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SOUTH VIETNAM WOMEN GUERRILLA'S ROLE DESCRIBED

[Excerpt from article by Nguyen Thi Dinh: "The Role and Capacity of South Vietnamese Women in the Guerrilla War Movement, During the Phase of General Offensives and Simultaneous Uprisings"; Havana, Granma, 10 March 1969, p 7]

In the present anti-Yankee struggle for the national salvation of our people, women constitute a numerous force which has a strategic character within the movement of political and armed struggle and within the recruiting effort. Women occupy an important place in the guerrilla war movement and they constitute the shock detachment in the coordinated movement of the political and armed struggle.

It was particularly during the days when the offensives were unleashed majestically, like storms, that more than 2 million women, without distinction as to religious belief, party affiliation, or nationality, both in the rural areas and in the cities, rose up in arms, laid seige to enemy posts and forced them to surrender and to withdraw. They knew how to use the traditional fighting methods, which involve the application of offensive thrusts in coordination with the impetus from popular uprisings, and they managed to destroy and to force the surrender of more than 500 enemy posts, as well as to wipe out thousands upon thousands of puppet soldiers.

The massive participation of our women in the armed struggle -- in which they have achieved many and considerable successes -- is an outstanding thing.

Women participate directly in the armed struggle by employing their great capacities in guerrilla warfare.

During the days of the general offensives and simultaneous uprisings, many regions -- which had correctly sized up the role of women in guerrilla warfare -- were able to mobilize a large force of women who were able to participate in the armed struggle, in the defense of the township, and to guarantee the accomplishment of the political tasks in the rear guard,

replacing the men who had gone off to the front.

Our women know how to employ many forms of combat, such as isolated action, ambush, surprise attack, etc.; they use all kinds of home-made weapons in this effort: pits with stakes or barbs, traps of various kinds, explosive mines. In this way they have been able to destroy various military installations, to wipe out the infantry, to destroy tanks, and to shoot down enemy aircraft. Many detachments of women guerrillas, serving with various components of the armed forces, such as artillery or the engineers, participated in the struggle, even though they were just recently trained, and they were able to achieve many outstanding successes. Here are some examples: the women's self-defense detachment of the city of Hue consisting exclusively of girls, beat back the attacks of a United States battalion, wiping out more than 100 soldiers; the platoon of women guerrillas of Trang Bang (in the Province of Tay Ninh), holding their fighting front throughout the day against enemy counterattacks, wiped out an American platoon and downed two helicopters; the women guerrilla's platoon of Chau Thanh (Tay Ninh), in coordination with other women's guerrilla units, wiped out a company of commandos, capturing weapons, prisoners, and so on. Another women's guerrilla unit, the To Thi Huynh (Tra Vinh) unit, in the course of the general offensives and uprisings last spring, fought 29 engagements, wiping out six military posts; in one of these engagements, the enemy suffered casualties amounting to 22 dead and 4 wounded; 22 weapons of various calibers were captured.

The detachment of women guerrillas of municipality D, in the district of Duc Hoa, destroyed 12 tanks and the members of the detachment were able to win the title "Good Fighter"; they included a girl just 15 years old.

In addition to the armed guerrilla groups, which are responsible for the dissemination of propaganda and whose primary mission is to spread revolutionary slogans, put up posters and hoist banners in the cities, we might also mention the women's self-defense detachments; a good example here is the "Le-thi-Rieng" detachment which displayed great valor during the attack against the center of Saigon, during the assault on the premises of the 5th Region Administrative Offices, a place where they hoisted a banner of the NLF, which was more than 5 meters wide and which fluttered from the flagpole in front of that headquarters. The women also in a considerable manner contributed to the attacks upon the United States Embassy and the headquarters of the general staff of the puppet army. The fighters in the city of Saigon actively rushed out into the streets, in coordination with the armed forces, wiping out more than 100 puppet soldiers in the center of the city. There were even cases where women, with their bare hands, captured a policeman along with his weapon.

These worthy daughters of the South Vietnamese people always displayed their revolutionary heroism in a lofty manner, creating panic and fear in the enemy ranks. For example, at Hue, there was a 16-year old girl who,

during the attack on the settlement of Kien Tuong, fought to the very last round, killing more than 10 of the enemy. In order not to fall into enemy hands, the girl smashed her rifle and jumped to the ground from a very great height, thus committing suicide. And here I have another example:

Lan, a girl guerrilla from Phuoc Loc, killed 10 puppet soldiers and also killed two Yankee soldiers before sacrificing herself. During the general offensives and the simultaneous uprisings, the women's batteries, through cannon fire, wiped out more than 300 of the enemy (mostly Americans), destroying 15 of the enemy's guns. The women's artillery detachment of Chau Thanh (Thu-dau-mot), on one occasion, was informed that the Yankees were going to stage one of their sweeps; they prepared an ambush, using artillery pieces, patiently waiting for the enemy to arrive. On various occasions, these valiant women fighters also created conditions enabling the infantry to attack the enemy positions, thus winning the confidence and sympathy of the people and of the infantry units themselves. The most outstanding success of these women is represented by their massive participation and their use of specific methods of action, such as guerrilla tactics, lightning attacks, individual assaults, using both legal and illegal means, especially attacks against the enemy in full daylight, in the city of Saigon and in other cities and towns, using the system of sending just a few against many, just one against 10, 20, and even 100 of the enemy; punishing the headmen, reactionaries, and executioners in their very own refuges. The explosions set off in enemy supply depots had serious consequences, causing constant panic among the enemy and greatly confusing his rear guard.

Women have made a most important contribution in the operation of supply services for the front lines. Thousands upon thousands of women are in the rescue brigades and in the weapons and supply transportation brigades, supporting the fighting men. In particular, there were more than 10,000 women (mostly young ones) who joined the volunteer brigades in order to provide various service functions on the battlefield itself. In their work, they always displayed great patience, courage, a high sense of responsibility, and an irrepressible love toward the fighting men. Even in the most bitter fighting, these veteran women volunteers followed in the footsteps of the fighting men and, with them, moved across the battlefield, under enemy fire, to rescue the wounded. Here is their slogan: "So long as there is one wounded man on the battlefield, we shall be there." This is especially true of the cities and towns, where enemy control is stricter and where the fighting has been increasingly bitter in recent times; when our fighting men entered the city, on those occasions, the women, side by side with the entire people, in sisterly love and concern as well as in a high revolutionary spirit, were always prepared to help our fighting men and to render services during the fighting. During the days of the general offensives and the simultaneous uprisings, in the city of Saigon, there were thousands of women who were under fire, carrying weapons and rations, standing guard, and serving as guides on the way to the combat areas.

Disdaining all risks, the mothers and young girls in Saigon led the wounded to their homes to take care of their wounds and give them all kinds of other assistance. An infinite number of valiant and intelligent women comrades in the liaison network led the fighting men through dozens of military posts and enemy defense lines, for the purpose of reaching the places of refuge of the enemy in the center of the city of Saigon. We could mention many other examples set by our women, both those from the ethnic majority, the Kinh, and those from the minorities, which support the Revolution and always try to devote all of their efforts and capacity to the defense of the Fatherland.

Women evidently not only have a tremendous potential for service during combat but, at the same time, they are capable of assuming leadership of combat units. Throughout all of South Vietnam we currently have hundreds of women cadres, military commanders on the municipal and district level, including some with the rank of company commander. These women proved to be very audacious in directing combat action during the recent general offensives, creating panic among the enemy ranks and promoting confidence among the people as well as sympathy among the fighting men; this is true of female comrade C., military commander of District T.B., as well as female comrade D., assistant military commander of District T.T., just to mention two examples.

The abovementioned successes faithfully reflect the great role and capacity of the South Vietnamese women during the period of the general offensives and simultaneous uprisings carried out by our people.

The people's war represents the combined force of the patriotism and the implacable hatred of our people toward its enemy, as expressed in extremely heroic and intelligent combat action. Our entire people has been fighting with various creative methods, using all types of weapons, coordinating the rudimentary weapons with the modern ones, captured from the enemy, and preventing all enemy attempts at repulsing them.

In addition to offering these fundamental elements, the woman of South Vietnam knows how to tie her ardent patriotism closely to her yearning for the liberation of the country and her desire for her own liberation.

Along with the heroic and indomitable fighting tradition of the people, the Vietnamese woman has her own tradition of heroic struggle against the invader; some good examples here are those offered by the two Trung sisters and Mrs. Trieu, in the past, and Nguyen Thi Minh Khai, Vo Thi Sau, Ta Thi Kieu, Ut Tieh, in the present. There are thousands upon thousands of heroic and indomitable examples set by women during the period of the anti-French struggle in the past and the present anti-Yankee war. National consciousness, class consciousness, combined with the desire for the liberation of the woman -- these are part of the overall revolutionary

spirit and the great determination of our woman.

A vast majority of Vietnamese women fought against the enemy consecutively for 23 years. They have become seasoned and they have proved themselves within the broad struggle movement of our people. This gave them an opportunity to acquire a strong political consciousness and good discipline. They have great experience in organizing the struggle, both the political and the armed struggle. On this basis of experience, it has been possible to create the detachments of women guerrilla fighters and the artillery detachments.

Because their members were trained from the bottom up, these detachments achieved many and notable successes, from their first engagements onward.

Throughout the phases of the revolutionary struggle of the South Vietnamese people, women have made a very important contribution -- in terms of their strength, their capacity, and their talents -- to the cause of national liberation and to the cause of their own liberation. Through their hardworking nature and their spirit of sacrifice in the face of the enemy, through their valor and firmness in combat, through their loyalty in carrying out orders and accomplishing both the family tasks and the community tasks, with the help of their tradition and the successes achieved during the two patriotic wars, the women of South Vietnam indeed have earned the title "Heroic, indomitable, loyal, generous, and successful."

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