken a number of provisions of the draft agreement and have to return to the Paris Conference in a position of weakness.

-- Destroying our economic and national defense potential in order to cut off at the source of supply for the front and to disrupt our plan to prepare for future large-scale fighting in the South.

--Inflict manpower and material losses on us to threaten the countries which were struggling against the U.S. imperialists and also to cause us to lose much time in overcoming the aftereffects after the war had ended, and therefore be unable to continue the resistance war in the South. Therefore, they would ensure that the puppet army and administration would have a rather stable period in which to strengthen their forces.

The enemy's plot was very cunning and their actions were very barbarous. For 12 straight days and nights they launched 663 B.52 sorties and 3,884 sorties by fighter-bombers, and continually attacked Hanoi, Hai Phong, and Thai Nguyen, the key lines of communication, and the large supply depots at Kep and Dong Mo on Route 1 north. They haphazardly bombed hospitals, housing areas, schools, bus stations, and railroad stations, and inflicted many losses on our people (2,368 dead, 3,526 wounded). In the Hanoi area alone the enemy concentrated 444 B.52 sorties, 66 percent of the total number of B.52 sorties, and more than 1,000 fighter-bomber sorties, 27 percent of such sorties during the bombing campaign.

Our soldiers and people, especially those in Hanoi, deservingly punished the enemy for their escalated, barbarous attacks. Because we had made very good preparations, in the very first battle our air-defense forces shot down the enemy's B.52 bombers. Although they sought all ways to deceive us and used countermeasures, organized tight formations, coordinated many types of airplanes which operated at both high altitudes and low altitudes, attacked at night and then attacked all the next day, and used many types of bombs and missiles, including "smart bombs," they still suffered a disastrous defeat. During the 12 days and nights of the raids, 81 enemy airplanes were shot down, and 44 pilots were captured. Of the plans shot down, 34 were "trump card" B.52's and 5 were F.111 variable-wing "all-weather penetrators." During those days of fierce challenge, our air-defense forces achieved outstanding accomplishments. Many localities achieved great feats of arms, such as Hanoi, which shot down 30 U.S. planes.

Coordinating with the fighting against the enemy airplanes, our people in the capital and in the other cities calmly and actively carried out evacuation and dispersion according to plan, thus reducing losses to people and property.

Th 12 days and nights of combat and victory in the skies of the north, especially the skies over the capital, at the end of 1972 were the air-defense campaign which annihilated the greatest numbers of the enemy's modern strategic airplanes, and attained the greatest strategic effectiveness, in the fight to defend the North and in our people's enterprise of resisting the U.S. for national salvation. It was the first campaign in the world that annihilated large numbers of the enemy's B.52 bombers and struck the heaviest annihilating blow against the U.S. strategic air force in the history of its development and aggression.

We prevented the raids from attaining their strategic goal. General Eisler, former Deputy Chief of Staff of the U.S. Air Force, had to admit that "We believe that North Vietnam has developed the most experienced air-defense forces in the world. Clearly, they are more experienced than any other country in launching SAM missiles to shoot down airplanes. They are also more experienced than any other military force in the use of ground radar," and that "in all but a few cases, our airplanes were shot down because the enemy caught them completely by surprise." A research group at Cornell University in the U.S. concluded that "The victory of the Vietnamese people is an unparalleled example of the victory of human intelligence over machines."

In the second war of destruction, Nixon concentrated very large forces, escalated rapidly, and attacked us fiercely by means of very cunning schemes. But, once again, they were heavily defeated. Above all, we defeated the enemy's plot to cut off the North's aid to the South, which was the foremost objective of the U.S. imperialists in their war of destruction against the North. We also defeated their plot to destroy the North's economic and national defense potential, to paralyze the North, and to shake our will and weaken our prestige.

The great victory of our soldiers and people in defeating the second war of destruction, and particularly their glorious victory in defeating the U.S. imperialists' strategic air raids, contributed importantly to the common victory, and had the effect of squashing Nixon's desire to "negotiate from a position of strength" and forcing the U.S. imperialists to deescalate, stop their bombing and shelling north of the 20th Parallel after 30 December 1972, and return to the Paris Conference in a position of weakness and isolation. During that session Kissinger himself had to blurt out to our delegates, "You are not only heroic but are also intelligent."

27 July: The Conference of European Communist and Workers' Parties in Solidarity With the Vietnamese People meets in Paris.

The barbarous war crimes of the U.S. imperialists gave rise to strong, broad waves of world support for Vietnam's resistance to U.S. imperialist aggression. All of progressive mankind, including progressive Americans, angrily condemned the Nixon administration and resolutely demanded that it end the war of aggression, unconditionally withdraw all of its troops back to the U.S., and negotiate seriously on the basis of our reasonable, rational solution.

Against that background, on 27 July 1972 the Conference of European Communist and Workers' Parties in Solidarity with the Vietnamese People met in Paris. Participating in the conference were 27 delegations, including delegations from the Eastern Europe socialist countries and delegations representing the communist and workers' parties in Western Europe and Northern Europe.

In his speech opening the conference, Georges Marchais General Secretary of the Central Committee of the French Communist Party, introduced the heroic struggle and great victories of the Vietnamese people and denounced the extremely barbarous war crimes of the U.S. aggressors. Victoriously concluding its discussions, the Conference of European Communist and Workers' Parties approved an important declaration regarding Vietnam.

The declaration severely condemned the Nixon administration for continuing to commit aggression in South Vietnam and for escalating its war against the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and committing extremely barbarous crimes against the people in both parts of our country, while also intensifying the war against the people of Laos and Kampuchea. The declaration stressed that "Today, no mission is more noble or urgent than supporting the people of Vietnam, Laos, and Kampuchea and denouncing the U.S. war crimes in Indochina."

The declaration resolutely supported the just, rational recommendation of the Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and the Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Republic of South Vietnam and stated that "The communist and workers' parties of Europe demand that the U.S. government immediately end its bombing and all other acts of war against the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, abandon its blockade of the ports of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, stop its genocide, without delay and unconditionally withdraw the U.S. troops and U.S. weapons from South Vietnam and all of Indochina, abandon its support for Thieu, and end all intervention in the internal affairs of Vietnam, Laos, and Kampuchea." Finally, the declaration appealed for communists, the working class, and the democratic and peace forces all over Europe to strengthen their solidarity with and support for the struggle for independence and freedom of the people of Vietnam and Indochina."

The Conference of European Communist and Workers' Parties and its declaration were outstanding events in the movement of the world's workers and people for solidarity with the Vietnamese people, and were important, necessary, and timely acts of support for the Vietnamese people in their opposition to the escalation by the U.S. imperialists. By means of the conference's declaration, the communist and workers' parties of Europe expressed the resolute support of the communists, the working class, and the socialist countries of Europe, and of the progressive people all over Europe, for the just cause and correct stand of our people in their anti-U.S. resistance war for national salvation. The convening of the conference, its declaration, and the ardent speeches by the leaders of the fraternal parties at the conference served to strongly inspire our soldiers and people to enthusiastically rush forward to completely defeat the U.S. aggressors.

10 August 1972: Conference of Foreign Ministers of the Nonaligned Nations meeting in Georgetown recognizes the legal status of the Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Republic of South Vietnam.

In August 1972 the people of the three Indochinese countries receive the great support and encouragement of the Conference of Foreign Ministers of the Nonaligned Nations, which met in Georgetown, the capital of the Republic of Guyana, near the U.S. At that conference, representatives of 59 nonaligned countries, reflecting the will of nearly half the nations of the world, with a total population of more than 1 billion, concentrated on discussing and approving many resolutions regarding opposition to old-style and new-style colonialism, opposition to the imperialists' wars of aggression, and peace and national independence.

The conference solemnly recognized the legal status of the representative of the Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Republic of South Vietnam and the representative of the Government of the Kampuchean National Solidarity Kingdom in the family of nonaligned countries, which was opposed to imperialism and in favor of defending national independence and peace, and refused to recognize the representatives of the Saigon puppet regime and the Phnom Penh puppet regime, which were lackeys of the U.S.

The recognition by the Georgetown Conference of the legal status of the representative of the Provisional Revolutionary Government and the representative of the Government of the Kampuchean National Solidarity Kingdom in the family of nonaligned nations was an important political victory of the Vietnamese people and the people of the three Indochinese countries. That victory of the national, democratic, and peace forces contributed to the collapse of the "Nixon Doctrine" and was also a strong blow against great-nation expansionism and big-nation hegemonism of Beijing, which gave no consideration to the vital interests of the other countries. It amounted to strong, precious support for us and inspired the people of the three Indochinese countries to persist in and promote the anti-U.S. resistance war for national salvation until complete victory was won.

27 January 1972: Paris Agreement on Vietnam signed.

By October 1972, because of the obstinacy of the U.S. the peace talks regarding Vietnam had gone on 4 years without any progress being made. In order to enable the talks to quickly produce results, during the separate meeting on 8 October 1972 our side made a very important move by submitting a draft "agreement to end the war and restore peace in Vietnam" and recommended that the agreement be signed immediately.

Our initiative put the prolonged talks on the right track. The U.S. Government had to admit that the draft agreement submitted by our side was a truly important and very basic document which made possible a quick solution.

After many days of negotiation, on 17 October 1972 we and the U.S. agreed on nearly all of the problems, on the basis of our draft agreement. In a message sent to our Premier on 20 October 1972 and 22 October 1972, the U.S. President praised our good will, confirmed that the agreement could be regarded as complete, and expressed satisfaction over our Government's explanations.

But then the U.S. deliberately held things up. After twice requesting that the timetable for signing the agreement, on 23 October the U.S. side, making the excuse of difficulties in Saigon, demanded that the talks continue and said nothing about living up to its pledges.

On 26 October 1972 we issued a "Declaration of the Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam on the present situation of the Vietnam peace talks." The declaration reviewed the developments during the talks and the main points of the agreement about which agreement had been reached, and exposed the lack of seriousness and good will on the part of the U.S., which had created a very serious situation and threatened the restoration of peace in Vietnam.

Having been defeated in both South Vietnam and North Vietnam, and having suffered an especially heavy defeat in their strategic air raids against North Vietnam during the last 12 days of 1972, the belligerent U.S. imperialists were subjected to the very strong pressure by the American people and the world's people, who demanded that they immediately end their bombing and sign the peace agreement. On 30 December 1972 the Nixon administration had to announce a return to the situation prior to 18 December 1972. In other words, it had to cease the bombing and shelling north of the 20th Parallel, beginning at 0700 on 30 December 1972, so that the Paris Conference could resume.

The private meetings between comrade Le Duc Tho and Kissinger were resumed on 8 January 1973. From a position of overwhelming strength we persistently struggled to maintain the basic contents of the draft agreement agreed to on 20 October 1972.

This time, Kissinger had to lower his voice. The Nixon-Kissinger clique had to admit the painful truth that in South Vietnam there were two areas of control, two administrations, two armies, and three political forces. On 12 and 13 January 1973 essential agreement was reached on the draft agreement. On 15 January 1973 the U.S. government had to announce the "cessation of all offensive military actions, including bombing, shelling, and mining," in the North of our country.

On 23 January 1973 the Agreement was signed by comrade Le Duc Tho and Kissinger. On 27 January 1973 the Agreement was officially signed by the Foreign Minister of the parties participating in the Paris Conference. The Agreement went into effect on 28 January 1973.

The contents of the Agreement met all four basic demands that we had made in the past:

-- The U.S. had to respect the independence, sovereignty, unity, and territorial integrity of Vietnam.

-- The U.S. had to withdraw all U.S. and vassal troops, dismantle the U.S. military bases, and pledge not to continue its military involvement or intervene in the internal affairs of South Vietnam, so that the people of South Vietnam can determine their own political future.

-- The U.S. imperialists and the Saigon administration had to recognize the Provisional Revolutionary Government as one of the "two South Vietnamese" sides, and had to acknowledge the fact that in South Vietnam there were two administrations, two armies, and two areas of control.

-- The U.S had to pay war reparations.

What was most painful to the U.S. imperialists was that they had to acknowledge the fact that North Vietnamese would not withdraw from the South, and acknowledge the existence and legal status of the Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Republic of South Vietnam.

On 2 March 1973, 12 delegations of the governments of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, the Republic of South Vietnam, the Soviet Union, the U.S., England, France, and China, the Saigon puppet administration, and the four countries in the International Commission for Control and Supervision held an international conference on Vietnam. The conference approved an Act which acknowledged the agreement and the protocols regarding Vietnam and guaranteed that they would be strictly and fully carried out. That Act signified a setback for the U.S., for not only the U.S. but the whole world recognized the existence of a revolutionary government in South Vietnam, and the end of the war in Vietnam was a demand not only of Vietnam but of the whole world. Never before had there been signed a document regarding the basic national rights of a nation's people which had been attentively observed by the nations and people of the world, as was the Paris Agreement on ending the war and restoring peace in Vietnam. It was also the result of the longest negotiations in this century, negotiations which lasted 4 years and 9 months and included 202 open sessions and 24 private meetings.

The signing of the Paris Agreement was a brilliant victory the patriotic struggle of the people and soldiers of the South and the North of our country. Our people's national salvation enterprise -- full of hardship and sacrifice, but extremely glorious -- achieved basic results of broad, profound significance.

With the victory of the Paris Agreement on Vietnam, the revolution in the South of our country entered a new phase; a new situation appeared in the South, an extremely important change with regard to the comparison of forces; the position and strength of the revolution were much greater than the position and strength of the clique of traitorous lackeys. That situation created very favorable conditions for our people in the South to continue to advance to completing the national democratic revolution.

The victory of the signing of the Paris Agreement also created extremely favorable conditions for the North. Building on its heroic revolutionary tradition, under peacetime conditions, and with the promoting of socialist construction, the North would be able to do an even better job of fulfilling its historic mission as the great rear area of the great front line.

Chapter V

From 27 January 1973 to 30 April 1975

Crating the Position and Strength to Advance to the Completion of the People's Democratic National Revolution, the Liberation of the South, and the Victorious Conclusion of Our People's Anti-U.S. Resistance War for National Salvation With the General Offensive and Uprising of the Spring of 1975.

1973

29 March: Our country is rid of aggressor troops. The headquarters of the U.S. expeditionary army must fold its flag. The last U.S. and vassal troops withdraw from South Vietnam.

To wage their war of aggression, at the highest point the U.S. imperialists had in the South 535,000 U.S. troops, who accounted for 68 percent of the infantry, 60 percent of the Marines, 32 percent of the tactical air force, and 50 percent of the strategic air force, of the U.S. Counting troops who were stationed outside the country but who participated in the war in Vietnam, they used more than 800,000 U.S. troops, and in the course of the war 6 million U.S. troops served in Vietnam. Furthermore, the U.S. brought troops of five vassal countries to the South to help them serve as the backbone for more than 1 million puppet troops. At the highest point the vassal troops included 50,000 South Koreans, 13,000 Thai, 7,000 Australians, 2,000 Filipinos, and 600 New Zealanders.

The glorious victory of our soldiers and people forced the U.S. imperialists to unilaterally withdraw their troops, and those of their vassals, from our country.

On 15 March 1973 the headquarters of the U.S. ground forces in Vietnam concluded a flag-folding ceremony "with a prayer for the mistakes the U.S. may (!) have committed" (AFP, 15 April 1973).

On 29 March 1973 the headquarters of the U.S. expeditionary army held a flag-folding ceremony after which Weyand, commander-in-chief of U.S. troops in South Vietnam, joined the last 2,501 U.S. troops to silently leave Tan Son Nhat airfield. The U.S. units left under the supervision of Vietnam People's Army Officers serving in the Four-Party Joint Military Commission.

More than 18 years previously U.S. troops came to South Vietnam to wage an declared war, but now, having been defeated and "battered and bruised," they had to silently retreat. As far as the U.S. Army was concerned it was "a war without brilliant victories, one which did not produce national heroes," but was "the greatest disaster in the history of the U.S. Army" (Newsweek, 5 February 1973). From the date of the first U.S. death, on 22 December 1961, to 30 April 1975, according to official U.S. statistics (although far from the truth), 56,245 American were killed, 303,640 were wounded, and 1,300 were missing. Twelve U.S. generals were killed, and 8 others wounded, on Vietnam battlefields.

When the U.S. expeditionary army packed up to leave, the vassal troops had to go along with them. On 29 March 1973 the last South Korean and Filipino soldiers left our country. On the South Vietnam battlefield the U.S. imperialists wanted to use the troops of U.S. vassals not only because they were "cheap" but also to reduce their military difficulties and political isolation. However, that lackey army could not save the U.S. from defeat, and what we witnessed was the bankruptcy of the U.S. policy of "using Asians to fight Asians" and the weakening of the U.S.

The U.S. committed aggression a total of 18 years and 10 months, from 1 June 1954, when the U.S. military delegation commanded by the CIA agent Col. Lansdale began to

fulfill its mission of "waging an unconventional war in South Vietnam" and "waging a secret war in North Vietnam," to 29 March 1973, and that is not counting prior to that, when the U.S. helped France wage war against us. Between 29 March 1973 and 30 April 1975 continued to command and aid the Saigon puppet army, to the day it completely collapsed. From its initial involvement to the time when it had to completely withdraw from our country, Vietnam was the longest and largest war of aggression, and also the worst defeat, in the 200-year history of the U.S. Army.

With the withdrawal of the U.S. expeditionary troops and the troops of the U.S. vassals from South Vietnam there were no aggressor troops in our country for the first time in 115 years, since 1858, when the French colonialists began to commit aggression against our country. The comparison of forces on the southern battlefield was changing increasingly in our favor. The Saigon puppet army and administration became increasingly confused and unconfident. That was an extremely favorable condition for us to win complete victory.

21 February: The Laotian patriotic forces win a major victory: the signing of the "Agreement to Restore Peace and Achieve National Conciliation" in Laos.

The defeats of the U.S. imperialists and their lackeys in all these Indochinese countries, especially on the Vietnam battlefield, strongly affected the political-military situation in Laos. Because of the continuous victories of the revolutionary forces in Laos between 1970 and 1972, especially the Plaine des Jarres-Xieng Khoang, Attopeu-Saravann-Bolovens Plateau, and Route 9 victories, the U.S. imperialists and their lackeys in Laos were forced to deescalate the war and negotiate with the Laotian revolutionary forces.

In October 1972 negotiations began in Vientiane between a delegation of Laotian patriotic forces representing the Laotian Patriotic Front and the Laotian patriotic neutralist forces on the one hand and a delegation representing the Vientiane government on the other hand.

After 5 months of negotiating, because of the correct stand, persistent attitude, and good will of the delegation of the patriotic forces, and its all-out efforts to reach a peaceful solution to the question of Laos, on 21 February 1973 the two sides signed the "Agreement to Restore Peace and Achieve National Conciliation in Laos" in Vientiane.

The Agreement recognized the basic rights of the Laotian people: independence, sovereignty, unity, territorial integrity and the right of self-determination of the Laotian people; ended all military acts and aggression by the U.S. and its Thai lackeys in Laos; and called for the withdrawal from Laos of all U.S. and Thai troops. It acknowledged the actual situation in Laos -- that there were two areas temporarily controlled by the two sides -- and that the internal affairs of Laos would have to be resolved in a spirit of national conciliation and in accordance with the principle of equality, with neither party coercing or taking over the other party. The Agreement also declared that the declaration on Laotian neutrality of 9 July 1961 and the 1962 Geneva Agreements on Laos were the proper bases of the independent, peaceful, and neutral Laotian foreign policy, and that

therefore the relevant parties in Laos, and the governments of the U.S., Thailand, and the other countries had to fully respect and strictly implement the Agreement. The Agreement called for the achievement of national conciliation, the observance of democratic rights, and the holding of truly free and democratic elections to elect a National Assembly and an official national coalition government in Laos.

Although the U.S. imperialists had to take a step backward, they had not abandoned their intention of maintaining their new policy in Laos. They encouraged the extremely reactionary Sanakikone lackey clique to impede and sabotage the signing of the protocol on which the two sides had reached agreement, continually violate the ceasefire, continually launch attacks against the patriotic forces, and carry out a reactionary coup d'etat on 20 August 1973. But that coup was unsuccessful.

The patriotic forces defeated all acts of sabotage by the reactionaries and persistently struggled to achieve peace and national conciliation. Therefore, on 14 September 1973, in Vientiane, the representatives of the patriotic forces and the Vientiane government signed the Protocol of the "Agreement to Restore Peace and Achieve National Conciliation in Laos" in order to resolve the specific political and military problems remaining after the signing of the Agreement on 21 February 1973.

Following the signing of the "Agreement to End the War and Restore Peace in Vietnam," the signing of the "Agreement to Restore Peace and Achieve National Conciliation in Laos" signified a basic defeat for the "Laoization" policy and "intensified special war" strategy of the U.S. imperialists. It was an important step toward the bankruptcy of the policy of "using Indochinese to fight Indochinese and using Asians to fight Asians" of the "Nixon Doctrine" in Laos. Along with the recently won victory of the Vietnamese people, that great victory of the Laotian people contributed importantly to expelling the aggressive imperialist powers from the Indochinese Peninsula.

The signing of the Agreement, the revolutionary struggle of the heroic Laotian people was a major turning point. On the basis of the comparison of forces increasingly favoring the Laotian revolution, the Agreement provided the strong preconditions for the struggle of the Laotian people to advance to the winning of complete victory.

13 October: The Party Central Committee holds its 21st Plenum, delineates the line toward completing the liberation of the South.

Beginning in March 1973 the Political Bureau, in addition to guiding the battlefields and guiding the strengthening of our forces, urgently began preparations for the 21st Plenum of the Party Central Committee, in order to determine the direction and policies with regard to fulfilling the people's democratic national revolution, liberating the South, and unifying the homeland.

In April 1973 comrade Le Duan, General Secretary of the Party Central Committee, expressed to the Political Bureau extremely important opinions in preparation for the Party Central Committee Plenum to discuss the revolutionary situation and missions in the new phase and the completion of the people's democratic national revolution in the South. On the basis of evaluating our victories and the enemy's

defeats during the 18 years of the anti-U.S. resistance war, comrade Le Duan concluded that the U.S. imperialists had been defeated, and had withdrawn 'never to return.' "At present, the U.S. imperialists want to achieve a stand-off in South-east Asia and in Vietnam, and want to transform the Saigon administration from a lackey administration into a dependent administration. In the North, the U.S. intends to come in economically in order to exert influence.

In June 1973 the Military Commission of the Party Central Committee issued a resolution on "The important new situation and missions," analyzed the developments in the situation since the Paris Agreement, predicted possible developments in the situation, and set forth the military guidelines and missions, and the major policies, with regard to the North and the South.

Also in June 1973 the Political Bureau met with the Party committee secretaries and commanders of the battlefields to discuss the drafting of the Political Bureau's report to the Party Central Committee. Embued with the spirit of that Political Bureau meeting, the Central Office, South Vietnam [COSVN] held its 12th conference in September 1973, and the Standing Committee of the Interzone Party Committee and the Military Region 5 Party Committee met in July and August 1973 to promptly bring about a strong transformation in the situation.

In October 1973 the whole Party Central Committee held its 21st Plenum and issued a resolution on "The great victory of the anti-U.S. resistance war for national salvation and the revolutionary missions in the South in the new phase." Our Party Central Committee listened to a report by the Central Committee and reviewed 18 victorious years of our people's anti-U.S. resistance war for national salvation and isolated the laws for winning victory -- the most decisive factors among which were always maintaining, consolidating, and strengthening the Party's leadership; the strategic offensive concept, knowing how to resolutely attack while knowing how to win step-by-step victories, gradually pushing back and defeating the enemy, and consolidating the revolutionary battlefield in order to win complete victory; the method of revolutionary violence, based on political and military forces and achieved by means of the forms of military struggle, political struggle, and diplomatic struggle, combined in a very active and flexible manner; combining mass uprisings with revolutionary warfare, uprisings with attacks, and attacks with uprisings; fighting the enemy in all three strategic areas by means of three spearheads, combining the three types of troops, combining guerrilla warfare with conventional warfare, combining large battles, medium battles, and small battles, and achieving mastery in order to annihilate the enemy and annihilating the enemy in order to achieve mastery; fighting for a long period of time, becoming increasingly stronger as we fight, and fighting while building and developing our forces; and attacking the enemy from a small scale to a large scale and from a low level to a high level. All of those forms and measures constitute a unified whole, are organically interrelated to one another, and create the combined strategy and military art of Vietnamese people's war.

Our Party always held high two banners -- the banner of independence and the banner of nationalism and socialism -- and closely combined the revolutionary missions in the two parts of our country, to attain the common goals of completing national independence, unifying the homeland, and advancing to socialism. Those laws for winning victory were very clearly manifested in our Party's revolutionary line and revolutionary war.

The Party Central Committee agreed unanimously with the assessment of the June 1973 resolution of the Military Commission, which had been approved by the Political Bureau. According to that assessment, there were two possibilities: because our active struggle on the political, military, and diplomatic fronts, we could gradually force the enemy to carry out the Paris Agreement on Vietnam and peace would be restored; or we would have to wage a difficult, fierce revolutionary war to defeat the enemy and win complete victory.

The Party Central Committee affirmed that "The revolutionary path of the South is the path of revolutionary violence. No matter what the situation, we must maintain the offensive strategy line."

According to the Party Central Committee, "The basic mission of the revolution in the South in the new phase is to continue to implement the strategy of the people's democratic national revolution, achieve national solidarity, struggle against the U.S. imperialists and the ruling comprador capitalist, bureaucratic, militarist, fascist clique, an effective tool of the U.S. imperialists which is ruling in the area controlled by the enemy, gradually push back and defeat the enemy until we eventually eliminate the U.S. lackey administration, eliminate the neocolonial regime, set up a truly democratic and national administration, achieve national conciliation, escape completely from dependence on the U.S., and achieve a South Vietnam that is peaceful, independent, democratic, neutral, and prosperous, and advance to the peaceful unification of the homeland."

The motto and operational mode of the revolution in the South was to firmly grasp the concept of strategic offensive, but the struggle forms, offensive tactics, and defensive tactics had to be applied flexibly and astutely, depending on the time, the specific circumstances of each area, or even each particular struggle, while maintaining and developing our forces in all respects, disintegrating and weakening the enemy's military and political forces, and causing the comparison of forces between ourselves and the enemy to change to our advantage. We absolutely had to be strong both politically and militarily in all three strategic areas.

The Party Central Committee defined the motto of military activity as follows: "We must resolutely counterattack and attack the enemy and maintain and develop our initiative in all regards, in order to defeat the enemy's 'pacification' and encroachment plans, especially in the lowland and contiguous areas." "The application of that motto must be tied in with the requirement of winning control of the population and winning the right of mastery, in order to gain the strength with which to defeat the enemy," but it had to be based on the specific circumstances of each area.

The 21st Plenum of the Party Central Committee, which was meticulously prepared by the Political Bureau, was a very timely meeting which was held only 9 months after the signing of the Paris Agreement and was one of the Party's historically significant plenums. On the basis of recapitulating and isolating the principal laws for winning victory during the 18 years of the anti-U.S. resistance war, the Party Central Committee made a major decision to complete the democratic national revolution in the South. The resolution of the 21st Plenum of the Party Central Committee was a very basic guidance resolution of the Party after the victory of the Paris Agreement. It would bring about a transformation of the situation, from the

victories in the latter part of 1973 and in 1974 to the general offensive and uprising of the spring of 1975, the completion of the victory of the anti-U.S. resistance war, the liberation of the South, and the unification of the nation.

In October 1973 and March 1974 the Military Commission of the Party Central Committee, implementing the resolution of the 21st Plenum of the Party Central Committee, issued resolutions assessing the situation and setting forth our military position.

In its resolution of October 1973 the Military Commission observed that since June 1973, because we promptly overcame our deficiencies and made all-out efforts, we had annihilated an important part of the enemy's manpower, maintained our vast liberated areas and base areas, and maintained our strategic pressure on the enemy. Some places had been able to disrupt the enemy's encroachment plans and maintain the liberated enclaves in the lowlands. With regard to building up our forces, we were able to rectify some of the deficiencies of the armed forces, especially the main-force units, and surpassed the plan norm regarding the transporting of supplies to the battlefields. With regard to the revolutions in the neighboring countries, we actively helped Laos and Kampuchea to continue to win victories.

However, there were some policies we were not yet able to carry out, so we still allowed the loss of population and land; had not yet been able to overcome the imbalance between the main-force troops and the local troops and between the concentrated forces and the military and guerrilla forces; the rate of the build-up of the strategic rear area was still slow; and difficulties were being encountered in building up the liberated areas. With regard to the fighting, we had not yet closely coordinated fighting at the front with deep penetration behind enemy lines, and had not yet coordinated the fighting with the political struggle. The Military Commission of the Party Central Committee sternly pointed out that "The principal reason is that we have deficiencies, not that the enemy is strong."

The Military Commission stated that our military objectives and operational guidelines for the coming period would be to, on the basis of fully understanding and implementing the resolution of the Party Central Committee, coordinate closely with the political, diplomatic, and legal struggles; concentrate on defeating the enemy's "pacification" plan in the lowland and contiguous areas; defeat their encroachment plan; hold the liberated enclaves; recover the areas taken by the enemy; expand and selectively consolidate our liberated area; disrupt the enemy's plan to blockade us economically; positively encourage self-sufficiency production; simultaneously fight, consolidate, and improve the fighting quality of the armed forces; prepare in all ways, including the preparation of the battlefield, in order to be prepared to fight on a large scale when the opportunity arises; and positively assist the revolutions in Laos and Kampuchea.

In its resolution of March 1974 the Military Commission set forth the guidelines for the next few years: "Our emphasis will be on inflicting an important defeat on the enemy's 'pacification' and encroachment plans, and on winning control of the population and winning mastery in the lowlands and in the outskirts of the large, prosperous cities. We must gradually advance the political struggle movement in the cities, while also preparing base-level forces and creating conditions and opportunities for bringing about a revolutionary high tide. The main-force troops must simultaneously fight and build, gradually increase the scale of the

annihilating battles, and simultaneously fight and monitor the enemy's reactions, in order to take prompt counter-measures. We must consolidate, build, and hold the liberated areas and base areas in the South. We must endeavor to restore and develop the economy, and build the North so that it is strong economically and defensively and prepared to defeat all enemy plots. We must completely change the comparison of forces to our advantage, weaken and imperil the enemy, and force them to adhere to the agreement and implement it step-by-step or face a major defeat. At the same time, we must create conditions, grasp the opportunities, and be prepared to take the initiative in coordinating three fists -- the rural areas, the cities, and the main-force troops -- in order to transform the situation unexpectedly and rapidly, so that the enemy do not have time to react, and win the greatest possible victory for the revolution."

After the 1972 strategic offensive, in each of the strategic areas our armed forces carried out a series of offensive campaigns and defensive campaigns, on scales of from three to six divisions, concentrated in a certain direction, in a relatively large area, and over a long period of time.

As they entered the new phase, our armed forces in general and our main-force troops in particular were stronger than ever but were organized only up to the division level. In the final phase of the war it would be necessary to organize one large campaign after another. Those campaigns would take place very urgently; the forces would operate continuously and would move rapidly in a large area of operations and from one battlefield to another; and the forces participating in the campaigns would be very large and consist of many armed forces branches and combat arms with strong technical equipment, which had the goal of annihilating large enemy units in order to conclude the war. The formation of main-force quan doan [corps] was extremely necessary in order to fulfill that historic mission.

The Party Central Committee adopted the policy of organizing strategic quan doan, beginning on 24 October 1973 with the formation of 1st Quan Doan, which consisted of a number of infantry divisions and combined-arms units and was stationed in the northern provinces.

On 17 May 1974 there was formed 2nd Quan Doan, consisting of a number of units fighting in the Tri-Thien zone.

On 20 July 1974 there was formed 4th Quan Doan, consisting of a number of units fighting in eastern Nam Bo.

The main-force forces in the Central Highlands, which had long concentrated many divisions in large campaigns under the command of a front command, were victorious, liberated Buon Ma Thuot and the entire Central Highlands area and annihilated most of the forces of the enemy's II Corps. On 27 March 1975 most of the divisions there were organized into the 3d Quan Doan, a strategic binh doan [corps] which participated in the historic Ho Chi Minh campaign, which liberated Saigon.

In the General Offensive and Uprising of the Spring of 1975, the strategic mobile quan doan were truly strong main-force fists and victoriously fulfilled their campaign and strategic missions. The quan doan all achieved very great results, both in annihilating the enemy's campaign and strategic forces and in liberating large

land areas and large numbers of people, and played an important strategic role in the Central Highlands and Hue-Da Nang campaigns. Especially in the historic Ho Chi Minh campaign the quan doan coordinated with the local armed forces and the political forces to annihilate or rout more than 400,000 enemy troops, liberated a large area, including Saigon, and brought about the complete collapse of the puppet army and the puppet administration.

October 1974 and January 1975: The Political Bureau of the Party Central Committee makes and supplements a historic decision to complete the liberation of the South.

Fully understanding and implementing the resolution of the 21st Plenum of the Party Central Committee and the October 1973 and March 1974 resolutions of the Military Commission of the Party Central Committee, in 1974 our troops in the South continually attacked the enemy and won many victories.

The puppet troops had to retreat step by step to defend the cities, the lines of communication, and the strategically significant areas. They were unable to retake and had to abandon, a number of areas we had taken, such as Nha Bich and Tong Le Chan in eastern Nam Bo; Tanh Linh in Military Region 6; Dac Pet, Ta Xup, Mang Den, and Mang But in the Central Highlands; and Nong Son and Gia Vut in Military Region 5. Because the U.S. Congress cut the supplemental aid appropriation, and because he was encountering serious economic difficulties, Nguyen Van Thieu had to adopt the policy of "fighting a poor man's war," something a reactionary lackey army cannot do. In August 1974 we attacked and mastered the Thuong Duc district capital and subsector (in Quang Nam Province). The puppet army used nearly all of its strategic reserve airborne division in a counterattack lasting several months but it could not retake it and had to call off the counterattack. Its "pacification" and encroachment plan was essentially defeated.

For our part, in the South the appearance of quan doans and binh doans equivalent to quan doans, stationed in the important theaters, created a major transformation in the comparison of forces. The strategic networks, along both the eastern and western Truong Son routes, were extended to Loc Ninh, and the pipeline crossed the Central Highlands and entered Zone 5 and eastern Nam Bo. In the north, after nearly 2 years of arduous endeavor, by 1974 many economic aspects had more or less risen to 1965 levels, and we sent to the south a large number of troops of the various kinds and a large quantity of military supplies, which far exceeded the plan levels of previous years.

The messy Watergate affair dragged the U.S. into one of its worst political crises ever. Nixon was overthrown and was replaced by Ford. Ford, a president who came to power without being elected, had to continue to cut aid to the Saigon puppet regime and could come up with no effective way to save it from its peril.

The international situation was also rather complicated, especially in Southeast Asia. Because of the approaching victory of the revolutionary war in Vietnam, the imperialists and international reactionaries wanted to compete for influence in that region and wanted to restrain us, but they were still at odds with one another, had not yet reached an agreement with one another, and none of those countries was fully prepared.

The war had entered its final phase, the comparison of forces had changed -- we had become stronger and the enemy had become weaker -- and that situation allowed us to calculate and prepare a "plan to liberate the South."

On 21 July 1974, comrade Le Duan, First Secretary of the Party Central Committee, expressed some opinions in favor of a plan to liberate the South. He observed that "The present opportunity is most favorable," that it was necessary to take advantage of that opportunity to fulfill our people's historic mission. If we delayed the situation would become very complicated for us. In accordance with a directive of the Political Bureau and the Military Commission of the Party Central Committee, the General Staff urgently made all-round preparations for that strategic plan.

Between 30 September and 8 October 1974 the Political Bureau met to analyze the new strategic opportunity and made the historic decision to completely liberate the South.

Evaluating the situation, the Political Bureau noted that since the beginning of 1974 we had, by making all-out efforts in many respects, attained great results in our strategic preparations. We had maintained and strongly developed the strategic initiative and had put the enemy on the defensive on all battlefields. We had increased the strength of our armed forces, especially the main-force troops, and had overextended and weakened the puppet army, especially its mobile main-force troops, thus causing our main-force troops to be far superior to the enemy's main-force troops. We also consolidated and expanded our offensive staging areas in the key strategic areas and did a relatively good job of preparing materiel stockpiles and strategic and campaign roads.

The U.S. was encountering increasing difficulty at home and abroad. Therefore, it had to reduce its aid to the puppets and was hardly capable of jumping back into the South, and no matter how it intervened it could not save the Saigon puppet regime from collapse and could not stop the advance of the revolution in the final phase of the war.

In the cities there was a movement to demand peace, livelihood, democracy, national independence, and the overthrow of Thieu.

The new victories of the Laotian revolution and the Kampuchean revolution further strengthened the revolution in the South. The people of the world were sympathetic toward and strongly supported our people's just struggle.

We brought about a ripe strategic opportunity and created important strategic factors for winning complete victory.

The Political Bureau unanimously approved a plan to liberate the South in 1975 and 1976, and selected the Central Highlands as the principal focal point of a large-scale, widespread offensive in 1975. In the Central Highlands the enemy were relatively weak and we had many advantages for moving forces south and bisecting central Vietnam. And in that area we could fully bring into play the strength of the technical combat arms. Thus the Central Highlands were an extremely important strategic area.

The Political Bureau also directed the Military Commission of the Party Central Committee and the General Staff to monitor and reach a conclusion about the U.S. reaction to our offensive activities during the 1974-1975 dry season, and to carefully calculate our materiel, munitions, and vehicles, for our military aid had been greatly reduced and we had to have plans to produce our own and to economize in their use.

Concluding the conference, comrade Le Duan, First Secretary of the Party Central Committee, analyzed the significance of that historic strategic mission as follows:

The time had come for us to make the decision to complete the democratic national revolution in the South. That was a very crucial, very important matter. It was crucial and important because for 30 years, since we won political power, we had continually been engaged in revolution and war. During several periods in which we opposed imperialism our revolutionary war had profound historical importance and epochal significance. It rallied a large force in a strategic location and opposed the strongest, most brutal imperialist country. Now we would complete the revolution and fulfill our epochal mission throughout the nation. That would exert an influence not only in our country, but also in Southeast Asia and the world.

He continued, "We had to fully realize its importance, but also had to fully realize its difficulties and complications. But we fully considered the possibilities, the comparison of forces, and everything else in making that decision, with the knowledge, understanding, and experience of the past 30 years, not of any one individual but of all of us."

Carrying out the directive of the Political Bureau and the Military Commission, on the battlefield the 1974-1975 dry season activity began at the end of 1974. At the same time, the organs and sectors of the High Command, and the various areas and units, feverishly worked to complete all strategic preparations. Meanwhile, the Political Bureau and the Military Commission, along with the battlefield commanders, prepared for an expanded Political Bureau conference from 18 December 1974 to 8 January 1975 to confirm and supplement the final decision, in accordance with the new development of the situation.

The Political Bureau made the following analysis: "The basic development of the situation during the past 2 years has clearly been that we are in a status of victory, advance, initiative and advantage, while the enemy is in a status of defeat, decline, passivity, and difficulty. That tendency cannot be reversed. The enemy's strengths are temporary and they are beset with internal contradictions and are becoming weaker. They are weakening across the board at an increasingly greater rate. Because of our activities and their internal difficulties the enemy may go into a precipitous decline. The comparison of forces between the enemy and ourselves, nationwide as well as on the southern battlefield, has undergone basic changes which clearly benefit the revolution. We are now stronger than the enemy."

"The U.S. imperialists would find it very difficult to intervene directly. If the puppets are in danger of a complete collapse, we must be on guard against the U.S. intervening with its air force or navy, not to expand the war but to save the Saigon regime. There is little possibility that they will use infantry, but we must continually monitor their plots, be vigilant, and be prepared to react. No matter

how they intervene, we will be fully determined and able to defeat them, and they cannot save the Saigon regime from collapse."

The Political Bureau concluded:

"We now have a very great strategic opportunity and have never had better military and political conditions than at present, or a better strategic opportunity to complete the people's national democratic revolution in the South in order to advance to the peaceful unification of the homeland, at a time when the revolutionary movements in the three Indochinese countries had strong offensive momentum and were winning increasingly greater victories."

On the basis of analyzing and evaluating the situation and that strategic opportunity, applying the laws of revolutionary warfare in our country, and promptly discovering the new elements of victory, the Political Bureau made the decision to "Mobilize the greatest possible efforts of the part of the entire Party, the entire army, and the entire population in both parts of the country to, in the 1975-1976 period, step up the military struggle and the political struggle, in combination with the diplomatic struggle, and rapidly and comprehensively change the comparison of forces on the southern battlefield along lines favorable to us, very urgently complete preparations in all regards, create ripe conditions, carry out a general offensive-general uprising, annihilate and disintegrate the puppet army, overthrow the puppet regime from the central level to the local level, win political power for the people, liberate South Vietnam, achieve a peaceful, independent, democratic, neutral, and prosperous Vietnam, and advance to the peaceful unification of the homeland.

In view of the crucial, difficult, and complicated, but extremely glorious mission of our nation, the Political Bureau decided to "Mobilize all forces of the nation, unite a million people as one, overcome all difficulties, hardships, and sacrifices, and struggle heroically to advance, with very strong determination to fight and win."

The Political Bureau admonished that in the process of carrying out that strategic decision it was necessary to firmly grasp the basic laws of revolutionary war in our country: combining the military and the political, combining offensives with uprisings, and combining revolutionary war with armed uprisings are the general laws, the highest development of which is the general offensive-general uprising and the bringing into play of the combined strength of the military offensive, the political offensive, and the military proselyting offensive, in combination with the diplomatic offensive.

The Political Bureau also stressed that while the revolutionary war was becoming increasingly fierce and was being fought on an increasingly larger scale, we had to firmly grasp the law of having to annihilate and disintegrate the enemy's military forces, including manpower and war facilities, especially the regular troops, the final basis of support for the fascist lackey regime of the U.S. imperialists. For that reason, in general and as a whole the general offensive has a decisive significance, and must keep a step ahead, annihilate in order to achieve mastery, achieve mastery in order to annihilate, tighten the encirclements of the cities, and weaken -- and eventually smash -- the puppet army. Only then could favorable conditions be created for uprisings by the urban masses.

We had to grasp the laws of the mass revolutionary movement, endeavor to develop the political forces in the cities, and develop the political struggle into a high tide, in order to grasp the opportunity when conditions are ripe, and coordinate it with the general offensive and the general uprising. We had to arm the revolutionary masses and overthrow the enemy administrations in the cities.

Proselyting among enemy soldiers would also play a very important role in disintegrating the puppet army, creating an uprising movement within the puppet army, creating a dissident movement within the puppet army and administration, advance to the achievement of a worker-peasant-soldier alliance, and contribute to the victory of the general offensive-general uprising.

The Political Bureau paid much attention to the matter of the strategic opportunity. The entire year 1975 would be an opportune time, a strong offensive blow could create an opportunity the political movement could enhance the opportunity, and the situation in the world and in the U.S. afforded an opportunity. The opportunities would be on ordinary, medium, or high levels, or would occur suddenly, at a rate of "1 day equalling 20 years," so we had to act urgently and attack more rapidly, for if there was an opportunity but we did not promptly exploit it we would commit a major crime against the nation.

Therefore, in addition to the basic strategic plan covering the 1975-1976 2-year period there had to be a plan to exploit opportunities, so we prepared an additional plan and extremely important action guidance: if there was an opportunity at the beginning or end of 1975 we would immediately liberate the South in 1975. In order to exploit opportunities and develop advantages, we had to always have reserve forces and plans in the operational areas, for our actual strength was the decisive factor.

With regard to the operational guidance motto, the Political Bureau set forth the following:

1. Combining the military, political, and diplomatic struggles and fight so that the puppets collapse but the U.S. does not intervene.
2. Concentrating forces to the highest, most rational degree, attacking most strongly in the principal strategic area, striking decisive blows, and winning, by all means, decisive victories in the decisive areas.
3. Being bold, resolute, solid, active, flexible, sharp, and prompt, and maintaining absolute secrecy and surprise.
4. Grasping opportunities, fully exploiting opportunities, expanding the victories and winning the greatest possible victory.

We had to endeavor to win victory as quickly as possible, carry out the general offensive-general uprising in such a way as to limit the loss of manpower and materiel, reduce the post-war difficulties and aftereffects of the war, do a good job of preserving the economic and cultural installations and ensuring livelihood, so that we could fully utilize the raw materials and equipment in the economic and cultural development of our country after complete victory.

The Political Bureau conference of October 1974 and the expanded Political Bureau conference of January 1975 were of important historical significance. The Political Bureau very accurately analyzed the new developments in the situation, made decisions, and set forth extremely important operational guidelines for the soldier soldiers and people of the entire nation in view of the great opportunity. They were torches which illuminated the path to the great victory of the spring of 1975.

1975

December 1974 to February 1975: The dry-season campaign on the Nam Bo battlefield.

Implementing the October 1974 decision of the Political Bureau and the "two-year plan to liberate the South," and on the basis of good preparations in eastern Nam Bo, the Military Commission of the Party Central Committee and the Regional Military Commission guided the carrying out of the 1974-1975 dry-season activity campaign, the first campaign of the 1975 operational plan. During that campaign we attacked the enemy to fulfill certain key requirements in the Mekong Delta and eastern Nam Bo. On the other battlefields there were small and medium coordinated activities, principally to make additional preparations for future campaigns.

On the Mekong Delta front, the activities of Military Region 9 attained good results. Within a period of 3 months (6 December 1974 to mid-February 1975) it knocked out of action about 20,000 of the enemy, wiped out or forced the abandonment of nearly 800 bases, subsectors, and outposts (including 2 subsectors, 2 strongpoints, and 51 military subsector branches), completely liberate 27 villages, essentially liberated 36 villages and 287 hamlets with more than 400,000 people, essentially gained control of the rural areas in Vinh Tra, shattered the defensive line around Chuong Thien, consolidated and expanded the base area, and connected it with a corridor extending down from the border.

Military Region forced the abandonment of 320 outposts and liberated 193 hamlets (14 villages were completely liberated and 17 were essentially liberated) with a population of nearly 100,000. During that activity campaign the situation in the Mekong Delta underwent important transformations. We controlled 2.5 million of a total population of 7 million, 1.44 million of whom were completely liberated.

On the eastern Nam Bo front we used part of the 4th Quan Doan to carry out a campaign in the Route 14-Phuoc Long area and won a major victory. In a period of more than 20 days (12 December 1974 to 6 January 1975) we killed or captured more than 3,000 of the enemy, captured more than of the various kinds, and liberated Route 14 and the city and province of Phuoc Long (6 January 1974), the first province in the South to be completely liberated.

In the Tanh Linh-Hoai Duc area we knocked out of action 2,400 of the enemy and completely liberated Tanh Linh District and 4 villages in Hoai Duc District, with a population of nearly 35,000.

In Tay Ninh, on 7 January 1975 we took the enemy's observation post on Mt. Ba Den. In the outskirts of Saigon we completely liberated 4 villages and 37 hamlets with a total population of nearly 18,000, weakened the enemy's control, and created

favorable conditions for the regiments to remain in the vicinity.

Noteworthy was the fact that when Phuoc Long and Mt. Ba Den were lost the puppet army reacted mainly by using its air force (it used 116 fighter-bombers in concentrated attacks and 160 helicopters of the 5th Air Division) and counterattacked with mobile forces of III Corps, but the counterattack was called off when it produced no results, for their strategic mobile forces were bogged down in Military Region I and the enemy had to be on guard against our attacks in other areas. As for the U.S. imperialists, they only threatened and applied pressure from afar, such as putting the 3rd Marine Division on Okinawa on alert, threatening to resume the bombing if we attacked, and sending the aircraft carrier Enterprise from the Philippines to the South China Sea off the coast of South Vietnam. But on 9 January 1975 the U.S. Embassy informed Thieu, "We have not yet been authorized to provide U.S. air support." On 22 January 1975 Ford announced that "We will take no action other than supplemental aid to Saigon; we will not intervene in South Vietnam without following constitutional and legislative procedures." When the U.S. asked him for a clarification, Ford had to order the Enterprise to the Indian Ocean.

The results of that activity campaign were that in Nam Bo and Military Region 6 we put out of action 56,315 of the enemy, wiped out 22 battalions and 66 puppet village administrations, 1 river flotilla, and 1 armored squadron, inflicted heavy losses on 15 battalions and 4 armored squadrons, captured 12,122 weapons of the various kinds, 786 radios, 118 vehicles, and 2 airplanes, destroyed 108 airplanes, 110 ships, and 494 motor vehicles, forced the abandonment of nearly 1,550 posts (including 1 sector, 2 subsectors, 3 strongpoints, and nearly 90 military subsector branches), completely liberated 1 province, 4 districts, 72 villages, and nearly 400 hamlets, essentially liberated 55 other villages, and liberated nearly 600,000 people.

The 1974-1975 dry-season offensive won a great victory. Those victories, especially in the Military Region 9 lowlands and Phuoc Long, were very important. They signified a new decline of the Saigon puppet army. The puppet regular troops were no longer capable of carrying out large-scale relief operations to retake the important areas, bases, and cities which we took in the mountain and contiguous areas. They further demonstrated the retreat of the U.S. imperialists with regard to their intention and capability to intervene in South Vietnam. The U.S. imperialists, who were running up against major domestic difficulties and who were divided internally, responded weakly to our offensive blows. Those victories caused the rural areas which we had liberated and mastered to differing degrees to continually expand and link up with one another. Our area of operations was consolidated and moved up close to the enemy's key areas. They reflected our new capability to win major victories in a brief period of time at a rapid rate, to take and hold a city on the jungle-and-mountains battlefield, and to completely liberate a province.

Those victories were an extremely important actual basis on which the Political Bureau conference of January 1975 affirmed, supplemented, and completed its decision to complete the people's democratic national revolution in the South in 1975 and 1976, with a very bold spirit and readiness to grasp the opportunity to completely liberate the South in 1975.

4 March to 23 March: The Central Highlands campaign wins a great victory. The general offensive and general uprising throughout the South wins great initial victories.

In December 1974 Nguyen Van Thieu met with the leaders of the puppet army to predict our activities in 1975. They believed that we could fight on a larger scale than in 1974, but not as large a scale as in 1968 or 1972; that we were not yet capable of attacking large cities or municipalities and were incapable of holding them if we did take them; that we could attack such small cities as Phuoc Long or Gia Nghia; and that our principal requirements were to win control of 2 million people in the Mekong Delta and to expand our liberated area in the mountain region. They believed that our objective was to win victory in order to force them to carry out the Paris Agreements on Vietnam and that our offensive in the first part of 1975 would take place in Military Region 3, with emphasis on taking Tay Ninh to serve as the capital of the Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Republic of South Vietnam. With regard to time, they predicted that we would attack before or after Tet and last until June 1975, stopping when the rainy season began.

Because of that assessment, they did not change their "strong at both ends" strategic deployment; i.e. Military Region 1 and Military Region 3 and 4, without any reinforcement of Military Region 2 and the Central Highlands. In fact, at that time they no longer had reserve forces to send as reinforcements. The defeat at Phuoc Long had demonstrated that.

With regard to methods, they advocated striking first to upset our preparatory plan. They carried out an "urgent pacification plan" during a 3-month period beginning on 1 January 1975 to prevent us from launching a "winter-spring campaign" and ordered an alert during Tet, etc.

The enemy, with such conclusions, policies, and methods, were completely caught by surprise strategically when our general offensive began.

Carrying out the strategic decision of the Political Bureau, the Military Commission of the Party Central Committee decided to use strong regular forces to launch a large-scale offensive in the Central Highlands and concentrate the main forces in the southern Central Highlands, in order to annihilate an important part of the enemy's manpower, take Buon Ma Thuot City, liberate Dac Lac Province, and then liberate all of the Central Highlands and develop the attack down into Phu Yen and Khanh Hoa, thus achieving a strategic interdiction.

The Political Bureau and the Military Commission decided to send Senior General Van Tien Dung, a member of the Political Bureau and Chief of Staff, to directly guide and command the campaign.

In order to ensure the victory of the key, opening battle we had to create all necessary conditions for attacking Buon Ma Thuot while the enemy were off guard, in order to achieve surprise and surround and isolate them. Therefore, in the key area we had to concentrate forces larger than those of the enemy, positively carry out feints, positively mislead the enemy, divide, surround, and isolate the enemy, achieve surprise, attack very strongly, and prevent the enemy from reacting in time, or from promptly counterattacking to retake the city once we had taken it.

In that spirit, on 4 March 1975 we attacked to cut routes 19 and 21 connecting the Central Highlands with the lowlands of Military Region 5 and launched medium-scale and small-scale diversionary attacks in Play Cu and Cong Tum. Then, on 8 March, we took Thuan Man and cut Route 14 between Play Cu and Buon Ma Thuot; and on 9 March we took the Duc Lap-Nui Lua area and completely isolated Buon Ma Thuot.

On 10 March 1975 we concentrated forces consisting of 1 infantry division, 2 infantry regiments, 1 sapper regiment, 1 tank company, 2 artillery regiments, and 3 anti-aircraft regiments to launch a direct attack on Buon Ma Thuot and wiped out all of the enemy forces there, consisting of the headquarters of the 23rd Division, the 53rd Regiment (minus a battalion) of the 23rd Division, an armored squadron, an R.F. battalion and 4 R.F. companies, and 57 popular force platoons. After two days of combat we had completely mastered the city of Buon Ma Thuot and smashed a large segment of the enemy's defensive system on the Central Highlands battlefield.

On 11 March the Political Bureau met and made the following assessment: "The victories at Buon Ma Thuot, Duc Lap, on Route 19, and in the other areas prove that we are capable of winning a great victory more quickly than anticipated."

During that meeting, comrade Le Duan contributed the following opinion: "We previously estimated that it would take 2 years to liberate the South. Now, after Phuoc Long and Buon Ma Thuot, we can accelerate the pace. Were they the first steps of the strategic general offensive? We must think about that."

The Political Bureau once again affirmed that there was even less possibility that the U.S. imperialists would intervene and directed the General Staff to urgently draft a plan to liberate the rest of the Central Highlands, liberate Hue and Danang, and foresaw even greater opportunities.

The Military Commission of the Party Central Committee directed the Central Highlands Front to resolutely defeat and annihilate the enemy's counterattacks, rapidly develop its offensive, surround and eventually annihilate Play Cu, cut Route 19, and isolate Cong Tum.

The enemy, struck with a lightening blow, hastily sent the remaining two regiments of the 23rd Division and the 21st Ranger Group to counterattack, in hopes of retaking Buon Ma Thuot. After 5 straight days of fighting our troops had annihilated all of the counterattacking enemy forces, then developed their attack down into Khanh Duong and Ninh Hoa.

On 13 March 1975 the Military Commission further directed: "In the event that the enemy lose a large part of its manpower and lose the city of Buon Ma Thuot and many district capitals and subsectors, and we did a good of cutting strategic Route 19, the enemy may concentrate their remaining forces in the Central Highlands in Play Cu. We must also consider the possibility that they may be forced to carry out a strategic withdrawal. Therefore, we must surround Play Cu and make good preparations for annihilating the enemy in both eventualities."

The Military Commission's assessment was entirely correct and sharp, and was very timely. Sure enough, on the morning of 14 March Thieu went to Cam Ranh to order

the evacuation of Play Cu-Cong Tum in order to hold the coastal area and later to concentrate forces to carry out a counterattack.

On 16 March our main-force troops quickly intercepted and pursued the enemy fleeing along Route 7. Meanwhile, a unit of the Tuy Hoa local troops was ordered to block the enemy at Cung Son. By 24 March all of the withdrawing enemy troops had been annihilated. The Central Highlands campaign concluded victoriously. The puppet II Corps forces defending that area were completely wiped out. We liberated all of the strategically very important Central Highlands area of the southern battlefield.

Coordinating with the Central Highlands, the Military Region 5, Tri-Thien, and Nam Bo battlefields launched campaigns or stepped up their attacks on the enemy and won many victories.

-- Military Region 5 completed its interdiction and took many important segments of Route 19. Especially, the local armed forces attacked and liberated large contiguous areas in Quang Nam-Quang Ngai (Tien Phuoc, Phuoc Lam, Son Ha, Tra Bong, Binh Son, and Son Tinh).

-- In Tri-Thien, beginning on 8 March 1975 the main-force troops were very active in the contiguous area and, in coordination with the local troops and the militia and guerrilla forces, stepped up their activities in the lowlands area.

-- In Nam Bo, in the offensives on Routes 13 and 20, we occupied many important staging areas around Saigon, to the northwest (Dau Tieng, Suoi Ong Hung, and Cau Khoi) and to the northeast (Dinh Quan and Vo Dac), liberated Route 20, Route 3, and a segment of National Route 1 (between Long Khanh and Rung La), and threatened Xuan Loc. In the Mekong Delta we launched combined offensive campaigns, expanded the liberated area, and penetrated deeply into a number of key areas.

In the first offensive cycle, the simultaneous attacks all over the South, we victoriously carried out offensive campaigns on the battlefields, especially the strategic campaign on the Central Highlands front.

Within a short period of time we annihilated or disintegrated an important part of the enemy's manpower, essentially wiped out the puppet II Corps, smashed the enemy's political administration, liberated many important areas, especially in the strategic Central Highlands, smashed the enemy's strategic defensive position in Military Region II, and forced them to take a new step downward and change over from the strategic defensive to strategic enclaves. The battlefield situation changed. A specific strategic opportunity appeared.

On 17 March, while the Central Highlands campaign was still developing, we were certain of victory and greatly exceeded requirements. The Military Commission met to prepare for a new direction of activity in order to fully exploit the favorable opportunity we had won. On 18 March the Political Bureau met and decided to fulfill the two-year plan in 1975. It determined that the principal focus of the strategic offensive would be Saigon, but that it would be necessary to immediately annihilate puppet I Corps. It was a decision to pursue the strategic general

offensive to complete victory. The Political Bureau assigned to the Military Commission of the Party Central Committee the task of drafting a plan to carry out that new decision.

21 March to 3 April: the Hue-Da Nang Campaign wins a big victory. The offensive develops, completely liberates the central and southern Trung Bo provinces.

After its 18 March meeting, on 25 March, the Political Bureau held another meeting and observed that "In actuality, with the great victory of the Central Highlands campaign our strategic general offensive. Our repeated victories since then signify a turning point in the military-political situation in the South, which has entered the phase of great-leap-forward development."

The Political Bureau observed that "A major strategic opportunity has arrived. Never before in the 20 years of resisting the U.S. for national salvation has the situation been as favorable as it is now," and that therefore it was necessary to "grasp the new strategic opportunity, make maximum use of time, rapidly concentrate our forces in the key direction, act boldly, achieve surprise, prevent the enemy from predicting our moves in time and from having time to react, and fulfill the mission of liberating the South as soon as possible." It decided to complete the liberation of Saigon and the South before the rainy season (May 1975).

The principal strategic direction was concentrating the forces of the entire nation on liberating Saigon-Gia Dinh in order to completely liberate the South. In order to fulfill that basic mission, the immediate strategic mission would be to fight a war-deciding strategic battle to take Hue and Danang, wipe out the puppet I Corps and prevent it from withdrawing to defend Saigon, and rapidly liberate the central and southern Trung Bo provinces, while stepping up all preparations for the final war-deciding battle to liberate Saigon.

The Political Bureau and the Military Commission, on the basis of organizing the main-force units of the Central Highlands Command, decided to set up the 3rd Quan Doan [Corps] to serve as the Command's strategic mobile force and prepare to send it south to participate in the liberation of Saigon. The Political Bureau also decided to set up a Battlefield Aid Council chaired by Premier Pham Van Dong.

The Hue-Da Nang Campaign was our main activity after the Central Highlands victory. The forces participating in the campaign included more than a corps. The battlefield was divided into two zones: Tri Thien-Hue and Quang Nam-Da Nang, the principal objectives of which were Hue and Da Nang. It was a campaign which took form in the process of development from a strategic offensive to a strategic general offensive under the direct guidance and command of the Military Commission and the High Command, which stimulated its rapid development on the basis of two offensive campaigns of the two localities: the spring-summer campaign of Tri-Thien and the spring-summer campaign of Military Region 5. It was the second war-deciding strategic battle, which created conditions for the final war-deciding strategic battle, the liberation of Saigon and the entire South.

The Military Commission foresaw two possibilities and two contingency plans for the Da Nang campaign:

--First, the enemy might pull back their forces to conduct an organized, relatively solid defense of Da Nang, in which case we would use the 2nd Quan Doan and rapidly send the 1st Quan Doan south to, along with the forces of Military Region 5, carry out a large-scale combined arms operation to take Da Nang.

--Second, the enemy would be routed and suffer heavy losses, and Da Nang would be isolated. In that case we would take advantage of the opportunity, rapidly develop our attack, and take Da Nang by relying principally on our on-the-spot forces.

The Political Bureau and the Military Commission decided to set up the Quang Nam-Da Nang Front Command to command the attack in accordance with the first contingency plan, with Lieutenant General Le Trong Tan serving as Commander and Colonel Chu Huy Man serving as political officer.

The situation developed very rapidly along the lines of the second possibility.

To the north, on 17 March the High Command directed the Tri-Thien Military Region and the 2nd Quan Doan to attack earlier than planned, for the enemy there were in a chaotic state and a favorable new opportunity had appeared. The strong activity of the main-force troops and local troops of Tri-Thien, added to our victory in the Central Highlands, had caused the enemy troops in Quang Tri to panic and withdraw on 18 March, thus creating a breach in their northern defenses and creating great chaos in the Thua Thien-Hue area. On 21 March the Tri-Thien forces made deep penetrations, divided the enemy, cut off the enemy's escape route from Da Nang along Route 1, blocked the Thuan An and Tu Hien outlets to the sea, surrounded the enemy in Hue and, along with the local armed forces and the mass uprising political movement, attacked the enemy everywhere. The enemy panicked and fled in all directions. Our soldiers and people annihilated or disintegrated nearly all of the 1st Marine Division and the 147th Marine Brigade. At 1030 hours on 25 March our soldiers and people liberated the city of Hue and Thua Thien Province.

With that victory, Da Nang was seriously threatened from the north. The spring-summer campaign of Military Region 5 began on 4 March 1975. South of Da Nang, the local armed forces and revolutionary masses attacked and arose in the Quang Nam lowlands. The Quang Ngai forces won a great initial victory, liberating Tien Phuoc and Phuoc Lam districts. Because of the enemy's rapid collapse, on 23 March 1975 the Standing Committee of the Military Region 5 Party Committee decided to "liberate Military Region 5 as quickly as possible" and was determined to smash the enemy's scheme of pulling back to the Chu Lai line to defend Da Nang from the south. Combining military attacks with the strong uprisings of the masses, on 24 March we liberated Tam Ky and cut Route 1. On 25 March Quang Ngai was liberated. Then we developed our attack and took the Chu Lai base on 26 March, annihilated the entire puppet 2nd Division, liberated all of the southern part of Military Region 1, and created yet another threat to Da Nang, from the south.

The Hue, Quang Nam, and Chu Lai victories and the annihilation of the enemy's 1st Division, 2nd Division, and 147th Marine Brigade were important blows to their plan to pull back and form a large enclave in order to defend Da Nang. We had very favorable conditions for "concentrating forces to annihilate a major part of the enemy's manpower at Da Nang and winning a major victory in that war-deciding strategic battle." (Message from the Military Commission to Military Region 5 on 26 March.)

In the Da Nang area there were still many enemy troops, about 75,000 in all, consisting of 15 battalions of the 3rd Infantry Division, a Marine Division, and remnants of the 1st and 2nd divisions, the 12th Ranger Group, 15 Regional Force battalions, two Popular Force battalions and 240 Popular Force platoons, 24,000 civil guards, 5,000 policemen, the 1st Air Division with 373 aircraft of the various kinds, 7 artillery battalions (with 114 artillery pieces of the various kinds), and the 11th Cavalry Squadron (70 tanks and armored vehicles). But they were suffering a major defeat, were isolated, were experiencing a collapse of morale, were shattered organizationally, and were confused with regard to command. Therefore, the Military Commission decided to attack Da Nang in accordance with the second contingency plan, to "bypass the objectives along the way and attack Da Nang directly, as rapidly, promptly, and boldly as possible, with forces that can most quickly be sent in." (Message from the Military Commission to Military Region 5 on 26 March.)

On 28 March our heavy artillery at Mui Trai pass, at Hai Van pass, and south of Da Nang shelled the airfield, the port, the Son Tra Peninsula, and the ships taking on the fleeing enemy. DaNang became even more chaotic.

On 29 March the 2nd Quan Doan divided into three columns north, northwest, and south west of Da Nang. Along with mechanized and tank units, they fought their way into the city and took the airfield and City Hall. One element took the Son Tra Peninsula.

The forces of Military Region 5 to the south and southwest, bypassing the objectives on the outer perimeter, rapidly penetrated into the city and, in coordination with the 2nd Quan Doan, took the Da Nang air base and the headquarters of the puppet I Corps.

On the same day, the local armed forces and revolutionary masses, coordinating with the main-force troops, liberated Hoi An and a number of other places. In the city of Da Nang the guerrilla and self-defense forces coordinated in attacking the prison, safeguarding the economic production, cultural, and public welfare installations, and maintaining order and security, in order to ensure that the city could resume normal activities immediately after the liberation.

Coordinating beautifully, our main-force corps, following the orders of the High Command and the Campaign Command, strongly developed their offensive from the Central Highlands battlefield down into the central coastal provinces, along routes 19, 7, and 21. Coordinating with the mass uprising movement, the offensive forces liberated Binh Dinh Province and the city of Quy Nhon (1 April), annihilated most of the puppet 2nd Division, liberated Phu Yen Province and the city of Tuy Hoa (1 April), and liberated Khanh Hoa Province, the city of Nha Trang, and the military port of Cam Ranh (3 April).

The local troops and uprising masses in the provinces of the southern Central Highlands, along with a number of main-force units, liberated Quang Duc Province and Gia Nghia City (24 March), Lam Dong Province and the city of Bao Loc (2 April), and Tuyen Duc Province and the city of Da Lat (4 April).

During the same period of time, in Nam Bo the soldiers and people of Binh Long, attacking and arsing, took the city of An Loc, took the military subsector and provincial capital of Chon Thanh, and liberated all of Binh Long Province. The soldiers and people of the provinces of Thu Dau Mot, Tay Ninh, Long An, Long Khanh,

and Binh Tuy, attacking and arising, annihilated the military subsectors and district capitals of Dau Tieng, Dinh Quan, and Hoai Duc and a whole series of military strongpoints, and liberated a vast, integrated area north and northwest of Saigon. The soldiers and people of the Mekong Delta provinces arose, annihilated many of the enemy, wiped out or forced the abandonment of thousands of outposts, won mastery in many localities, and expanded the liberated area.

The second activity cycle, centered around the Hue-Da Nang campaign, won a very great victory. Within a short period of time we knocked out of action the puppets I Corps and Marine division, wiped out or disintegrated all of the enemy's military forces and their control apparatus, and liberated all of central Trung Bo and a number of provinces in Military Region 6 and eastern Nam Bo.

Those war-deciding strategic victories smashed the enemy's enclave strategy, prevented them from withdrawing forces to reinforce their defenses around Saigon, and outstandingly fulfilled the strategic missions assigned by the Political Bureau.

The comparison of positions and forces on the battlefield underwent a great transformation that was entirely in our favor. Two of the four enemy military regions had been eliminated. They lost nearly half of their forces, and the rest were in a hopeless situation, had poor morale, were shattered organizationally, had suffered large losses of materiel and technical facilities, and were completely deadlocked strategically and tactically. We had liberated a vast area encompassing 16 provinces and 6 municipalities and cities. Including the liberated areas in eastern Nam Bo and the Mekong Delta, our liberated area accounted for three-fourths of the area and nearly half the population of the South. The direct rear area was vast, had rich resources, and was connected with the socialist North. The combat effectiveness of our troops was greater than ever. We were capable of annihilating and disintegrating entire enemy corps and could attack and take cities with the largest enemy base complexes in the lowlands by carrying out large-scale offensives. Coming of age as they fought, the main-force quan doans were capable of rapid movement, were fully equipped, and were very experienced in combat.

Clearly, we had new, extremely favorable conditions before we entered the final war-war-determining strategic battle.

17 April: The soldiers and people of Kampuchea victoriously conclude the anti-U.S. resistance war in Kampuchea.

After their great victories in 1971 and 1972, between the beginning of 1973 and the end of 1974 the soldiers and people of Kampuchea carried out an offensive to surround Phnom Penh and place the U.S.-aided Lon Nol in an increasingly perilous position.

The spring 1975 general offensive and uprising in our country created strong repercussions on the Kampuchean battlefield. The U.S.-Saigon puppet gang and the lackey Lon Nol were extremely shaken. On the crest of the great victories of the Central Highlands and Hue-Da Nang campaigns in our country, the soldiers and people of Kampuchea broke the resistance of the Lon Nol in the outskirts and on 10 April completed the encirclement of Phnom Penh and shelled the center of the city.

On 12 April the U.S. had to carry out Operation "Eaglepull" to evacuate the last Americans from Phnom Penh.

On 17 April attacks from the north, northwest, west, east, and south smashed the defensive system of the Phnom Penh puppet army. The Lon Nol administration, a lackey of the U.S. imperialists, collapsed.

The victory soldiers and people of Kampuchea contributed to further weakening the U.S. imperialists and further bankrupted their global strategy. It was also a victory for the militant solidarity of the Vietnamese and Kampuchean people who, along with the Laotian people had fought side-by-side against the common enemy.

The victory of the Kampuchean soldiers and people at Phnom Penh was also a blow that was coordinated with the general offensive and uprising of our people, which was developing strongly on the South Vietnam battlefield. It once again clearly revealed the intention and capability of the U.S. imperialists in their intervention in the war in Indochina.

14 to 29 April: Liberation of the islands in the Paracel Archipelago occupied by the Saigon puppet army.

The Paracel and the Spratley archipelagos, situated in Vietnamese territory in the South China Sea, occupy very important positions and have long been coveted by the reactionary, expansionist rulers in Beijing.

On 20 January 1974, with the support of the U.S. imperialists, with whom they had made a deal, the Chinese used their air force and navy to take our Paracel Archipelago, which were then occupied by the Saigon puppet army. They wanted to achieve a fait accompli while our people were urgently preparing to liberate the South. They then turned over their POW's directly to the Saigon puppets.

With the occupation of the Paracel Archipelago and their invasion of part of our territory, the Beijing rulers began to openly apply their policy of expansionism against Vietnam.

Our Party vehemently protested, but in order to maintain solidarity between the two peoples, while at the same time concentrating all capabilities on the enterprise of opposing the U.S. for national salvation, we patiently recommended that the two sides hold talks to resolve that problem. The Beijing rulers not only obstinately rejected our proposal but launched a deceptive propaganda campaign, presented bogus proof in order to hold on to our archipelago, and brazenly demanded the Spratley Archipelago as well.

At the beginning of April 1975, when we were in the process of completely liberating the coastal provinces of central Vietnam and southern Trung Bo, the Political Bureau decided to quickly liberate the islands in the Spratley Archipelago that were occupied by the Saigon puppet army, and regarded that as a very important mission. On 4 April 1975 the Military Commission of the Party Central Committee assigned that mission to the Command of Military Region 5 and to the Naval Command.

Urgently and strictly carrying out that order, and taking advantage of a favorable opportunity, during the night of 13 April and 14 April 1975 the forces of Military Region 5 and the Navy liberated Song Tu Tay Island, and during the night of 28 and early morning of 29 April completed the Nam Yet, Son Ca, Sinh Ton, Truong Son, and An Bang islands.

The decision to liberate all of the islands in the Spratley Archipelago occupied by the Saigon puppet army was a very sharp and timely policy of our Party, and was an important victory which stopped the expansionist plot of the reactionary clique in the Beijing ruling circles and of the imperialists and other reactionaries to occupy those islands of ours before we did. That victory created favorable conditions for the great undertaking of building and defending our country after the South was completely liberated.

9 April to 2 May: The historic Ho Chi Minh Campaign wins a complete victory and completely liberates the South.

On 1 April the Political Bureau of the Party Central Committee held a meeting. After evaluating the victory that had been won and analyzing the situation, it concluded that "With regard to both strategy and military-political forces, we have sufficient strength to overwhelm the enemy troops, while the puppet army faces the peril of collapse and annihilation. The U.S. has proved to be completely impotent, and even if it increases its aid it cannot save the puppets from collapse. The revolutionary war in the South has entered a phase of great-leap-forward development and the strategic opportunity for carrying out a general offensive and general uprising in the enemy's lair is ripe. At this moment, the final war-deciding strategic battle of our soldiers and people to complete the people's democratic national revolution in the South and unify the country has begun."

Our country's revolution was developing more seethingly than ever, at the rate of 1 day equalling 20 years. The Political Bureau made the following decision: "Grasp the strategic opportunity, with the guiding thoughts of marvelous speed, boldness, surprise, and winning certain victory; and complete the general offensive and general uprising as soon as possible, preferably in April 1975, and not be tardy."

In order to carry out that decision, the Political Bureau decided such major things as the action motto, stepping up activities to the west of Saigon and in the Mekong Delta, rapidly sending forces from the north to eastern Nam Bo, and organizing unified leadership and command for both the Nam Bo battlefield and the campaign to liberate Saigon-Gia Dinh. It decided to concentrate forces to ensure that the historic war-deciding battle won complete victory.

For the enemy's part, after they lost Military Region 1 and Military Region 2 they estimated that it would be 2 more months before we would be able to resume our offensive, so they adopted the policy of organizing a distant defense line, hold all of Military Region 3 and Military Region 4, hinder and slow down our offensive until the rainy season, and the retake a number of areas they had lost in order to negotiate with us. Phan Rang was an important anchor in that defensive position, so the enemy concentrated there a force of more than two divisions, including

infantry, air force units, airborne troops, and Rangers under the direct command of the forward headquarters of the puppet II Corps.

They gathered together the remnant troops, reorganized their remaining forces, restored the units that had suffered heavy losses, and redeployed their forces, in order to fundamentally improve their defensive position in the Saigon-Gia Dinh area and in the Mekong Delta.

Around Saigon, to the north, the northwest, and the southwest, they deployed in each direction a division or a reinforced division. To the east their defensive force was gradually increased to 9 regiments and brigades of infantry, airborne, and Marine troops, and 4 armored regiments.

Saigon-Gia Dinh proper was defended by a number of airborne, Ranger, and armored units, the base defense forces, and the forces of the "Capital Special Zone." Three air divisions provided direct support in the Saigon-Gia Dinh area.

In the Mekong Delta the enemy still had three infantry divisions, 5 armored regiments, and an air division, concentrated to defend the Tan An-My Tho area.

In order to help the lackeys prolong their death throes the Ford administration set up an emergency air lift to transport weapons and equipment to the puppet army.

On the crest of our victories, taking advantage of the enemy's confusion and disintegration and in order to continually develop their attack and create a favorable position for the attack on Saigon, on 9 April our troops launched a strong attack to the east and entered Xuan Loc. At the same time, to the southwest our armed forces, in coordinating with the revolutionary masses, attacked the system of outposts, subsectors, and district capitals, thus creating a staging area for our main-force units and surrounding and dividing the enemy. That activity campaign disintegrated and annihilated additional enemy forces but did not fulfill the requirements that had been set.

On 14 April 1975 the Political Bureau approved a plan for an offensive campaign to liberate Saigon-Gia Dinh -- the "Ho Chi Minh Campaign" -- a large-scale combined arms campaign which would combine attacks and uprisings to take the enemy's final lair. It would be a historic strategic war-deciding campaign to conclude our people's great anti-U.S. resistance war for national salvation.

In accordance with the Political Bureau and the Military Commission, the reinforced 2nd Quan Doan moved south along the coast to participate in the campaign to liberate Saigon. On its path of advance that quan doan annihilated all of the enemy troops defending Phan Rang on 16 April, liberated Ninh Thuan Province and then, in coordination with uprising mass forces, liberated Binh Thuan Province and Phan Thiet City (19 April) and Binh Tuy Province and Ham Tan City (22 April). On 21 April the enemy troops at Xuan Loc had to withdraw and we liberated Long Khanh Province.

The U.S.-puppets were confronted with imminent annihilation and collapse from which they could no longer be extricated. They were, in their words, "in a situation of

real peril, with a life expectancy that can be calculated by the day or week, not by the month."

On 18 April, the U.S. President ordered the evacuation of Americans from Saigon. On 21 April Thieu had to resign and was replaced by Tran Van Huong in order to conform to the constitution, but in fact that was a way of turning his office over to Duong Van Minh, with whom they thought we would agree to negotiate. But on 23 April, in a speech at Tulane University, Ford declared that "as far as the United States is concerned, the Vietnam War is over."

By 26 April 1975 the main-force columns and technical combat arms had assembled on schedule in the various directions:

--To the northwest the reinforced 3rd Quan Doan coordinated with the armed forces of Tay Ninh and Saigon-Gia Dinh.

--To the north and northeast there was the 1st Quan Doan, reinforced with sapper, tank, and anti-aircraft units.

--To the east and southeast there were the 4th and 2nd quan doans, reinforced with artillery, tanks, anti-aircraft artillery, sappers, and commandoes.

--To the west and southwest there were the main-force 232nd Group of the South and the main-force units of Military Region 8, forces which were the equivalent of a corps.

--In the outskirts of Saigon and in the city proper there were sapper units and artillery units which had the missions of attacking airfields, ships, enemy fire-support bases, etc., in coordination with the mass political forces.

To the rear we urgently organized new reserve forces: infantry, anti-aircraft artillery, etc.

We concentrated forces that were sufficient to overwhelm the enemy.

On 26 April, Tran Van Huong turned over the presidency of the puppet administration to Duong Van Minh.

At 1700 hours on 26 April our forces to the east and southeast launched their attack on the enemy's eastern defense line. After 2 days of fighting we took Ba Ria, Long Thanh, the armored school at Nuoc Trong, and Trang Bom, and shelled and paralyzed Bien Hoa Airbase. Sappers infiltrated and took the Rach Chiec and Dong Nai bridges. The Command of the puppet II Corps fled to Go Vap. We continued to advance in the direction of Bien Hoa.

To the southwest, Group 232 took the Ben Luc-Tan An, Trung Luong-Tan Hiep, and Cai-Lay-An Huu segments of Route 4, which was completely blocked.

To the northwest we cut Route 22 (between Bau Nau and Tra Vo) and Route 1 (between Phuoc My and Trang Bang).

On 28 April, Duong Van Minh announced that he was assuming the presidency. At 1700 hours on the same day five A37's we had captured from the enemy bombed Tan Son Nhat airfields, then used artillery to interdict and paralyze the enemy's air evacuation, forcing the U.S. to carry out a "daredevil" helicopter evacuation. By the end of 28 April the puppet General Staff and strategic and tactical command organs had disintegrated, which caused the command structure of the puppet army to collapse.

On 29 April we launched a general offensive all along the front. After a day of fighting we had shattered and taken the bases on the outer perimeter of Saigon-Gia Dinh, cut off and annihilated the puppet main-force divisions and prevented them from withdrawing, and took staging areas from which to advance into the city. Our soldiers and people, squashing Duong Van Minh's plot to call for "a ceasefire and negotiations to turn over the government," resolutely carried out the order of the Political Bureau and the campaign command: "Continue to advance into Saigon according to plan, advance with the greatest possible vigor, liberate and occupy the city, disarm the enemy troops, dissolve the enemy's administration at the various levels, and thoroughly smash all enemy resistance."

During the day, from all directions the corps and units advanced rapidly and took such key objectives as Tan Son Nhat airfield, the puppet General Staff, the headquarters of the Capital Special Zone, the naval base, the Bach Dang port, the radio station, and the national police headquarters, and annihilated or routed all of the puppet main-force units. A joint unit of the 2nd Quan Doan took "Independence Palace" at 1045 hours, captured the entire puppet central administration, and forced the enemy to declare an unconditional surrender. The victorious unit raised the revolutionary flag on the roof of the puppet presidential palace, called ironically "Independence Palace," at 1130. That signified the end of the lackey regime of the U.S. imperialist aggressors.

The offensive campaign to liberate Saigon-Gia Dinh -- the historic Ho Chi Minh Campaign -- had won total victory. Our people's anti-U.S. resistance war for national salvation had won total victory. Our 30-year-long liberation war against imperialist aggression, under the leadership of the Party, had won total victory.

In addition to the military attacks, millions of people arose and, along with the armed forces, annihilated, routed, or forced the surrender of all remaining forces of the puppet army and administration and completely liberated Nam Bo.

On 29 April we liberated Hau Nghia.

On 30 April we liberated Long An, Binh Duong, Tay Ninh, Can Tho, Tra Vinh, Soc Trang, Rach Gia, Bac Lieu, and Phu Quoc Island.

On 1 May we liberated Vinh Long, Ben Tre, My Tho, Go Cong, Kien Tuong, Ca Mau, Long Xuyen, Sa Dec, Chuong Thien, and Con Dao.

On the morning of 2 May we liberated Chau Doc. The general offensive and general uprising of the spring of 1975 had won a complete victory.

--We completely smashed the gigantic military and police apparatus of the Saigon puppet army and administration, which the U.S. had provided with modern equipment,

and annihilated and routed more than 1 million troops and 1.5 million civil guards. The enemy forces included 4 corps, 13 infantry divisions, 18 ranger groups, 6 air divisions, 22 armored regiments, 66 artillery battalions, and all police, regional force, and civil guard forces.

--We captured or destroyed all of the enemy's weapons, war facilities, equipment, military bases, warehouses, airfields, and ports.

--We disintegrated the puppet administrative apparatus -- a very large control apparatus the U.S. imperialists had built up over a period of over 20 years -- from the central level down to the village level, and wiped out hundreds of military subsectors, thousands of subsector branches, and nearly 8,000 outposts.

--We completely liberated the South and captured many municipalities and cities almost intact. The lives of the people returned to normal immediately after the revolution took over.

The resolution of the Fourth Party Congress comprehensively and profoundly analyzed the victory of our people's anti-U.S. resistance war for national salvation. That victory "was a great turning point in our nation's history. It gloriously concluded a 30-year process of war to liberate the country and defend the homeland, beginning with the August Revolution, and permanently removed the ruling yoke of imperialism which had existed in our country for more than a century, brought about permanent independence for our country, and unified our country and advanced it to socialism. That victory defeated the largest and longest neocolonial war of aggression since World War II, upset the global strategy of the leading imperialist country, placed the U.S. in the most difficult situation ever, shrunk and further weakened the imperialist system, strengthened the outpost of socialism in Southeast Asia, expanded and strengthened the socialist system, and further enhanced the strength and offensive status of the revolutionary forces of the world."

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