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MILITARY AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC SECURITY

HANOI RADIO CARRIES ARTICLE BY LT GEN HOANG MINH THAO

Hanoi Domestic Service 31 Jul, 1-3 Aug 78 BK

[Four part article by Lt Gen Hoang Minh Thao; "The Art of Drawing up Battle Plans." published in the July and August issues of TAP CHI QUAN DOI NHAN DAN]

[31 Jul 78]

[Text] What Are Battle Plans? Dear Comrades and Friends: In our country, in all wars against aggression thus far our people have always had to cope with big, powerful enemies. To defeat these enemies, in addition to developing the strength of the entire country, our people have paid utmost attention to developing the art of fighting the aggressors to defend the country. Our people have long studied and applied the art of formulating battle plans in order to set up lethal and strong battle dispositions. Relying on these battle plans, our people have been able to use a few men to defeat many. If we have powerful forces, our victories will be even greater.

Looking at the history of our struggle against aggression both long ago and, in particular, in the two resistance wars against the French and the United States, we realize that our people's art of formulating battle plans is excellent. Our people traditionally have been experienced in using their battle plans in very imaginative ways to defeat aggressors stronger than them. This is a prominent aspect of Vietnam's art of fighting aggressors to defend the country.

To present this subject, in the July and August issues of TAP CHI QUAN DOI NHAN DAN, Lt Gen Hoang Minh Thao has written an article on this subject entitled: "The Art of Drawing up Battle Plans." This article comprises four major parts: Part I "What Are Battle Plans?"; Part II "Bases on Which Battle Plans Are Drawn Up"; Part III "Requirements for Drawing up Battle Plans," and Part IV "Stratagems and Battle Plans."

Comrades and Friends, to help you to understand this subject and apply and develop it in the new situation with a view to achieving combat readiness

and fighting to defend the fatherland, we would like to present the major points of this entire article by Lt Gen Hoang Minh Thao. In this broadcast, we would like to report on Part I of the article entitled: "What Are Battle Plans?"

All our Vietnamese people are proud of the glorious military exploits of our ancestors on the Bach Dang River, in the Chi Lang Mountain Pass, in Dong Da and elsewhere. Each of these military exploits reflected the lethal and strong battle dispositions which our ancestors used to annihilate the aggressor enemies to defend the beloved fatherland. On the Bach Dang River, Ngo Quyen and Tran Hung Dao set up battle positions, planted wooden stakes on the riverbed, deployed troops in ambush on river banks, and used troops to provoke the enemy and lure them to the battleground that had been prepared along the river just when the tide was subsiding. Consequently, tens of thousands of enemy troops and thousands of large vessels were completely destroyed by our armed forces which had smaller numerical strength and smaller vessels.

In the Dien Bien Phu campaign, we took up positions in the mountains and attacked enemy troops in the valley. The enemy troops were numerous, had solid fortifications and were supported by aircraft in their resistance to us. We attacked the enemy troops by surprise, destroyed one enemy fortification after another, controlled the enemy airfield, dug trenches to infiltrate deeply into the enemy combat positions, split the enemy troops to destroy one enemy outfit after another, and then conducted a general offensive to destroy the enemy troops as a whole.

Using these two examples, we realize that to implement battle plans means deploy our forces, develop our unit formations and organize our equipment and battlefields in a specific combat area to cope with the enemy according to our combat stratagems. In common words, the art of implementing battle plans is the art of deploying troops and setting up battlefields. Battle plans play a decisive role in determining the evolution and result of each battle or campaign and each armed struggle as a whole. Well prepared battle plans will result in increasing the strength of our forces. Therefore, with small forces, we will be able to defeat larger, enemy forces. Conversely, with a poor battle plan a strong force can only be passive, confused and suffer losses.

President Ho once compared a battle array with a shuttlecock whose force could exceed its own weight by manyfold if it was properly struck. In the history of wars, there were many cases in which a small army which stood in a dangerous position cleverly deployed its forces and excelled in directing the tide of battle, thus gloriously defeating larger armies. In war, there may be a great many different types of battle plans. Each combat aspect may use a different battle plan. An offensive has its own battle plan; an ambush has its own battle plan; the defensive has its own battle plan; fighting in combat villages or hamlets has its own battle plan. One divides battle plans into strategic battle plans, battle plans for individual campaigns and battle plans for individual battles.

On the basis of the line on people's war, in the recent resistance wars against the French and the Americans, our party led our people in developing a battle plan for a people's war throughout the country for the war as a whole, for each locality, village or urban ward, and for each battle and campaign. The battle plan for our people's war, whether for the entire country or for a single battle, is a battle plan to fight the enemy by combining strength of the entire people, by combining the three categories of troops, by combining guerrilla war with conventional war, by combining offensives with uprisings, by combining the local forces with the mobile forces, and by combining the annihilation of the enemy with mastery and mastery with the annihilation of the enemy in the overall struggle on the closely-combined military, political and diplomatic fronts. On such battle schemes, each citizen becomes a combatant endowed with a strength superior to that of the enemy, and each village becomes a fortress for mounting a firm, and strong defense and launching strong attacks. In the anti-French resistance war, many villages such as (Nguyen) Village in Thai Binh and (Tang Hung) Village in Ha Son Binh defeated many enemy regiments. In the anti-U.S. resistance war, there were renowned Ap Bac and Cu Chi which, relying on the battle plan of people's war, smashed large-scale U.S.-puppet operations. The local strength of the battle plans for people's war in all areas developed to a high degree, thus turning our entire country into a unified front with an omnipresent strength.

The fighting strength of our entire country increased tremendously. The French and U.S. aggressors had numerous professional aggressor armed forces equipped with large numbers of aircraft and artillery pieces. They were able to occupy a number of localities and strategic areas. However, when facing our battle plan for people's war, tens of thousands of enemy troops were split up, surrounded and controlled. Although they sent in large numbers of troops and poured in large quantities of modern weapons, the enemy always had a shortage of troops and weapons and realized that they could not resist the strength of the battle plan of the people's war. The U.S. aggressors tried to raise the number of their troop concentrations to as much as 7 to 12 times more than our troops. However, as admitted by U.S. generals, when the number of their troops had reached its highest level, there were eight times as many troops used for defending against our offensive thrusts than as mobile troops.

The battle plan of the people's war throughout the country and in each hamlet or village exerted an extremely threatening and damaging impact on the enemy, but constantly provided our mobile regular forces with the ability to set up strong battle positions to destroy one enemy outfit after another and to advance and completely destroy the enemy troops to win total victory in the war.

In the recent two wars of resistance, the people's war created the basis for our army and people to utilize highly effective and original strategic battle plans.

The 1953-1954 winter-spring strategic offensive involved combat dispositions designed both to continuously develop our strategic offensive initiative and to smash the French-U.S. strategic counteroffensive under the Navarre Plan, thus leading to our glorious victories at Dien Bien Phu, in the Red River Delta, in Region 5 and in our joint operations with the Lao armed forces.

The 1968 spring strategic offensive, which was directed against nearly all of the enemy's key bases throughout the south and which dealt a crushing blow to the U.S. imperialists' regional war strategy, represented a new height in the art of launching crippling surprise attacks.

The 1975 spring strategic offensive, which prompted a quick change in the balance of force between us and the enemy, constituted the pinnacle of the art of conducting lightning strikes.

Thanks to such effective people's war battle plans, our armed forces and people were able to devise extremely lively and creative tactics for various campaigns and battles.

In the two wars of resistance for national liberation, our armed forces and people concentrated mainly on conducting offensive campaigns against the enemy. We also conducted some counteroffensives, such as the one on Route 9 in southern Laos, and defensive campaigns--but these were very few and far between. That was why we achieved many successes in drawing up and directing battle plans for offensive campaigns and battles.

We all know that, in attacking the enemy, we used many combat tactics and measures in many vastly different conditions. In some campaigns we resorted to the tactic of encircling the primary objectives and annihilating the secondary ones; in some others we made use of the encirclement tactic. We attacked the enemy on different terrains; in the jungles and mountains, in the plains and in the towns and cities. We conducted our offensives in highly diversified forms. In some offensives we used overwhelming forces such as the annihilation attack against the enemy at (Hin Lam) and (Doc Lap) in the anti-French war of resistance and the battles to destroy the enemy defensive line on Route 9 and to capture Ban Me Thuot.

We used different, suitable battle plans for each offensive, depending on terrain conditions and the actual balance of forces. Generally speaking, however, these battle plans involved the uses of such common tactics as attacking, encircling, dividing, stalling and annihilating. These tactics were used sometimes overtly and sometimes covertly.

The more a battle plan makes use of these tactics, the more strength it will create for us to overcome the enemy. To defeat the enemy, in our battle plans we must always use offensive and annihilation tactics, the two most basic tactics. In the 1975 spring Tay Nguyen campaign, owing to our effective offensive and tactics, we were able to apply the encirclement, division and stalling tactics which in turn created conditions for us to further improve our offensive and annihilation tactics. We must see the close relationship among these tactics in our battle plans. If all the

tactics used in a battle plan are satisfactorily applied and developed, they can help us build a resilient strength and may even enable us to increase our strength manyfold. Only in this way can we draw up a strong battle plan, whether it is for offensive, counteroffensive or defensive purposes.

In the past, our forefathers excelled in drawing up battle plans. That was why they were able to double the attacking strength of their forces. It was partly due to their ability to draw up effective and strong battle plans that our forefathers were able to add chapters of glorious victories over the Sung, Mongolian, Ming and Chiang aggressors to our history. Bringing into full play our traditional ability and experience in drawing up battle plans, we will certainly be able to create strong and firm battle plans for our people's war for the defense of the fatherland which will annihilate any enemy which dares to lay its hand on our country. The more foolhardy and reckless the enemy is, the more defeats it will suffer, defeats which will be much more lamentable than the ones suffered recently by the French and U.S. aggressors.

[1 Aug 78]

[Text] Bases On Which Battle Plans Are Drawn Up

The drawing up of plans for a campaign or a battle must, generally speaking, be based on estimates and analyses of the enemy's strength and ours, on meteorological and hydrological conditions, on terrain conditions and on the situation of the people.

Following are our views on these factors and on their use in drawing up battle plans:

#### The Enemy Factor

To know the enemy is to know the number of its troops, their weapons and equipment, their morale, discipline, fighting ability, behavior, their strengths and weaknesses, and particularly their schemes, maneuvers and operational principles. Only with such knowledge can we have a basis upon which to appraise the strengths and weaknesses of the enemy's battle plans and to predict changes in its position and strength when under attack.

Realities in the distant past and in the recent two wars of resistance have shown that in order to make an accurate appraisal of the aforementioned factors we must have the determination to fight and win victory, to study the enemy so as to destroy it and to know its strengths so as to neutralize them.

In the 13th century, when Mongolian troops staged a massive invasion of our country, Tran Quoc Tuan, with his strong determination to defeat the aggressors, made a very accurate appraisal of the enemy situation--the enemy troops have attacked in an impetuous manner like the spreading of a fire. This makes it easy for us to fight them.

In the battle to wipe out a relief column under the command of Lieu Thang, Le Loi and Nguyen Trai correctly evaluated the strengths and weaknesses of the enemy's battle plans. Le Loi did not underestimate Liu Thang's relief force numbering hundreds of thousands of troops, but he pointed out: the enemy is in a hurry and Lieu Thang is arrogant. We can set up ambushes at strategic places to destroy his vanguard column. With our first battle, we will wipe out all of his advance troops. With our second battle we will completely annihilate the enemy forces.

The ensuing fighting proceeded exactly as Le Loi and Nguyen Trai predicted. Lieu Thang perished an ambush in the strategic area of Chi Lang. Thereafter, tens of thousands of enemy troops were wiped out at (Can Trang). The entire enemy force was surrounded and destroyed when it reached (Xuong Giang).

When the United States began to wage a war of aggression against the southern part of our country, our party pointed out: The U.S. aggressors are an extremely dangerous enemy and have many strong points. But they are in a position of defeat from the beginning.

Proceeding from such an accurate and extremely penetrating appraisal of the enemy's situation, our party was able to take a correct strategic decision--to use an offensive strategy to defeat the U.S. aggressors.

To know the enemy calls for thorough knowledge of its strategic schemes and plans, its operational procedures and its specific operational schemes in any given campaign theater. Only with such knowledge can we have an adequate basis for anticipating and appraising the enemy's moves and thereby be able to devise appropriate battle plans and deploy troops to eradicate it.

The Lam Son 719 Operation of the U.S. puppet troops into the 9th route in southern Laos began on 31 January 1971. As we had already grasped their strategic plans and schemes, we could make accurate appraisals and estimates and prepare a battle plan to fight them as early as mid-1970, nearly 1/2 year in advance of the enemy operation. In modern warfare it is an important and complex task to know the enemy. Using modern technical means, the enemy can conceal its preparations and learn about your situation and then make a diversionary move to deceive you. We must, therefore, have the means to collect information on and closely watch the enemy. We must know how to fully utilize modern technical means to collect information on the enemy and must be able to make accurate estimates and devise many operational plans to cope with it.

## Factors Concerning Us

To know ourselves is to grasp a vital and decisive factor in formulating battle plans. To know ourselves is to correctly organize, arrange and deploy our forces so as to develop our fighting ability and strength to the highest degree.

To know ourselves, therefore, involves a large scope of activities through which all of a unit commander's functions in feeding, administering, training and using troops are manifested. In fact, through such activities cadres cooperate with combatants to build their units and discuss plans and schemes to fight the enemy. If the cadres and combatants remain united, they will understand one another and will be of one mind in combat, thus winning the confidence of higher commanders and other units in combined operations. Together they will overcome difficulties and fulfill their assigned duties.

King Quang Trung, who used to personally organize and train his troops, could firmly control them and rely on their morale and ability. Due to his correct viewpoint, Quang Trung could control and command his troops well. It is more important for troops to be united and well seasoned than numerous; it is not superiority in force and number which decides victory or defeat in war. Our forefathers mobilized the entire country to defeat the enemy by outnumbering its troops. Even women participated in fighting the aggressors. However, we have always considered qualitative superiority a factor in defeating the enemy. Nevertheless, when appraising our situation, we have always taken into account both qualitative and quantitative data. In every battle and campaign, we have always specifically each weapon [as received] and each round of ammunition and on this basis formulating a battle plan to strongly defeat the enemy.

## Military Terrain Factor

In formulating a battle plan, it is impossible for us not to take into account specific terrain and weather conditions such as sun, rain, cold and warm weather. Our ancestors stressed using climate and terrain to their own advantage. These are objective factors. In each battle and each campaign, we can encounter different difficulties or advantages resulting from the terrain and weather conditions. In formulating a battle plan, we must know how to turn both the disadvantages and advantages of hydrological and meteorological conditions and terrain into assets in order to increase our strength and cause more difficulties to the enemy.

Ngo Quyen, Ly Thuong Kiet and Tran Hung Dao took advantage of hydrological conditions to set up ambushes in the Bach Dang River area and completely eradicate the aggressors. During the past resistance struggle, we also capitalized on darkness and fog to launch daring surprise attacks to kill enemy troops even in their beds. We also took advantage of the characteristics of the dry and rainy seasons to launch appropriate offensives against the enemy.

Our country's topography includes mountains, rivers, seas, plains, dense jungles, thin forests, high hills, steep slopes and deep streams, all of which our ancestors considered militarily dangerous terrain. The dangerous Chi Lan terrain was several times the scene of ambushes which eradicated the aggressors. Just like our forefathers, we now pay much attention to the terrain factor and are very creative in taking advantage of and modifying terrain for the deployment of forces to fight the enemy and defend the fatherland. Our people can even establish battle plans for the scattered villages and hamlets in the Yellow River delta. Many glorious battles, such as at Chuong Duong, Ham Tu and Dong Da, were won in this very delta.

In our era, the terrain in our country has been fully used in several ways to defeat the enemy. We used jungles and forests to wage dangerous offensive battles against the enemy such as in Song Lo in Cao Lang Province, Dien Bien Phu in Hoa Binh Province and Khe Sanh in the Tay Nguyen highlands. Even the Yellow and Mekong River deltas were transformed into dangerous areas where countless French and American troops were buried. Combat villages such as Cua Ca, Tam Thuan, Ap Bac and Cu Chi have gone down in the history of anti-aggression warfare as sagas of the use of terrain to defeat the enemy.

#### The People Factor

Our nation's anti-aggression warfare has been outstandingly characterized by its very widespread popularity. Our age-old martial arts have taught us how to correctly view and develop the people factor to turn a battlefield into a labyrinth in order to weaken the aggressors no matter how strong they are. In our era, the people factor has been the most adequately and completely understood. Our party asserted that the patriotic war which it led was of the people and for the people. Our armed forces come from the people and fight for the people. They were the core force in the all-people movement to fight the enemy and liberate and defend the country. The people were the factor that enabled us to launch various campaigns to intercept the enemy throughout the country under a firm and well-organized battle plan.

This battle plan caused the enemy insoluble problems--whether to concentrate troops or disperse them, and from what source to take troops to replace casualties--thus making the enemy battle plan vulnerable and weak in every respect. Hundreds of thousands of enemy troops deployed inside and around Saigon still could not defend the enemy's last den against the offensive of our small but well seasoned forces. As for us, with the people factor, our battle positions in each locality and throughout the country became stronger. We could combine local combat forces with mobile combat forces in a flexible manner to defeat the enemy in all areas at any time.

Our mobile forces possessed great strength and could always take the initiative in offensives to eradicate enemy troops and to defeat their vulnerable battle and campaign plans. The people factor was manifested in the national battle plan to fight the enemy, in each locality and each village and in the coordination between the people and the army, between individual localities and the entire country, and between concentrated combat tactics and guerrilla combat tactics.

This factor can be developed and its effects felt in warfare only when we have firm and strong political, economic, cultural and ideological bases among the people and when the people are well educated and prepared in terms of morale and combat spirit and are organized to participate in combat and combat support. Relying on the people and developing their strength to establish battle plans for national defense constitute one of our nation's creative martial arts. This art is being fully used and developed in establishing and promoting the people's right to collective mastery, in building national defense and in maintaining combat readiness for national defense. Each of our villages and hamlets will become a combat stronghold, each of our districts will be turned into a strong military bunker and each of our provinces will be a powerful strategic unit under the people's warfare battle plan to defend the country.

[2 Aug 78]

[Text] Requirements for Drawing up Battle Plans

Formulating a battle array [Bayf Traanj] is always aimed at devising battle plans to one's advantage and upsetting the enemy's battle plans in order to annihilate the enemy and defeat them. To achieve this goal, any battle plan, generally speaking, must meet the following fundamental requirements:

1. Superior Power

Only by having superior power can one solve the question of annihilating the enemy. This is a question of dialectic significance. With two forces interacting, the one which can develop its strength will win. Generally speaking, the balance of forces of two parties confronting each other has the following fundamental aspects: either one party is strong and the other is weak, or the two parties are of equal strength. The requirements facing us in the people's war for the defense of the fatherland are that whatever the balance of forces, we must fight and win and that we must achieve superior power with which to fight and win. To meet these requirements, when drawing up battle plans, we must select the right direction of attack and the combat area. By insuring that we will have superior

power in this area, will we be able to win a battle or a campaign. Depending on the balance of forces, the selection of the direction of attack and the combat area can be made on the principle that if we are stronger than the enemy, we will attack them wherever they are strong; if we are of equal strength with the enemy, we will attack them wherever they are relatively strong; and if we are weaker than the enemy, we will attack them wherever they have defensive gaps or are relatively weak. The enemy always takes precautionary measures and seeks ways to cover up their weaknesses and gaps. We must be clever in detecting their weaknesses and gaps. On the other hand, our battle plans can also cause the enemy to develop weaknesses and gaps in his defenses. Therefore, if we excel in drawing up battle plans and satisfactorily control the enemy, we will have great capabilities to choose the direction and the combat area.

In the recent anti-U.S. resistance war, because we had drawn up sound battle plans for the people's war, the enemy's battle plans were plagued by many gaps and weaknesses. Each time we attacked an area, the enemy was confused, scared and embarrassed when having to guess the direction of our main offensive direction. Everywhere, the enemy realized that they were beset by gaps and weaknesses and that we could concentrate our forces on attacking them. In many strategic offensives, epitomized by the general 1975 spring offensive, our main force and that of the enemy, in general, was almost of equal strength. However, because we successfully developed our strategic battle plans, selected the right direction of attack and the main combat areas, and drew up sound tactical battle plans, we insured our increasingly superior power with which to deal the enemy destructive blows at Ban Me Thuot and to smash the enemy's battle deployments in the central highlands and on the entire southern battlefield, thus annihilating one enemy outfit after another and concluding the Ho Chi Minh campaign with enough superiority to overpower the enemy troops.

## 2. Taking Initiative

The factors for taking the initiative in carrying out battle plans include: taking the initiative in deploying troops, choosing good opportunities to open fire first, adopting effective combat tactics and taking the initiative in carrying out each of the various steps as well as the overall plan for each battle or campaign. In carrying out these battle plans, our forces must take the initiative in achieving mutual coordination in order to combine their strength and to increase their strength and to take the initiative in their operations.

In combat, the two belligerent parties will seek every means to take and maintain their initiative. To do this, the battle plans must meet the following requirements:

They must be sound and must provide us with favorable conditions to bring our mobility into full play and to concentrate our forces; they must involve splitting, surrounding and controlling the enemy troops. In the process of

drawing up these battle plans, we must know how to carry out diversionary tactics to deceive the enemy and to prevent them from perceiving our designs and stratagems in drawing up the battle plans. We must also forecast and take measures to readily cope with complex difficulties which may be encountered when confronting the enemy. The more satisfactorily this work is carried out, the greater will be our success in eliminating the adverse circumstances that create difficulties for us in gaining and maintaining our initiative.

In the general 1975 spring offensive and uprising, we constantly maintained the initiative because all our strategic battle plans were sound and because we succeeded in splitting and controlling the enemy. When we attacked Ban Me Thuot, the enemy tried to concentrate their troops to rescue it, but in vain. In Thua Thien-hue, Quang Tri and Saigon, the enemy was attacked and threatened and needed troop reinforcements. Because we succeeded in controlling and splitting the enemy, we deprived the enemy of their ability to launch a strategic counteroffensive. The general offensive thus developed ever more favorably for us.

### 3. Offensive Tactics and Unexpected, Lightning and Destructive Attacks

Such offensive tactics and such attacks are necessary to enable us to annihilate the enemy and to firmly maintain our superior power and our initiative in attacking the enemy. Such offensive tactics and such attacks are closely interrelated and must be carried out both in an entire battle or campaign and in each outfit or force engaged in combat. In each battle plan, such offensive tactics and such attacks can either be used at once or cannot be used until a certain combat phase. We usually call these tactics overt and covert tactics. A sound battle plan always includes overt and covert tactics. The covert tactics ususally involve deploying mobile forces in advantageous positions, which can then assume various tasks and adopt various methods and measures to attack the enemy. For instance, in the central highlands campaign in spring 1975, Division X concealed itself in advantageous, mobile positions and was able to maneuver in various directions. This division was able simultaneously to split and control the enemy and to maneuver to attack reinforcements. When favorable opportunities presented themselves, this division was able to promptly pursue the enemy.

Another astute tactic is called sharp nibbling tactics, which consists of deploying forces in dangerous areas, sometimes located deep in the enemy-controlled zones or in the vicinity of these zones. These forces can immediately threaten the enemy and attack the most vital areas under enemy control. For instance, the deep infiltrations and ambushes by seasoned special units in the vicinity of Saigon or inside it constituted very astute and sharp blows which seriously scared the enemy who could not effectively cope with these attacks.

By drawing up battle plans with sound tactics, we were able to use a few to defeat many enemy troops, from an already strong position, we became even stronger, and the enemy became weaker and weaker. In our offensive against Ban Me Thuot, we expected to have to fight from 5 to 7 days. However, because we had drawn up battle plans with offensive, destruction, surrounding and splitting tactics, after attacking the enemy for only 30 hours, we completely captured Ban Me Thuot.

[3 Aug 78]

[Text] Stratagems and Battle Plans

The core of the art of battle planning lies in the conception of stratagems for establishing battle plans. Only by devising clever stratagems and dangerous schemes can we establish effective battle plans. Stratagems and battle plans cannot be separated from each other. It is necessary to study the relationship between stratagems and battle plans in order to understand what stratagems are and to heighten the standards of stratagems in establishing and controlling battle plans.

#### 1. Stratagems Reconcile Objectivity and Subjectivity in the Establishment and Control of Battle Plans

In a battle of war in general, all factors are fundamentally characterized by their objective and subjective aspects. The objective aspect involves the realistic information on the enemy situation and ours, the terrain and the deployment of both sides' forces on the battlefield. The subjective aspect consists of the knowledge and appraisal of the realistic objective situation, of grasping the objective laws and of making the subjective aspect compatible with objective realities. In an armed conflict, if we have a force equal or superior to the enemy's, this will be an advantage and an indication that the subjective can be reconciled with the objective. The subjective is the desire to win while the objective is the superiority in forces; however, this advantage can exist only in the initial balance of forces and is subject to change since the subjective efforts to be made afterwards by both sides and their standards of stratagems may differ. This can be likened to two chess players who initially have equal numbers of chess pieces arranged in the same pattern, but the game may end with one player winning over the other due to his clever moves. President Ho's poem about a chess game, said in part: "Two winning pieces can become useless in a wrong move while a pawn if rightly moved can checkmate the opponent."

Facts show that due to clever stratagems, our people defeated the enemy which outnumbered us in both personnel and weapons. However, it is necessary to note that in general, the use of a small force to defeat a larger one presents some aspects of incompatibility between objectivity and subjectivity. The reason why a small force can defeat a larger one is that it knows how to develop its subjective efforts including its strategic skills to a high standard so as to reconcile objectivity with subjectivity. To use stratagems for this purpose is to scientifically calculate various conditions and to adopt appropriate operational procedures to outdo the enemy. It is not unusual that we cannot solve all the contradictions at one time but we must solve them one by one, especially the main ones, so as to advance toward reconciling all of them. To fulfill this requirement, we must conceive good stratagems in the fundamental tasks of establishing and operationally controlling battle plans.

## 2. Stratagems to Establish and Control Battle Plans

In establishing a battle plan, stratagems cannot be easily conceived. To conceive good stratagems, we must secure all the information on the enemy situation and ours, the terrain and both sides' deployment of forces, and on this basis strategically establish the battle plan. A good strategist must be able to establish a sound and problematic battle plan which the enemy cannot analyze, or if he can, he will not be able to cope with it. At the same time, action must be taken to avoid playing into the enemy's hands. A good strategic battle plan must eliminate or minimize all the circumstances which would be likely to hamper the development of our strength to defeat the enemy.

For the Tay Nguyen campaign in the spring of 1975, we established a battle plan for isolating and dividing the enemy forces in Tay Nguyen. The enemy had a general reserve force there. In difficult situations, the enemy might use the battlefield reserve forces and the mobile strategic reserve force as reinforcements to break our divisive encirclement. It might bring in reinforcements promptly by road and air. If the enemy were allowed to do this, we would be in a very difficult situation. Action had to be taken to either eliminate or minimize this situation. We, therefore, established a battle plan which fundamentally consisted of attacking the enemy troops in Banmethuot, intercepting and dividing their mobile ground forces, preparing our mobile forces to strengthen our battle positions and neutralize the enemy counterattacks, and seizing and controlling the airport in order to eliminate or minimize the enemy air mobility.

Such a battle plan was clearly very extensive and complicated. However, the more extensive and complicated the plan is, the less and simpler unexpected situations will occur. As a result, the Tay Nguyen campaign developed as we anticipated. The enemy could use only helicopters to bring in reinforcements for its troops in Banmethuot. However, these reinforcements were not strong and were landed right on our ambush area. No sooner had

they landed, then they were completely eradicated by our predisposed mobile forces. Therefore, during the Tay Nguyen campaign, the situations in which we could have encountered many difficulties were reduced, while many favorable opportunities appeared making our victory even greater.

The operational control of a battle plan constitutes a very important and significant task which contributes to deciding the results of the battle or campaign. It means that we must refer to the latest realistic situation to adjust to deployment of forces, complement the defensive and offensive methods and make full use of all appropriate tactics to carry out the conceived stratagems.

Combat is a match of forces for survival. No matter how able and talented we are, we cannot force the enemy to stay put completely. It will react fiercely. The situation of the match of forces will continuously change. There can be circumstances in which we will win strategically, but, in some cases we might lose. The conduct of a battle plan, therefore, constitutes a course during which conflicting situations may take place. During such a course of good strategist must be able to handle these situations in the most appropriate manner to create many opportunities which will be favorable to us but disadvantageous to the enemy. During the anti-U.S. resistance struggle, while conducting the battle plan [words indistinct] at Ba Gia and Pleime, we had actively created a situation in which the enemy was lured into our ambush area, so that it was completely eradicated.

In the 1975 spring offensive, to create favorable conditions for our forces to fight a decisive battle at Ban Me Thuot, our strategic commanders directed the implementation of the plan for that battle and achieved a strategic coordination, thus pinning down an enemy paratroop division in Hue and Danang. Only after we seized Ban Me Thuot and frustrated the enemy's battle plan in the central highlands was the enemy paratroop division able to dispatch one of its units down to (Phuong Quan) pass. The moving of this paratroop unit was too late, thus putting it in a passive position. Meanwhile, we enjoyed favorable conditions for annihilating the enemy's strategic reserve forces.

Stratagems and battle plans are closely related. Solving their relationship will be instrumental in solving contradictions, struggling against and improving unfavorable circumstances and creating good opportunities to make our forces even stronger and to further weaken the enemy forces. Only in this way will we be able to annihilate the enemy more quickly and easily. As Nguyen Trai [an ancient Vietnamese general] once said: A good commander is one who knows when the circumstances are favorable and whether his forces are strong and ready for action. When we are in a favorable situation and when our position is strong, we can avoid losses and make our small, weak forces become large and powerful. When we are faced with unfavorable circumstances and when our position is not advantageous, our strong forces will become weak and eventually court disasters. Such a change of circumstances and position may occur as quickly as one turns his hand.

A war for the defense of our socialist fatherland will present many new problems in drawing up battle plans of a people's war. Our fighting in the southwestern border areas against the Kampuchean reactionaries invading our fatherland and the combat readiness achieved by our people in all localities throughout our country are providing us with many valuable experiences in many respects, including in the art of drawing up battle plans. Building socialism along the party's correct and creative line we will provide us with new capabilities and bases in the political, economic and military areas, which will help us to draw up firm and good battle plans of a people's war. If an enemy of our people recklessly provokes a war of aggression against our country, our troops and people will immediately develop the invincible strength of the battle plans of the people's war and deal the enemy deadly blows. Right at the very outset, our troops and people will be able to achieve a coordination among the three categories of troops. They will resolutely, heroically and undauntingly attack the enemy, intercept and split the enemy forces, launch attacks against both the forefront and rear of these forces and annihilate as many enemy troops as possible when they set foot on our country in the border and sea areas and on our islands.

Throughout our country, there will be good battle plans for each locality, hamlet and village. On the basis of these battle dispositions, we will create battles and campaigns to fight and annihilate the enemy, to firmly defend the fatherland's territory and sovereignty, to protect the people's lives and property and to deal deadly blows to the enemy plots and acts of aggression.

Our act of drawing up battle plans will certainly be developed to a high degree. Applying that art to a war for the defense of the socialist fatherland, we will certainly make our people's history of struggle against foreign aggression further shine with new, unprecedentedly glorious feats of arms.

CSO: 4209