VIET-NAM
DOCUMENTS AND RESEARCH NOTES

GIAF: "ARM THE REVOLUTIONARY Masses AND BUILD THE PEOPLE'S ARMY" - PART 1
"ARM THE REVOLUTIONARY MASSES AND BUILD THE PEOPLE'S ARMY"

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"ARM THE REVOLUTIONARY MASSES AND BUILD THE PEOPLE'S ARMY"

Introduction

Viet-Nam Documents and Research Notes No. 104, "The 'Local Forces' and Army Recruiting in North Viet-Nam" examined the North Vietnamese high command's attitudes towards their armed forces, and problems of recruiting them. While that paper was being prepared, a lengthy article by Senior General Vo Nguyen Giap, Minister of National Defense, Commander of the Viet-Nam People's Army, a Member of the National Defense Council and of the Politburo of the Viet-Nam Workers' Party began to appear in Hanoi. It was serialized in both Tap Chi Quan Doi Nhan Dan, the Army's magazine, and in Hoc Tap, the theoretical journal of the Viet-Nam Workers' [Communist] Party.

The first chapter of the four-part article appeared in the December 1971 issue of the Army magazine, and the January 1972 issue of Hoc Tap. Chapter II was published in the January issue of the Army magazine, and the February Hoc Tap.

The first two parts of the article are introductory in nature. They discuss, respectively, the Marxist-Leninist socio-political theories of military organization, and Vietnamese military history and traditions. These two parts are reproduced here as Part I of this issue of Viet-Nam Documents and Research Notes.

Parts III and IV, which Giap titled "The Creativeness of Our Party and People" and "Strongly and Largely Arm the Revolutionary Masses and Build a Regular, Modern People's Armed Forces," will be printed as Parts II and III of this issue of Viet-Nam Documents and Research Notes.

Vo Nguyen Giap as writer and theoretician is never happier than when he combines his two loves, military history and theory, and political ideology. The first part of his article,
"Marxist-Leninist Theory on Military Organization of the Proletariat", presents his research into the military theories of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin. He discusses in a straight-forward manner the military organizational theories of Marx and Engels in the 19th Century, and more exuberantly Lenin's views on the October Revolution in the Soviet Union and the birth of the Red Army.

In Part II, "Our People's Traditions and Experiences in Building Armed Forces in the Past", Giap displays his pride in Vietnamese military history and folk-lore, as well as his application of Marxian analysis to pre-industrial societies. He traces Vietnamese history from the earliest days, of the Hung kings, through the French domination of the 19th Century. The thread which runs through the entire story, according to Giap, is the Vietnamese tradition of resistance to aggression. All the national heroes of Viet-Nam, from Hung Vuong through the Trung sisters to Le Loi and Nguyen Hue, were people who led popular revolts against invading armies or oppressive warlords. The "aggressors" were of course the Chinese, who were defeated in all the episodes Giap cites.

Giap says, "The history of wars in our country...was essentially a history of national uprisings and wars -- that is, people's uprisings and people's wars." However he concedes that some of Viet-Nam's heroes were "feudalists" and denied their peasant followers a fair share in the fruits of victory. The concluding paragraph of this section states:

"The tradition of the entire people pooling their efforts to fight the aggressors' and their experience in people's uprisings and wars and experience in military organization -- which includes the national army and the people's armed forces -- are valuable traditions and experiences of our people. These are also characteristics rare in the military history of peoples. With the emergency of the Vietnamese working class and our Party, and in accordance with Marxism-Leninism and our Party's political and military lines, these valuable traditions and experiences have been further developed by our Party and the Vietnamese people in new historic conditions in order to defeat the most cruel aggressor enemy of the era." The DRV's Defense Minister clearly believes that his country is equipped by history to
successfully face any threat.

Chapter III, which was published in the February and March issues of Tap Chi Quan Doi Nhan Dan, and the March and April issues of Hoc Tap, is being reproduced as Part II of this research note.

Chapter IV will be published as Part III when it is available.
"ARM THE REVOLUTIONARY MASSES
AND BUILD THE PEOPLE'S ARMY"
By Senior Gen Võ Nguyên Giáp

[Hanoi Học Tập in Vietnamese January 1972]

The Vietnamese people are heroic people with a very glorious tradition of anti-aggression struggle. For many centuries our people have had experience in national uprisings and people's war against aggressor armies far more numerous and stronger than themselves.

Since the birth of the Vietnamese working class, led by our Party and aiming at the objectives of the revolution—national independence, democracy and socialism—our people have further developed the nation's anti-aggression [struggle—Ed.], stepping up national uprisings and people's war to a very high level. They defeated the Japanese fascists and the French imperialists and are defeating the U.S. imperialists, adding the most splendid pages to their history and making worthy contributions to the revolutionary undertaking of the Indochinese, Southeast Asian and world peoples.

In the successful struggle against imperialism and colonialism, the cruel aggressive forces of the 20th Century, Viet-Nam is the symbol of the undaunted struggle spirit, of the creative intellect, of the military skill to kill the aggressors for national salvation and of the matchless strength of the people's war. The Vietnamese people's war is a great fact and legend of the 20th Century. The Vietnamese people pointed out this brilliant truth: In the present era a small nation, whose territory is not vast, whose population is not numerous and whose economy is underdeveloped can absolutely defeat aggressor enemies far stronger than themselves, including ringleader imperialists—the U.S. imperialists—if it is united and determined to fight, if it has appropriate revolutionary lines, if it knows how to creatively apply the Marxist-Leninist principles of national uprisings and the people's war to its concrete situation and if it is helped by the socialist camp and the progressives.
In setting the appropriate and creative lines for the revolution and revolutionary war in Viet-Nam, our Party soon discovered and has closely adhered to the laws of the development of our society and the laws of revolutionary war and of revolutionary violence in our country. The main content of these laws of revolutionary violence is to coordinate political with armed forces, political with armed struggle and uprisings with revolutionary wars. In the leadership of national uprisings and the people's war, our Party has built a national solidarity bloc on the basis of the worker-peasant alliance led by the working class, has organized the masses' broad political force and has built the people's strong armed forces that include the masses' armed forces and the revolutionary army. Our people have creatively applied every form of struggle, coordinating offensives with uprisings and applying the strategy of offensive throughout the three strategic areas in order to annihilate the enemy, regain and maintain their right to mastership, overthrow the imperialist yoke and the imperialists' puppets and defeat the imperialist war of aggression.

This article deals with the problem of building the people's armed forces in uprisings, and the revolutionary war in our country, part of the main content of our Party's military line.

In the process of carrying out national uprisings and the people's war and building national defense under the Party's leadership, our people's armed forces were born, have grown rapidly and have won gloriously. Every patriotic Vietnamese has stood up to fight and kill the aggressors for national salvation. Our people have developed the nation's tradition of "all family members are soldiers" by organizing the People's Army to kill the aggressors and the masses' armed forces to directly engage in the fighting everywhere. Today our nation has millions of combatants in the masses' broad armed organizations and hundreds of thousands of combatants in the units of the People's Army who are equipped with many kinds of weapons, from rudimentary to relatively modern and modern ones, who fight the aggressors with an excellent art, who are very valiant and intelligent and who are fighting sacrificially day and night for the Fatherland's independence, freedom and reunification, for socialism and against the ringleader imperialists of the present era, the U.S. imperialist aggressors.
Looking back at the rapid growth and the road lined with brilliant victories that our people in general and the people's armed forces in particular have achieved in their struggle against the Japanese fascists, the French colonialists and the U.S. imperialists, we may say that the force of all-people's uprisings and the people's war consists of both political forces and armed forces. This is a typical case of our Party's success in organizing and building the combined strength of the revolutionary masses and of revolutionary violence. We may also say that our people's armed forces comprise both the armed forces of the masses and the revolutionary army organized and led by the Party. This is a typical case of success in organizing and building the military forces of our nation—a small nation that has successfully defeated three big imperialist powers in the present era.

This typical success was achieved because our Party firmly grasped perfect Marxist-Leninist theories on the organization of military forces in armed uprisings and in revolutionary war, inherited and further developed the tradition of all-people's struggle against the aggressors and experience in organizing the armed forces acquired by our people in the former national uprisings and national wars and critically learned from experience acquired by other nations. Our Party has creatively applied these theories and experience to the practical conditions of the uprisings and the war in our country—that is, to the real situation of a small country having to cope with powerful aggressive forces of imperialism and colonialism with a view to achieving the objectives set forth by our Party for the revolution in our country.

Deeply imbued with the views on revolutionary violence and on people's warfare, our Party advocates arming the broad masses along with building a powerful people's army. Our Party regards the masses' armed forces as a foundation of the People's Army and regards the People's Army as core elements of the masses' armed forces in armed uprisings and in the revolutionary war, as well as in building all-people's national defense, in the national liberation war and in the national defense war.
Deeply imbued with a concrete historical viewpoint, in different periods of revolutionary struggle our Party has successfully armed the masses and built the People’s Army in consonance with the demands of the revolutionary task, with the objectives of the fight and with the form of the revolutionary struggle in each period on the basis of the concrete historical, political, social and economic conditions.

Although the Nixon Administration has sustained heavy setbacks, it is stubbornly continuing to carry out the Vietnamization program and intensify and expand the war of aggression all over Indochina. The South Vietnamese people, clearly understanding the procedures of the revolutionary war in the new situation, are intensifying their armed struggle and political struggle and closely combining military offensives with uprisings in the three strategic zones, being determined, together with the fraternal Cambodian and Lao peoples, to completely smash the "Vietnamization" strategy and the Nixon Doctrine in Indochina.

More than ever, while developing political forces and political struggle, it is necessary that our people vigorously step up the building of the armed forces and intensify the armed struggle and closely combine them with other struggles in order, together with our entire people, to completely defeat the U.S. aggressors and their henchmen, liberate the South, protect the North, proceed toward the reunification of the Fatherland and fulfill our international duty.

While endeavoring to fulfill this prime mission of our revolution, it is necessary that we create conditions and set forth trends for a long-term building of the people’s armed forces and the all-people’s national defense to effectively defend our Fatherland against the invasion of any enemy who dares to grab our land and infringe upon our national independence and freedom, no matter how powerful he may be and whatever modern weapons he may have.

It is necessary that we satisfactorily solve the problem of arming the revolutionary masses and building the people’s armed forces with a view to fulfilling these immediate and long-term missions of our people.
To attain these objectives it is necessary to make an in-depth study of the Marxist-Leninist theories on the military organization of the proletarian class, learn from our national traditions and experience in organizing our people's armed forces in the past and, particularly, recapitulate the experience acquired by our Party in the past 40 years of building the armed forces and arming the masses.

Arming the masses and building the armed forces is one of the urgent problems of the world's peoples in the present era and in the present struggle for independence, sovereignty, democracy and socialism and against the policies of violence and war of the imperialists headed by the Americans and in the face of the present strong development of increasingly modern weapons and war equipment in the world.

This article consists of four parts:

I.--The Marxist-Leninist theory on the military organization of the proletariat.

II.--Our people's traditions and experiences in building the armed forces in the past.

III.--Our Party's and people's creativeness in arming the revolutionary masses and building the people's armed forces over the past 40 years.

IV.--Strongly and largely arm the revolutionary masses and build a regular, modern people's armed forces.


Marxism-Leninism studies the problem of the military organization of the proletariat in the organic relationship with the class struggle doctrine and the state.

Since the original communal society, disintegrated society has been divided into classes and social history has been the history of class struggle. Because the existence of the peoples has given rise to the problem of oppression and
enslavement of people, the history of the class struggle has continued in the form of national struggle. The slave owners and slaves, the landlord class and the peasants, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, the oppressors and the oppressed peoples, the aggressive countries and the invaded countries and antagonistic groups of people in society have waged an incessant struggle in many forms, and when this struggle became most violent armed conflict or war would break out. From ancient times to the present in a society with classes countless wars have broken out. In about 5,000 years there have been more than 10,000 relatively large-scale wars.

The armed forces are the principal tool of war. Their birth is related to the emergence of the state when society is divided into antagonistic classes. The armed forces are a special organization of the state, a tool of a definite class that is used to implement the political line of that class through the means of armed violence.

The state's class character decides the social character and the function of the armed forces. The armed forces of all exploiting states have the following basic functions: Internally, suppress the exploited masses and force them to submit to the order of the ruling class; externally, conquer other countries and defend their own countries from foreign aggression.

In social history there have been three types of exploiting states and three corresponding types of armed forces: the armed forces of the slave state, the armed forces of the feudal state and the armed forces of the bourgeois state.

In the process of history these types of armed forces were given many different names and adopted different organizational forms and recruiting methods according to the concrete conditions, but the nature of these armed forces is identical, which is that the exploiting state's armed forces are always a tool of the ruling class to suppress the exploited masses in the country and to plunder and enslave other countries and peoples.
However, the ruling class's army is not the only army to exist under an exploiting regime. To resist the ruling class's armed violence, the oppressed masses, in the process of their revolutionary struggle, also built their own revolutionary armed organizations. In ancient Rome the slaves rose up under the leadership of Spartacus, whom Marx regarded as "the finest typical personality in all ancient history, a talented warrior and a genuine representative of the ancient proletariat." (Marx: letter to Engels, 27 February 1861). He succeeded in organizing a sizable partisan army consisting of hundreds of thousands of men who fought perseveringly against the enslaving state army.

In the feudal era armed peasant organizations frequently emerged in the uprisings in Europe, Asia, Africa... In many countries peasant wars and wars of liberation broke out on a fairly large scale and had a very strong fighting strength. Even when capitalism was on the rise armed organizations of the peasants and workers—who struggled spontaneously under the bourgeoisie's banner—also continuously participated in the various bourgeois revolutions against feudalism.

However, because of historical limitations and because of the absence of correct political, military and organizational lines the revolutionary armed organizations of the various exploited classes—despite the fact that they fought very courageously and frequently won very great victories—were finally repressed by the enemy and betrayed by their "allies."

This betrayal was reflected most vividly in the bourgeois revolution led by the bourgeoisie. Engels pointed out long ago in France that following each revolution the workers were armed. "Therefore, the first move by the bourgeois clique holding power was to disarm the workers. In line with this move, following each revolution—in which the workers shed their blood—a new struggle broke out and ended in the workers' defeat." (Engels: Foreword to "The Civil War In France" by Marx, Marx-Engels, Selected Works, Su That Publishing House, Hanoi, 1962, Volume I, pp 756-757)
The problem of the oppressed masses' military organizations was not perfectly solved within the framework of the proletariat's military science until the emergence of Marxism and until the proletariat, led by its own political party, became an independent political force and moved from the period of "spontaneity" to the period of "self-consciousness" -- a period in which the proletariat's revolutionary struggle made big leaps forward qualitatively. The emergence of the working class's party--the Communist Party--in the political arena and this party's holding of revolutionary leadership in various countries led to the emergence of armed organizations that obviously had a revolutionary and popular nature and that emerged from the proletarian revolutions or from the democratic bourgeois, people's democratic and national liberation revolutions led by the working class. Specifically, following the success of the Russian October Revolution and the subsequent successes achieved by many other socialist countries in Europe, Asia and Latin America there emerged for the first time in the world a form of completely new armed forces: Armed forces that actually belonged to the people and to the state of proletarian dictatorship--the most advanced state in the history of mankind.

1--Marx's and Engels' Points of Discussion.

While defining the historic mission of the international working class as the burier of capitalism and as the builder of communist society--a classless society free of the system of exploitation of man by man--Marx and Engels also indicated to the proletariat the correct way to liberate itself. Along this way the working class--under the Communist Party's leadership, in close alliance with the peasants and using revolutionary violence--destroyed the state apparatus of the bourgeoisie, set up the state of proletarian dictatorship and used it as a tool to protest the proletariat's domination and reform society in accordance with communist principles.

The establishment of the proletariat's military organizations was dictated primarily by the great revolutionary struggle of the proletariat. Despite the shackles imposed on them, the proletariat and the revolutionary masses rose up
and destroyed the old world. In the revolutionary process it was necessary for the proletariat and the revolutionary masses to advance with their military organizations. Military organizations were necessary because only by using material forces could the proletariat and the revolutionary masses destroy the enemy's material forces and only by resorting to violence could they fulfill their great, historic mission—that of overthrowing the bourgeois' yoke of domination and establishing the proletarian dictatorship. Never would the ruling class voluntarily withdraw from the arena of history. The monarchical state and the bourgeois state always had at their disposal sizable armed forces and concerned themselves with unceasingly improving and perfecting these armed forces as an effective tool for repressing the laboring people at home and pushing their piratic political line in the international arena. They constantly relied on the counterrevolutionary military apparatus to stifle all the proletariat's and laboring masses' aspirations for freedom and drive their revolutionary struggle into a blood-bath. Even when capitalism was on the rise Engels pointed out this "basic characteristic" of the bourgeoisie, saying: "... The bourgeoisie has showed us that whenever the proletariat—as a separate class with their own interests and demands—dares oppose it, the bourgeois may take extremely cruel and frenzied reprisals." (Engels: Foreword to "The Civil War In France" by Marx; Marx-Engels, Selected Works, Su That Publishing House, Hanoi, 1962, Volume I, page 758) The development of capitalism and its increasingly acute, intrinsic contradictions inevitably gave rise to a growing militarist tendency to build up the counterrevolutionary armed forces within the state apparatus of the bourgeoisie. Engels wrote: "The army has become a main objective of the state. The army per se has become an end, whereas the people are only a source of supply of troops and a source of material support for the troops. Militarism is dominating and trampling on Europe." (Engels, Anti-Duehring, Su That Publishing House, Hanoi, 1959, page 286)

This situation compelled the proletariat and the oppressed masses to form their own military organizations to resist armed repression by the bourgeois state, destroy the military apparatus and crush all its acts of resistance and seize and firmly maintain revolutionary power.
If a military organization is an imperative requirement in the proletariat's struggle to overthrow the bourgeoisie, how should this military organization be built?

This is a problem that was perfectly solved by the masters of Marxism-Leninism. Apart from being founders of the proletariat's military science, Marx and Engels were also the first builders of the theoretical foundation of the question of which form the proletariat's military organization should take. They raised the following famous point of discussion: arming the working class and replacing the regular army with arming the people. "... Workers must be armed and organized. It is necessary to immediately arm the entire proletariat with rifles, carbines, artillery guns and ammunition.... It is necessary to arm the proletariat and counter all attempts to disarm workers." (Marx and Engels: "Letter from the Party Central Committee to the Communists' Allies," Marx and Engels, Selected Works, Su That Publishing House, Hanoi, 1962, Volume I, page 145) This seething call for struggle, which Marx and Engels made in the 1850's was based on the experience gained from the French proletariat's first, great and bloody struggle against the bourgeoisie in 1848. At the time when popular uprisings and civil war had become an immediate political mission for the revolutions in a number of developed capitalist countries in Western Europe, Marx and Engels regarded this call for struggle as a main requirement set forth in the proletariat's revolutionary action program.

The history of Europe between the end of the 18th Century and the middle of the 19th Century was still a history of bourgeois democratic revolutions. Against that background, the proletariat had to ally with the bourgeois democratic parties in opposing the feudal ruling clique and the reactionary bourgeoisie, and usually after a successful revolution this party temporarily took power. In this situation Marx and Engels considered arming the proletariat an essential condition not only for smashing the state machinery of the reactionary feudal and bourgeois classes and for winning victories in uprisings, but also for dooming the inevitable deceitful schemes of the bourgeois democratic parties which would betray the workers after taking power. They said this is also essential for insuring that the working class' political
independence is maintained and strengthened and for protecting the achievements of its struggle, thus creating conditions for advancing toward the proletarian revolution and for using its power to eliminate bourgeois rule.

Marx and Engels believed that after the proletariat was armed it would possess boundless strength. Marx and Engels themselves clearly saw this strength in the 1848 revolution in Paris. Marx said: "One knows that the workers had no leaders, common plans or means and almost no weapons, but with their unmatched bravery and talents they succeeded in resisting for five straight days against the armed forces and the security guards in Paris, as well as against the national guardsmen coming from the provinces." (Marx: "The Class Struggle In Paris"; Marx-Engels, Selected Works, Sự Thất Publishing House, Hanoi, 1962, volume I, page 226). As for Engels, he said; "If 40,000 workers in Paris could resist as vigorously as they did against such forces, which were four times stronger than they were, what great achievements all the Paris workers would score if they acted in conformity with discipline and as everyone did!" (Marx-Engels: Selected Works, in German, Volume VII part 1, page 134).

Developing their ideology, in 1871, relying on the experience of the Paris Commune, Marx and Engels advanced the following principle: The concern of any successful revolution is to smash the old armed forces, disband the old armed forces, replace the old armed forces with new armed forces and substitute people's armed forces for regular armed forces. Marx said: "Paris, which was the seat of the old administration and the socialist fortress of the French working class, could resist because of the fact that it was surrounded and it succeeded in eliminating the regular armed forces and in replacing them with a national guard composed mostly of workers. It is necessary now to turn this actual situation into a permanent regime." (Marx: "The Civil War In France"; Marx-Engels, Selected Works, Sự Thất Publishing House, Hanoi, 1962, Volume I, page 832).

Marx and Engels stressed that under the capitalist regime the regular armed forces were the main tool of the bourgeoisie's ruling for waging the war against the laborers. To smash these regular armed forces means to deprive the bourgeoisie power of its material tool and to eliminate the
danger of its resistance and uprising. At the same time, relying firmly on the forces of the revolutionary masses, the proletariat must rapidly build and develop its military organization by arming the proletariat and the revolutionary masses and consider them the sole armed forces in order to firmly maintain the success of its uprising and to develop its revolution. The Paris Commune taught the world proletariat this life-or-death lesson: "The Commune's first decree calls for elimination of the regular armed forces and its replacement with the armed people." (Marx: "The Civil War In France"; Marx-Engels, Selected Works, Sê Thất Publishing House, Hanoi, 1962, Volume I, page 832). Marx and Engels highly assessed this lesson on the working class duty to smash the old state's bureaucratic and military machinery and to replace it with the organization of the proletariat's new state and so seriously considered this an insight of great historic significance that later in their foreword in the 1872 [edition] of the Communist Manifesto Marx and Engels considered this an addition of great significance to the Manifesto.

Engels also anticipated that to arm the people would be the form of military organization for the socialist states.

This anticipation was based primarily on the theories of Marx and Engels that the success of socialism could only come simultaneously in all or in most of the developed capitalist countries. Moreover, because of its nature the socialist system did not take aggressive action against any country and, therefore, did not need a regular army. The armed people could assume the task of protecting internal public order and security. Engels also based his theories on an analysis of the situation of the armies of various countries and on the status of the military art and military technology in the latter half of the 19th Century. At that time only France, Germany and Russia, which were developed capitalist countries, had sizable military apparatuses, whereas the other capitalist countries, including Britain and the United States, did not yet have sizable armed forces. Therefore, once proletarian revolution had broken out and triumphed in all or in most of the developed capitalist countries, the military forces of the remaining capitalist countries no longer had substantial strength. In this situation Engels, basing himself on the experience of the Paris Commune, was convinced that once the people--under
the socialist system and relying on its superiority—have been armed, organized and trained militarily, they are fully capable of defeating the aggressor troops in the self-defense wars waged to protect the socialist state.

On the basis of this analysis, Marx and Engels held that in the process of socialist revolution the bourgeoisie's regular army must be replaced by the armed people.

Marx and Engels dealt with the problem of arming the masses not only in the proletariat's uprisings and within the socialist state's military organization, but also in national wars. While analyzing various wars Marx and Engels drew a line of distinction between just war and aggressive war and consistently sided with the just wars—national liberation and self-defense wars—of the oppressed peoples and of victims of aggression. Engels concerned himself with taking into account, studying and consolidating the experience discerned from the contemporary wars and tried hard to chart for the oppressed peoples the correct way to wage people's war in order to defeat the aggressors' professional army. In many published studies on the history of war, Engels dealt extensively with the armed masses' great impact and major role in just and self-defense wars. Engels' thoughts were closely associated with the new methods of waging people's war that he advocated. He wrote: "A people intent on achieving independence for themselves should not confine themselves to conventional methods of waging war. Staging mass uprisings, waging revolutionary war and organizing guerrilla teams everywhere are the only ways whereby a small nation can defeat a large nation and whereby a less powerful army can oppose a more powerful and better organized army." (Engels, "Defeat Of The Piedmont People," excerpted from the work by Engels, Lenin and Stalin entitled "On People's War," Su That Publishing House, Hanoi, 1970, page 27). The broad, armed masses of the people constitute a main force used in waging this form of war.

Engels warmly hailed the resistance wars in France (1793) and Spain (1807-12), Russia's resistance against Napoleon (1812), Hungary's resistance against Austria (1849) and so forth. In these resistance wars, the resistance
forces were capable of adopting the methods of waging people's war, coordinating the regular army's combat with the armed masses' combat activities and, thereby, bringing into full play the great strength of their respective people and country in order to defeat the aggressor armies that were more powerful than themselves.

In analyzing the defeat of the Piedmontese in the northern part of Italy in their self-defense against the Austrian troops, Engels pointed out: "The initial big mistake of the Piedmontese was that they used regular troops to resist the Austrian troops and the Piedmontese wanted only to conduct a general, bourgeois and conventional war." (Engels, Lenin and Stalin: "On People's War," Su That Publishing-House, Hanoi, 1970, page 27.) As pointed out by Engels, the Piedmontese troops' defeat at Novarra "would be insignificant if a really revolutionary war broke out after this defeat, if the remnants of the Italian army immediately declared that they were the nucleus of a nationwide general uprising and if the ordinary strategic war of the armed forces became a people's war like that waged by the French in 1973" (same work, page 29) and if the Turin government courageously took revolutionary measures and dared motivate the people to wage a revolutionary war. Engels concluded: Italy's independence was doomed because of the cowardice of the monarchy and not because of the invincibility of Austrian weapons.

Engels also drew an identical conclusion when he commented on the French-German war in 1871.

Engels held that France was fully capable of reversing the situation even after the German troops had occupied one-sixth of French territory and were encircling the Merdes and Paris fortresses. He pointed out: While nearly all the German forces were pinned down in the area under their occupation, in the remaining five-sixths of its territory France was still capable of forming a sufficient number of armed units to harass the German forces, cut their communications lines, destroy their logistic bases, attack scattered German units.... everywhere. Thereby, the French could force the Germans to spread their forces and to partially withdraw their troops from these two fortresses to cope with the situation to the
extent that Baden could seek ways to escape from Merdes and the German troops' encirclement of Paris could become a mere "ghostly shadow."

Engels asked: "What would the Germans' fate be if the French were as patriotic as the Spaniards in 1808, if each city and hamlet became a bastion and if each peasant and citizen became a combatant?" (same work, page 155).

Engels also dealt with the people's armed uprising and ad hoc units of Asian forces which, with their numerous methods of conducting people's war, were a good match for the European aggressive armies. Engels wrote: "The Chinese calmly and rationally poisoned bread... hiding weapons on themselves, they boarded a merchant ship and during the voyage they killed the shipmaster and seized the ship.... Even those coolies aboard the ship bound for foreign areas also arose and fought to seize the ship. They would rather die in the sinking ship or amid the flames burning on the ship than surrender. Even outside their fatherland's border, the Chinese emigrants concocted plots and suddenly staged night uprisings..." (Engels, Lenin and Stalin: "Persia and China" quoted from the book "On People's War," Su That Publishing House, Hanoi, 1970, pages 118-119) and Engels asked: "What can an army do to oppose a people who have conducted a war with such methods?"

We can see that the initial viewpoint, on the military organization of the proletariat and oppressed masses, of those who created scientific communism is the arming of the working class, people and revolutionary masses. Marx and Engels laid the theoretical foundation for the uprisings to win proletarian dictatorship, in the wars to protect the socialist state and even in the liberation and self-defense wars of the oppressed peoples and invaded countries who were living under bourgeois regimes.

Obviously this is a very basic view. This was marvelous success for Marx and Engels in applying the theories materialism, of classes, the masses and revolutionary violence to the building of military organizations of
the proletariat and the oppressed masses. This was a typical example of a correct assessment of the masses’ decisive role in armed uprisings and revolutionary wars. The great value of this view lies in the fact that for the first time in world history it shows the proletariat and the oppressed peoples the most correct direction and path to follow to create their own military organizations; new-type military organizations that are born in the bosom of the proletariat and the working class and that fight for the people and their class. If a revolutionary party has a correct revolutionary line and knows how to firmly rely on the revolutionary masses—workers, peasants and so forth—to build and develop its military organizations, it will be able to create for itself an invincible revolutionary armed force.

This view has become the theoretical foundation of the task of building the armed forces in the military doctrine of Marxism-Leninism. It is an extremely powerful weapon for the proletariat and the oppressed peoples worldwide. It is of great assistance to them in their revolutionary struggle to destroy the old world and build a new one.

2—Lenin’s Views

The Russian Marxists, headed by the great Lenin, applied the above view of Marx and Engels to new historic conditions: the socialist revolution and the democratic bourgeois revolution were carried out during the imperialist phase.

Under the condition that capitalism had entered the imperialist phase, Lenin advanced his new and famous view: socialism cannot triumph in all countries at one time; but first it will triumph in one country or a few countries. At the same time, relying on the new doctrine on the proletariat’s leadership over the democratic bourgeois revolution and on the evolution from the democratic bourgeois revolution to the proletarian revolution, Lenin and the Russian Bolshevik Party worked out a military program for the democratic bourgeois revolution and the socialist revolution in Russia.
Lenin pointed out the inevitability of the building of military organizations for the proletariat under new historic conditions: "The bourgeoisie's armed struggle against the proletariat is one of the major, most fundamental and most important truths of the contemporary capitalist society. Our slogan should be: Arm the proletariat so that it can defeat and disarm the bourgeoisie. This is the only strategy which the revolutionary class can advance—a strategy that originates from the objective development of capitalist militarism and whose advance is required by this development." (Lenin; "Military Program of the Proletarian Revolution," Complete Works, Volume 23, Russian Version, 4th edition, page 69).

Since the beginning of the 20th Century and throughout the process of their leadership over the 1905 Revolution and the Great October Revolution, Lenin and the Russian Communist Party—basing themselves on the principles of Marx and Engels—set forth the necessity of replacing the regular army by the people's militia through arming the people. This is one of the main objectives of the program of the democratic bourgeois revolution as well as that of the socialist revolution.

Lenin pointed out that in Russia as well as in many countries worldwide, the bourgeois regular army was mainly used not to oppose foreign aggressors, but to repress workers and wage wars of aggression for enslaving other peoples. Lenin wrote: "Everywhere the regular army has become a weapon for the reactionary forces; it has become a servant to the capitalists in their struggle against the working class; it has become an executioner in charge of destroying the people's freedoms." (Lenin "The Army and the Revolution," Complete Works, Volume 10, Russian Version, 4th edition, page 38). Such an army can never become a prop for the people. Eliminating the army is a condition for the revolution; it helps the revolution frustrate all the plots aimed at restoring the reactionary forces and reduce the enormous budget earmarked for supporting this Army. Then it is necessary to arm the people, especially workers and poor peasants. Basing himself on the contemporary historic conditions, Lenin asserted: "No forces in the world dare to invade free Russia if the main prop of this freedom is the armed people who have destroyed
militarism, who have turned all soldiers into citizens and who have turned all citizens capable of carrying weapons into soldiers.... Military science has demonstrated that a people's militia system can be achieved and that the people's militia can fulfill its fighting tasks in a defensive war as well as in an offensive war." (Lenin; "The Army and the Revolution." Complete Works, volume 10, Russian Version, 4th Edition, page 39)

Under Lenin's leadership, during the pre-October Revolution period along with building a political army of the revolution, the Russian Communist Party and working class had striven to carry out this slogan. They had stepped up troop-proselytizing activities and the party-building task within the Czar's armed forces with a view to disintegrating or drawing army units to the revolutionary ranks. They had emphasized military study within the Party, had positively propagated military knowledge among the masses and trained them militarily, had armed the workers and the revolutionary masses with weapons, had established and strengthened the Communist Party's leadership in a military organization, had organized worker militia units and combat units serving as a nucleus for the revolutionary armed forces and had built a revolutionary force in which the workers and the peasants would be united with the revolutionary soldiers. This force was an armed revolutionary force composed of three elements: a) the armed proletariat and peasants; b) organized progressive teams formed by the representatives of these classes; and c) army units that volunteered to return to the people. Thanks to this, the revolution was able to activate an armed force composed mainly of the majority of the masses of armed workers and peasants fighting under the Communist Party's leadership and serving as an assault force for the masses revolutionary movement. This force played a decisive role in the victories of the February Revolution and later of the October Revolution.

The success of the Russian October Revolution led to the birth of the first socialist state in the world. This socialist state was located in the middle of the hostile circle of imperialism. The success of the Russian October Revolution opened a new era in mankind's history and rocked the entire capitalist world. Therefore, as Lenin had
foreseen, imperialism was resolved to strangle to death the socialist state while the latter was still in embryo. This danger of aggression prompted the Soviet State to carry out the inevitable duty to arm itself to defend the socialist fatherland against aggressive imperialism and to review its military organization.

Lenin's great contributions were attributed to the fact that he not only affirmed the principles of Marx and Engels on arming the people, but also developed Marx and Engels' concept and stressed the need to build a permanent, regular army of the Soviet State on the basis of arming the people, a new-type army of the working class and of other laboring people.

Lenin stressed that in the face of the very great danger of aggression, if the Soviet Republic did not want to become a prey for imperialism, it should possess a well-trained, well-equipped, disciplined, powerful regular army with a concentrated, unified command. As pointed out by Lenin, under conditions in which the capitalist powers possess great armies that are well-trained and equipped with modern weapons, in which the conditions that the armed forces of the Soviet State are gradually equipped with modern weapons and the troops must be trained and equipped in accordance with the rules of the modern military art and in which the imperialists can always launch a surprise offensive, the armed forces of the Soviet State cannot only maintain a civil guard force. They must have a regular army. Lenin asserted: "At present the regular army must be raised to the first rank" (Lenin; Complete Works, Russian Edition, volume 24, 3rd edition, page 750). This regular army is different in substance from the army of the bourgeoisie. This is a new-style army, a people's army, a revolutionary army, and a socialist army.

Considering the demands of modern war, a regular army presents obvious superiority over a militia force: great mobility because of nondependence on the locality; modern weapons and technical means; intensive, long-term, comprehensive and systematic training consistent with the constantly developing demands of military technology and art; a body of well-trained and experienced professional cadres; a great combat strength and permanent combat readiness.
Faced with an entirely new problem under difficult circumstances and relying upon the people's creativeness, along with dissolving the old army Lenin and the Soviet Communists gradually but successfully solved a series of problems involving the principles of building a new type of regular army of the proletarian state—the worker-peasant Red Army. Lenin defined the functions and tasks of the red army, the revolutionary and popular character of the proletarian state's army, the Party's organization, the system of political tasks, the Communist Party's close leadership over the army, the lines and policies toward forming and improving cadres; the principles of organizing, equipping, educating and training the Soviet Army, Soviet military tactics and many other aspects of the Red Army's activities.

In building the Red Army, Lenin had to struggle resolutely and persistently against every erroneous tendency. He completely smashed schemes of the Menshevik and Socialist-Revolutionary cliques and of Anarchists who disguised themselves under the fallacious "arming the people" label to frenziedly oppose the Party's lines and stands toward building the Red Army. At the 8th Congress of the Party, Lenin and his militant comrades defeated the "military opposition faction" in the Party that opposed strict discipline and a unified and concentrated command, that is, actually opposed the principles of building the Red Army's regular troops.

After the Civil War, the form of the Soviet state's military organization was once again discussed. The Communist Party, led by Lenin, resolutely rejected the Trotskyites' tendency to dissolve the Red Army and turn the army into a militia.

Revolutionary realities have proven that Lenin's arguments are extremely clear-sighted and truthful. The Soviet state's success in defeating the armed intervention of the imperialists' clique that colluded with the domestic anti-revolutionaries in the hope of nipping the Soviet state in the bud and the Soviet Union's great success in the great patriotic 1941-45 war that defeated German fascism and Japanese militarism are not separated from these proper arguments of Lenin. The entire world knows that in World War II, the
Soviet Union's Red Army—the powerful regular army of the first Soviet state in the world—is the force that held a direct, decisive role in defeating German fascism's and Japanese militarism's cruel aggressive armies—which had tens of millions of troops and had very modern equipment—wiping the aggressors out of the Soviet fatherland, making contributions to directly liberating many countries in Europe and Asia, pursuing and annihilating the Nazis right at their last lairs and saving mankind from the disaster of fascism.

Not only was the Red Army absolutely superior over the enemy politically and morally but it was also superior over him in the quantity and quality of troops, in the quantity and quality of modern weapons and means and in tactics and the art of command. It was on the basis of this powerful force that the Red Army could launch counteroffensive and offensive operations on a very large scale, annihilating tens of divisions of the enemy in one operation, destroying his defense lines, liberating vast territories, creating decisive turning points in the development of the war and finally advancing the war to great success.

Lenin's point regarding the building of the Red Army was a new development of Marx and Engels' theory on the socialist state's military organization under the new historic conditions of a socialist state encircled by capitalism. The great value of this point lies in the fact that it reveals to the proletariat that during the age of imperialism, when the inherently bellicose imperialists possess colossal aggressive armies equipped with ultramodern weapons, the socialist state must have a powerful regular army along with the armed people to safeguard the fatherland's security.

Holding administrative power, the proletariat can fully depend on the supremacy of the new social regime and on the modern material and technical bases to unceasingly develop socialism and can use its state apparatus to rapidly build such an army, that is, a new-style modern regular army to be a steadfast support for the national defense of the socialist state.

Here the question is: How must the people be armed after the socialist state has built such a powerful regular army?
In Lenin's opinion, it is necessary to build a socialist red army on the basis of arming the people. At the Third Congress of the All Russian Workers Soviet of Peasants and Soldiers Lenin told about an elderly Finnish woman who met a Red Army soldier as she was gathering wood. Unlike the soldiers of the Czar, who usually seized her firewood, this soldier helped her collect more. Through this story Lenin showed that the masses had a different opinion of the soldiers of the Red Army. He said: "...They told each other that from now on they no longer need fear the soldiers because they protect the working people and will mercilessly smash the yoke of the exploiting clique...." (Lenin, Complete Works, volume 26, French Edition, page 404). This is truly a revolutionary army, a people's army. Dealing with relations between the red troops and the armed people, Lenin said: "This is the people's feeling. When the ordinary illiterate people tell one another that the Red Guards are making every effort to resist the exploiters, their words are an invincible strength. They will reach tens of millions of people and will help build a steadfast undertaking similar to that built by the Paris Commune in the 19th Century, which was soon defeated by the bourgeoisie. These words will help build a socialist Red Army on the basis of arming the people as expected by all socialist persons" (Ibid).

At the 8th Bolshevik Party Congress, Lenin, stressing the need to concentrate on building a Red Army, pointed out that the Party continued to maintain the civil guard network. The program of the congress stressed the duty to train all the working people militarily and to build close relations between the reorganized troops and state enterprises, trade unions and poor peasants' organizations.

In the Soviet Union, after the successful October Revolution, the armed forces of the revolutionary masses, the civil guard teams and guerrilla teams of poor workers and peasants played a very important role in the struggle against the counterrevolutionaries. The Red Guards were the nucleus of the worker-peasant Red Army.

Before the Red Army became a force of millions, in many areas of Russia guerrilla teams were one of the main forces of the people's struggle against the foreign interventionists.
and white guards. During the Civil War tens of thousands of guerrillas fought in the enemy's rear in close coordination with the Red Army. Many units and corps of the Red Army were set up from guerrilla teams during the Civil War.

After the success of the Civil War the Red Army's troop strength decreased whereas its quality intensively improved, and for many years the militia system was maintained in many forms consistent with the concrete situation of each period.

In the great 1941-45 national defense resistance, led by the CPSU headed by Stalin, guerrilla, militia and militant workers organizations developed great effects in uniting with the Red Army in defeating German fascism in their fatherland.

One million guerrillas, organized by the Communist Party throughout the war, fought valiantly in areas temporarily occupied by German troops. They annihilated millions of enemy troops and pinned down one-tenth of the German fascists' total infantry. On the main battlefront the people's armed forces cooperated with the Red Army to fight the enemy to defend the Soviet fatherland. In many big campaigns divisions of the militia force, together with the people, coordinated their attacks with the Red Army to score outstanding achievements in combat and combat support activities.

The close coordination in combat between the standing army of the Soviet state and the people's armed forces in the great national salvation war—in which the Soviet Red Army played the main role—was a lively picture of people's war under present conditions.

The USSR people and the Red Army combatants are proud of the great strength of the sacred people's war against the fascist Germans from 1941 through 1945. This pride is reflected in the following sentences of a popular Soviet song:

"The people's war,
"A sacred war."
This was the success of USSR military science and of the people's war policy of Marxism-Leninism; it was also the success of the principles of Karl Marx, Engels and Lenin on building military organizations which the CPSU has applied under new conditions.

During and after World War II the revolutionary struggle movement of the people of various countries vigorously developed; many revolts and revolutionary wars occurred in Europe and Asia. The great victory of the Red Army over fascism and the great success of the revolutionary struggle of the world people brought into existence many socialist countries and a world system. The world people's struggle for socialism, national independence, democracy and peace has formed a revolutionary high tide to repeatedly attack imperialism.

It was in the flames of struggle of the armed uprising and the revolutionary war after the October Revolution and during and after World War II that the revolutionary armed forces of the peoples of the socialist countries in Europe, Asia and Latin America were born and quickly developed. Because of the different concrete historic conditions and circumstances, the process and degree of development and the organizational patterns of the revolutionary armed forces of the socialist countries were not identical, but most of these forces were born as a result of the guerrilla movement against the reactionaries within their countries and against the fascist aggressors, were organized into armies and were composed even of the masses' armed organizations in different forms.

In Asia in the process of a protracted and hard revolutionary armed struggle against the imperialists, feudalists and bureaucratic capitalists, the Chinese people succeeded in activating the worker-peasant Red Army, carried out the policy of "mobilizing and arming all people" and won great victories. Our Vietnamese people have successfully conducted armed uprising and revolutionary war. Our people's armed forces are one of the typical success of the creative application of the Marxist-Leninist theory on arming the masses and building the army. We will analyze this matter in subsequent parts.
Through many forms of struggle many colonial and dependent countries succeeded in achieving independence in different degrees. Many countries achieved independence through armed struggle. These countries have become nationalist countries. In the process of armed struggle as well as after winning victory a number of countries, positively opposing imperialism and colonialism, strove to activate their armed forces by organizing the armies of the national administrations and states while at the same time arming the people to a certain degree.

At present the people of many Asian, African and Latin American countries who are conducting an armed struggle to win power and national independence have also applied the above mentioned experiences in organizing the revolutionary armed forces to their concrete circumstances.

Attacked from many directions and repeatedly defeated, imperialism, led by U.S. imperialism, has used many very cunning, wicked and ruthless policies to resist the revolutionary movement of the world’s peoples in the hope of maintaining its special privileges and interests. They (the imperialists--Editor) have increased national defense budgets, have engaged in an arms race, have developed mass destruction weapons, have built military bases everywhere, have established military alliance blocs and have repeatedly provoked armed interventions and "special" and "limited" aggressive wars in preparation for a new world war.

To defend their socialist fatherlands, to safeguard world peace and to frustrate imperialism's war schemes and tricks, along with building the economy and developing science and technology the countries of the socialist camp are endeavoring to increase their national defense capabilities. Relying on the superiority of the socialist regime and on the basis of the results in building the material and technical bases of socialism and communism, the socialist countries have taken great interest in activating revolutionary armies according to the trend of modernization in different degrees depending on their concrete conditions, have constantly improved the socialist armies' revolutionary character and have positively
armed the armies with increasingly modern weapons and means, including both nuclear and conventional weapons.

In activating a modern army many socialist countries have paid great attention to broadly arming the masses of people—the workers and the collective peasants—in appropriate organizational forms and to providing appropriate equipment for them to develop to the highest degree the strength of the masses and of the socialist regime in the consolidation of national defense and in the protection of their countries.

What conclusion do we draw from the above theory and facts? We can come to the following conclusion:

Arming the revolutionary masses in coordination with building a revolutionary army is a perfect Marxist-Leninist principle on the form of military organization of the socialist countries' national defense, of a liberation war, of a war to defend the fatherland and of a revolutionary war of the people of the world in the present era. This principle is the development of Marx and Engels' theory on arming the people to Lenin's theory on building a revolutionary army on the basis of arming the people.

Marx, Engels and Lenin marvelously recapitulated the experiences in building a military organization for the proletariat and the oppressed peoples in the process of a protracted revolutionary struggle to win and maintain power. To a certain extent this is the continuation and creative development of experiences in organizing the armed forces for the revolutionary classes and the oppressed and aggressed peoples in the historic epochs prior to the advent of Marxism.

Arising to carry out a revolution with their bare hands to overthrow the ruling yoke of the capitalists, the imperialists and the feudalists, the proletariat, the working people and the oppressed peoples naturally could not have an army at the very beginning of their struggle. In the process of the revolution, when the problem of armed
struggle and armed uprising was raised, the proletariat, the laboring people and the oppressed people inevitably had to build a military organization of their own. As a rule the initial form of this military organization is the armed masses, and on the basis of arming the masses a revolutionary army is gradually activated. Usually in an uprising the armed masses play a key role, but sometimes a revolutionary army plays an assault role. When the uprising is developed into a revolutionary war the army's role becomes ever more important and the revolutionary armed forces include both the army and the armed masses.

The building of a permanent, regular revolutionary army in its true sense can come about only when the proletariat and the laboring people win power and have a state. The form of military organization of a socialist state or a people's democratic state—an organizational form capable of developing to the highest degree the fighting strength of the people and of the new regime—is in associating the building of a modern regular revolutionary army with strong and broad arming of the revolutionary people. The armed masses and the revolutionary army are two elements of the state's armed forces in which the regular army is the core force and the armed masses are the broad force. Therefore attention must be paid to building the army and at the same time to developing the force of the armed masses.

The close coordination between these two elements in the socialist state's armed forces reflects the absolute superiority of the socialist regime to the exploitative class. Under various regimes of the state of the exploitative class, because the interests of the ruling class and those of the masses are completely contradictory, there is substantially opposition between the popular masses and the state and its regular army. The ruling state considers the armed revolutionary people as a danger. The reactionary rulers would rather lose the country than arm the people. As observed by Engels, they would rather cooperate with their cruelest enemy who has the same origin as themselves, than coalesce with the people. In a number of cases the feudal and bourgeois classes, while still playing their progressive role in history and maintaining their national spirit, have
armed the masses so they can cooperate with the regular army in resisting the aggressors. However, in these cases the arming of the masses is still restricted.

Under the socialist regime the situation is quite different. The exploiting class is overthrown, the exploitation of man by man is eliminated, the all-people ownership or collective ownership system is set up and the laboring people's right to collective ownership is confirmed.

The function of the socialist armed forces--the main violent tool of the dictatorial proletarian state--is to suppress all enemies within and outside the country and protect the new regime and the working people's interests. Together with the increasingly developed material and technical forces of socialism, this high political singleness--the spirit of the new society--is the most steadfast basis for building new-style modern, revolutionary armed forces and for developing to a new degree the combined combat strength of the revolutionary army and armed masses. The socialist state's armed forces are the first armed forces in history that include the workers and peasants who are real masters of their fate, who have a high political awareness and who are ready to sacrifice everything for socialist and communist ideals. They are invincible armed forces.
II -- Our People's Traditions And Experiences.

Marxist-Leninist theory on the military organization of the proletariat is mainly a recapitulation of the realities and experiences of the proletarian revolutions and national wars in Europe during the capitalist and imperialist era as well as a recapitulation of the realities and experiences of the military struggles and military organizations of various classes and nations through various eras.

After studying the history of our people's struggle against foreign aggression and the history of the organization of our armed forces, we find that there are different prominent characteristics between our military struggles and the organization of our armed forces and the corresponding situations in many European countries. Engels' expectations on general uprisings and people's war and on arming the masses in Europe in the 19th Century were fulfilled in a relatively universal manner in our country during a score of past centuries under feudal regimes. Realities and our people's unique, lively and rich experiences confirm the talents of Marx, Engels and Lenin as reflected through their formulas on launching general uprisings and waging people's wars as well as on organizing the armed forces by the proletariat and the people who arise to liberate themselves.

Unlike the situation in many Western countries, where the shaping of a nation was closely linked with the disintegration of the feudal regime and the birth of capitalism, in our country our nation was born and developed from the generations-old struggles against invasions and rules by foreign feudalists. Many national uprisings and many national wars broke out successively in our national history.

Viet-Nam was one of the cradles of mankind. Since the day the Hung kings built the Van Lang country, for thousands of years before Christ, in the struggle against nature and against the other clans to survive and develop, the various clans of the Viet tribe gradually built up firm factors enabling them to shape a nation: They lived for many years in a
peaceful land; they had their own language; they organized an economy and a politico-social system of a certain degree of development; they built up their own culture and moral tradition. Thus our people's national feelings and consciousness as well as their spirit of mastership developed early. Our people's vitality was very strong. In struggle against powerful aggressors the Vietnamese people safeguarded their territory, fought heroically and intelligently and labored industriously and creatively to survive and develop.

Our country is rich and beautiful. It is rich in natural resources. It occupies a strategic position in Southeast Asia, at the intersection of water and land communication lines from north to south and from east to west. It is a base linking the interior with the sea and is a beachhead connecting the sea with the interior. That is why big and powerful aggressive forces have always tried to conquer our country in order to exploit and enslave our people and use our country as a springboard to develop their influence in all directions. That is why throughout their long history our people have constantly had to cope with wars of aggression, continuously waged wars to safeguard the Fatherland and national independence and continuously arose and waged wars of liberation in order to wrest back national independence. Our people's national feelings and consciousness, spirit of mastership and determination to struggle staunchly and unsubmissively to safeguard national independence developed through these uprisings and wars. Our people gradually built up and strongly developed a very precious tradition -- the tradition of struggling gloriously against foreign aggression for independence and freedom.

Our country is small, with little area and population. In the first years after Christ our people lived mainly in what is now Bac Bo and Northern Trung Bo. At the time of the Trung Sisters there were about one million people. Later our territory was enlarged and our population increased. The aggressor forces generally were many
times bigger than ours. Because we had to use a small army to oppose a larger one, in order to defend our native land and defeat the cruel enemies our people had to develop the all-people strength and the strength of the entire country; our people could not rely on the army alone.

All our people's resistances against foreign aggressions are just. Our people possess ardent patriotism, great national unity and a confident unsubmissive struggle spirit. They have had to use a small army to fight a larger one. Therefore, in the people's uprisings and wars in our history, in terms of military organizations, there were often the armed popular forces or the people's army and there was coordination among them. Our people have long built and relentlessly developed the "All Nation Unite" tradition (Trần Quốc Tuấn, Testament: Our People's Morale and Strength) to resist foreign aggression. This is a secret technique of winning victory -- a technique that our national hero Trần Quốc Tuấn in the 13th Century summarized into a principle on the basis of our people's experiences in combat thousands of years earlier. That principle has been developed into the "All People Unite" line in the present era. In the Trần Dynasty, there was the "All People Are Soldiers" slogan (Abridged History of Việt-Nam Written on Imperial Orders, Volume 6). Our people have long held high the "When The Aggressors Come, Women Must Fight" slogan. This is a great and familiar reality in our people's life and combat.

The masses' active participation in our national uprisings and wars in the past and the "All Nation Unite" and "All People Fight The Enemy" tradition enable us to assert that our national uprisings and wars in history have long been our people's uprisings and wars. These wars were mainly led by the feudalist class and took place over a wide area and developed rather greatly, although this development was restricted by the leading class and other historic conditions.
Now there is a question: What were class struggles in our nation and what was the military organization in these class struggles?

As in every society that has classes and class conflict, our Vietnamese society changed and developed through fierce class struggles, mainly between feudalists and peasants. The army of the feudal state in our country was an instrument of the feudal class to maintain its domination and whose function was to oppress the people, especially peasants, and whose role concerning foreign affairs was to oppose foreign invasions and in turn invade other countries. Whenever class contradictions within the nation became severe -- usually in situations where there were no wars of aggression by foreigners -- our peasants, who had a rather strong revolutionary spirit and sense of democracy, arose many times to struggle fiercely, to organize their armed forces and to wage peasant uprisings and wars in order to oppose feudalists. This is an important problem that is not dealt with in this article.

However, in view of foreign aggression and in view of the permanent threat of aggressive forces in peace time and while contradictions between our nation and foreign feudal aggressors became most important, various classes in our nation united together and temporarily reconciled their contradictions in order to devote the entire nation's forces to opposing aggression, except in a number of cases in which the feudal cliques were willing to sell the country and surrender to the aggressors. National struggle, according to the Marxist viewpoint, is also a form of class struggle; in our country, during this period, this was a struggle for national defense between an alliance of the feudal class and peasantry on the one hand and aggressive foreign feudal classes on the other hand. In our country, the feudal class, when it was ascending, was endowed with a nationalist spirit. It created certain democratic forms to motivate the people to oppose foreign aggression. Trần Quốc Túân had the idea of "improving the people's strength" in order to "have a strong base" and considered it to be "the best
policy to defend the country." Therefore, the national movement in our country was not separated from the feudal class' organizational and leadership role when this class was still holding an active role in the history of our country and especially from the vigorous force of peasants who are deeply patriotic and constituted the majority of our nation in ancient times. Therefore, when the feudal class declined and sold out the country, our peasants arose to oppose feudalism; in certain cases they gained the national banner, such as in the Tay Son Movement led by Nguyen Hue. The Tay Son peasants' movement became a national movement and, therefore, advanced the nation's uprising and war to a very high level, toppling domestic feudalists, defeating foreign aggressors and scoring great successes.

The birth and development of our nation and the tradition of the all-people resistance that has been reflected in our national uprisings and wars are obviously original traits and great realities in our country's history. They influence many aspects of our people's social activities. They have deeply affected our people's uprisings and wars and the military organization in national uprisings and wars. This article introduces only a number of general ideas as an initial step in dealing with questions from the birth of the nation to the development of the uprisings, wars and military organization on the basis of existing historic documents. We hope that future studies will give us more historic documents that will provide us with additional knowledge and scientific bases for a deeper understanding of these questions.

Our people's anti-aggression struggles and military organization in the time before Christ were partly reflected in legends and myths and a number of historic documents.

It was not accidental that in the era of the Hung kings of the Van Lang country, together with the myth of the mountain and river gods reflecting our people's very fierce struggle against nature, there was the Giong Saint legend praising our ancestors' very glorious anti-aggression fights. The Giong Saint legend crystallizes typical traits of our people's anti-aggression tradition and of the combat spirit,
stalwartness and matchless strength of the masses participating in the fight. The Giông Saint grew rapidly after listening to the national salvation appeal he used iron and bamboo sticks to annihilate the enemy. Accompanying him were peasants holding batons, fishermen holding poles and young shepherds holding sticks. This brilliant, symbolic legend is a symbol of our nation's "all-people resistance" and "all-country resistance" in prehistoric periods.

Our country's armed masses spontaneously arose to oppose aggression in early times. In the Third Century before Christ, the Âu Lac people, united with other Viet nationalities in continuously fighting for tens of years against the Chin aggressors, elected heroes as their commanders, launched night raids, killing hundreds of the enemy, and scored final success. Such methods in fighting and organizing forces came from the masses; motivated by hatred for the enemy, the masses spontaneously rose up to kill the aggressors. We cannot avoid comparing this fighting method with the valiant and versatile methods using scattered formations of U.S. militiamen in their anti-English colonialist independence war in the 18th Century that was praised by Engels. The Lac people who spontaneously armed themselves and fought, were our nation's "guerrilla combatants" in ancient times.

In our history the nation's army was organized very early in order to oppose aggression. An Dương Vương's army included infantry and navy; his Cố Loa citadel was both an infantry and naval base. This army had a very dangerous kind of weapon, the "multi-arrow crossbow" that could release many arrows at one time and used brass arrows that were produced in large quantity; hundreds of thousands of the arrows can be found now in the Cố Loa area. All this is proof of the rather early development of military organization in our country. The emergence of the "multi-arrow crossbow" and brass arrows marked great progress in the military art of our country at that time. Is it the origin of the "Magic Crossbow [in the Vietnamese legend]"? However, although one has a "magic crossbow," one will lose his country if he does not know how to rely upon the people and is not vigilant. Therefore, An Dương Vương was defeated by Triệu Đà.
This was the beginning of a period in which our people were dominated by foreign feudalists. For 10 centuries, our people continuously arose to struggle to liberate the nation and regain independence for the country. This was a period in which national uprisings were continuously carried out; there were uprisings in each of these centuries and many of them became liberation wars. The successful nationwide uprising led by the two Trưng sisters was followed by uprisings led by Chu Đất, Lương Long, Sister Triệu, Lý Bi, Lý Tuệ Tiễn and Dinh Kiên, Mai Thúc Loan, Phùng Hưng and Dương Thanh and Khúc Thừa Du's uprising and Ngô Quyền's victory on the Bach Dăng River that ended the foreign domination and regained independence for the nation.

Generally speaking during this period of foreign domination our people naturally could not have an army of their own. Our people's armed forces were essentially partisan units organized in the various uprisings under the leadership of patriotic officials and generals and village notables who were the representatives of the feudal class at that time. The partisan units had the character of the armed forces of the masses who were revolting. They had also, to a certain extent, the character of an army. The uprising forces were sometimes limited and sometimes broad, but they included many strata of people. The participants in these forces were patriots, the mountain tribal people, the delta people, village officials, tribal heads and patriotic high-ranking officials.

After the victory of the uprisings or when the uprisings were protracted into a liberation war the leaders of the uprisings organized, to a definite degree, a national army to wage the war.

The struggle movement of the masses and the revolts of the partisans had an effect on the Vietnamese troops who served the dominating administration. As a result many armed mutinies broke out. In the armed mutiny in 803 Vuông Quí Nguyên, a Vietnamese commander, joined the soldiers in arising and chasing away the local governor.
Our people's national spirit and patriotism during this period were clearly reflected in the revolts, typical of which was the revolt by the Trưng Sisters early in the Christian era. A striking feature in this revolt by the Trưng Sisters at Mê Linh was that the revolt was "unanimously responded to" (from a post-Han dynasty history book) by the high-ranking officials and generals and the people throughout the 65 districts and cities, that is the entire territory of our country at that time. The phenomenon of "unanimous response" of the entire country under the Trưng Sisters' national salvation banner was rare in history. It can be said that that response was a "concerted uprising," a people's uprising that reflected the clear national spirit of the high-ranking officials and generals, of the people and of the tribes that formed the ancient Âu Lạc nation.

The Trưng Sisters' revolt succeeded. National independence was restored. After proclaiming themselves queens, the Trưng Sisters organized a national government and a national army. Three years later, the aggressors returned and again invaded our country. The Trưng Sisters' young army was defeated. The domination by foreign feudalists was reestablished. During the following centuries, our unsubmissive people arose again and again and struggled for independence.

Ly Bi's revolt succeeded because "it was supported by heroes from various districts." After three months of fighting, the ruling administration collapsed. Lý Bi's revolutionary troops entered the Long Biên capital and successively defeated two counterattacks by the Liang troops.

After this victory, the Văn Xuant independent state and its armed forces were founded. Yet in the following national defense resistance, Lý Bi's armed forces were defeated, Triệu Quang Phúc reorganized the revolutionary troops, retreated to the Da Trach base and adopted the "protracted resistance" tactic and the tactics of launching small, scattered and surprise attacks to decimate the
enemy. Subsequently Trieu Quang Phuc took advantage of the great rebellions in the Liang dynasty and counterattacked and defeated the aggressor troops and regained independence. The independent Van Xuân state existed for nearly one century. This is a great victory of our people at that time. Our people began thinking about the protracted fighting and developed the tactics of unleashing small, scattered and surprise attacks. After the defeat of the Van Xuan state, our people staged relentless uprisings for three successive centuries. Until the Tenth Century, their struggle developed more seethingly. In relying on that struggle movement and taking advantage of the fact that the Tang dynasty was weakened by the local peasants' continuous uprisings and that the Tang military governor was demoted and killed, Khuc Thua Dû, supported by the local people, stood up, proclaimed himself military governor and regained national sovereignty. For many decades that sovereignty experienced many arduous trials and sometimes won and sometimes lost. Until 938, Ngô Quyên's armed forces defeated the southern Han aggressor troops on the Bach Đang river and our people truly regained independence. This naval battle with our combat boats, iron spikes and valiant, skillful fighting marked the powerful combat strength and the development of our people's armed forces at that time. Historian Lê Văn Hữu praised Ngô Quyên's armed exploits as follows: Ngo Quyen used the newly-organized Vietnamese troops to defeat the one million troops of Lưu Hoàng Thao. His plans were good and so was his fighting. He saved the country and proclaimed himself king and thus made the aggressors dare not invade our country again."

The Bach Đang victory marked a great turn in our history. That was a time when our people won complete independence, built and developed a feudal nation that gradually became more and more prosperous and consolidated and maintained that independence in many centuries. The power-centralizing feudal state, in many dynasties, promulgated many ever more perfect policies to build and consolidate its administrative machinery at the central and local levels in order to step up the economic and cultural development and to consolidate and strengthen national defense. Under the leadership of the feudal class that was
at that time playing an active role in the development of the nation, our people staged war to protect the fatherland and firmly maintained national independence. When the country was temporarily dominated by foreign aggressors, our people arose and staged a liberation war to win back independence.

The development of our people's armed forces during this period was closely related to the above war and uprising. It reflected an overall development of an independent country built on the basis of a comprehensively consolidated feudal regime.

A distinctive difference in building the armed forces by the feudal state in our country, as compared with many feudal states in Europe, is that, it was an "all the citizens are soldiers" system and not a "mercenary" system. The "arming all the people" system in Europe, mentioned by Engels, had been applied only in the early years of the French bourgeoisie's revolution.

The "all citizens are soldiers" system was built and gradually perfected through many dynasties.

Under the Dinh-Lê dynasty, after the end of the "Twelve Warlords' War" and after the power-centralizing feudal administration was formed, a system of controlling the size of the population to recruit youths into the army was applied. The armed forces were organized according to the "people acting as soldiers when required and returning to work in the rice paddies after fulfilling the military duty" method. Therefore, with a rather small active force as a core element, the feudal state at that time succeeded in activating ten military corps composed of about one million troops under the command of Commander-in-Chief Lê Hoàn. In view of the size of the population at that time, all soldiers of this army were peasants. It was very uncommon to arm all people in the feudalist era but it was, nevertheless, very necessary for a small nation like ours to resist the aggressors.
The comprehensive development of the independent feudal nation under the Lý dynasty was clearly reflected in various systems and policies concerning the organizing of the armed forces. This was a policy of "making peasants soldiers" who performed the military duty and carried out production at the same time. Under the Lý dynasty, the peasants were classified into "Hoāng Nam" aged from 18 to 20 and "Đại Hoāng Nam" aged from 20 to 60 who had to "take turns to perform the military duty" and to enroll in the army in wartime. Nowadays, this is called a military obligation.

Up to the Trần dynasty, the organization of the armed forces on the basis of the system of mobilizing the forces of all people and of the entire country according to Trần Quốc Tuấn's "the entire people pool their efforts" concept was reflected in a concentrated manner in the "making all citizens soldiers" motto of that period. Historian Phan Huy Chu observed: "The military was very strong at that time. In peace time troops were stationed in favorable combat positions and fought very hard in wartime. Therefore, being soldiers, the people under the Trần dynasty succeeded in defeating the cruel enemy and made their country strong."

The well-organized system of the armed forces under the Trần dynasty reflected the marked development and the consolidation of the feudal regime in our country in the three centuries of construction in peace.

Depending on a regime in which "all people are soldiers," the feudal state, in the organizational field, set up many troop categories: royal troops at the central level, troops of the "lo" (small administrative unit -- editor) troops of local nobles and minority tribal chiefs, village guards, militia and local troops of villages, hamlets, and mountains. The troops of the imperial court were called "imperial troops" under the Dinh and Lê dynasties and "citadel guards" under the Lý and Trần dynasties. They were full-time servicemen like the present regular troops. The rural troops were called "external troops." Like the reserve forces of today "they could return to farming in peacetime and had to report in wartime."
The feudal administration created the village guards and local troops to help maintain its rule in villages and hamlets in peacetime and to cooperate with the people in fighting aggression in wartime, thus forming the people's broad armed forces.

During ten centuries of struggle for independence our people's armed forces were chiefly composed of partisans who staged uprisings with the participation of the masses. During the period of building and consolidating national independence the forces of our army emerged in national defense and in the war for the Fatherland's protection. They were regular troops of the independent feudal state and were organized more perfectly. The army of the Lý dynasty comprised ground troops, cavalry, elephant mounted troops and navymen equipped with spears, scimitars, crossbows and stone launchers. The army of the Trần dynasty possessed cannons. Our people paid great attention to the problem of equipping the army, relied on the development of production forces to produce dangerous weapons and war material and concentrated on troop feeding because they considered the "troops' food as important as their lives." Though small in number, the in-service troops were crack troops and their force could be expanded quickly in wartime. Military training was very important. Trần Quốc Tuấn edited the "Binh Thu Yếu Lục" and "Van Kiếp Tông Bi Truyền Thư"("Principals of Military Strategy" and "Secrets of The Military Tacties at Van Kiep") to teach and train the troops and officers.

The regulations of the feudal state on organizing the army were compiled by historian Phan Huy Chu into a military book with this content: 1) Military ranks, 2) recruiting methods, 3) regulations on troop messes and pay, 4) training, 5) prohibitions, 6) examination rules and, 7) imperial audience rules. This proves that our country's military organization in the old days was pretty good and that our forefathers were vigilant because in peaceful years they concentrated on building military forces, encouraged the people to practice wrestling and fencing.
and consolidated national defense to safeguard national independence. Of course the army of the feudal state assumed not only the duty of "protecting the country" but also the duty of "quashing rebellion" or putting down people's struggles in the country.

With our people's regaining of independence and building a perfect country, their patriotism and stalwart fighting will have developed by a new step. This patriotism was manifested in their determination to persistently struggle to regain independence during the period of foreign domination, in their spirit of self-strengthening and self-reliance to build the country and in their determination to fight to protect the border and this beautiful country on which our ancestors shed their blood and tears and devoted their mental efforts in national salvation and construction. Depending on this patriotism and fighting will, with armed forces built on the basis of the increasingly prosperous feudal regime and with the national heroes' talent in leading the war, our people won glorious victories in the history of national defense. Our country remains small even though it has been consolidated in every respect, in the economic as well as national defense fields. Depending on the regime in which "all people are soldiers" and the troops are crack troops, though not numerous, our people gloriously defeated many brutal, powerful aggressive armies at that time and could therefore safeguard the fatherland's independence and freedom.

Gen. Lê Hoàn defeated the aggressive army of the Sung dynasty in the Chí Lăng and Bach Đằng battles.

Ly Thường Kiệt used troops to launch an offensive on the enemy area and destroyed the enemy's important base.

Later, in our country's resistance and throughout the struggle against the aggressors, the Vietnamese royal main army fought a few successive battles on the frontline of the Như Nguyệt river, annihilating more than half the enemy strength. Tens of thousands of local troops, including regional and village troops, launched coordinated attacks behind the enemy on small groups of enemy
combat and transportation troops. At Lang Sơn the Tày people, led by Thân Canh Phúc, moved into the forest and made use of surprise attacks and night attacks with high efficiency.

Thus right at that time there was combat coordination between the royal main force troops and regional forces and the enemy was caught in a strategic position in which he was attacked from in front and behind. This form of combat coordination is a special feature in military art in which a weak country struggles against a strong enemy's war of aggression. The Sung dynasty's invasion was smashed. The Sungs had to recognize our country as an independent kingdom.

In the three resistances against the Yuan troops in the 13th Century, thanks to his main force troops and village and regional troops organized according to the principle "all the people are soldiers," Trần Quốc Tuấn cleverly coordinated the main force troops' concentrated attacks and major attacks with local minor attacks by regional and village troops and of armed masses. It is clear that the armed forces played a very important and directly decisive role. His main force troops won many outstanding battles at Đông Bo Dau, Hậm Tú, Chuồng Dương, Văn Kiếp, Bạch Đằng and so forth. However, the armed masses were also developed and played a very important role. People in the mountain areas intercepted, pinned down and killed many enemy troops. Lowlanders relied on villages and hamlets to attack the enemy on the spot. Very early our people knew how to rely on villages and hamlets to carry out struggles. We can say that this was a type of "combat village." The people also hid their property and applied the scorched-earth tactics, causing the enemy many difficulties in food supply. The words "kill the Tatars" tattooed on the commanders' and soldiers' arms proved the people's very high determination to fight and sacrifice. This was true people's warfare in the feudal age. While the Yuan and Mongol troops acted freely throughout
Europe and Asia and erased the names of many countries from the world map, they were defeated by the Vietnamese people in all three of their invasions of Viêt-Nam. The great success of the resistance war led by national hero Trần Quốc Tuấn under the Trần dynasty -- a success which was basically due to the fact that the people had joined forces, as Trần Quốc Tuấn himself put it -- reflected a fairly high level of development of the armed forces at that time and the great effect of the coordination between the armed forces and the people in our country who were armed in wartime to defend the fatherland. This was a very glorious victory in a resistance war to defend the fatherland waged under a feudal regime while our country was built and consolidated and our people were positively prepared for national defense during several hundred years of peace.

In the middle of the 14th Century the feudal clique of the Trần dynasty degenerated, intensifying the oppression and exploitation of the people. Many uprisings involving peasants and slaves occurred for nearly half a century. Taking advantage of this situation, Hồ Quy Ly usurped the throne, founding the Ho dynasty. The people became divided. Because it relied merely on the armed forces, on ingenious weapons and strong fortresses and not on the people, the resistance war organized by Hồ Quy Ly against the Ming aggressors failed. But the aggressors could not dominate our people. Many uprisings broke out right afterward.

Lê Lợi first staged an uprising in Lam Sông with some 2,000 partisans. This developed into a liberation war. Fighting the war were partisans supported by armed people. When the uprising had developed into a liberation war, partisans were gradually built into an army whose strength eventually rose to more than 200,000 and whose organization become more and more perfect thanks to inheriting and developing the experiences from the previous Lý and Trần dynasties.
Nguyễn Trãi's well-known sentence: "Hold high the stick as a banner and gather all peasants and poor people" reveals the broad mass character of the uprising. The banner was a bamboo stick and the forces were the peasants and poor people. We can say that they were the broad masses of peasants and workers in our country at that time. After nearly 50 years of unsuccessful struggle against the feudal Trần dynasty in the previous century, they gathered under the national flag of Lê Lợi and Nguyễn Trãi. Moreover, the Lam Sơn uprising broke out in a situation different from that of uprisings during the previous 10 centuries. Our country was dominated by the Ming dynasty for 20 years. Before that, our people succeeded in building an independent feudal country, consolidated and safeguarded their independence for five centuries and successively defeated many aggressive wars by more powerful enemies. For this reason, despite all difficulties in the first years and despite the fact that the uprising troops had had to withdraw into the deep jungles on several occasions and launch small-scale and isolated battles against the enemy, the uprising forces developed very rapidly, especially after they chose a proper direction and took over Nghệ An as a springboard from which to attack and liberate Thanh Hóa and then Tân Bình and Thuận Hóa. Wherever the uprising troops went, the local people arose and supported them by supplying them with food. They joined the uprising, armed themselves, and cooperated with the troops in encircling the enemy's posts, killing the enemy troops, fragmenting the oppressive administration in districts and liberating many vast areas.

The Minh dynasty sent reinforcements to our country. With an army of a few thousand single-minded men, an army different from that of the Ho dynasty, which included hundreds of thousands of men who were disunited, Lê Lợi and Nguyễn Trãi cooperated with other outstanding military leaders in organizing many great battles and won resounding victories at Tốt Động, Chúc Động, Chí Lạng and Xường Giang, annihilating thousands of enemy troops. The people in various localities arose and participated in the resistance. Wherever the uprising troops went, numerous people followed them and offered them wine. As a result, "the more they fought, the
more victories they won and wherever they went they destroyed the enemy troops as they would destroy dry twigs" (Nguyễn Trãi). In the fight against the enemy, the people resorted to many tricks. For instance, the owner of a tea house of the Luông family in the Cổ Long citadel resorted to a trick to kill the enemy and to help take a fortress. She was awarded by Emperor Lê Lợi with the title "Kiên Quốc Phụ Nhân" (Nation Building Lady).

Nguyễn Trãi also pushed forward the proselyting task, persuading the enemy. He encouraged and forced the enemy in the Nghệ An, Diên Châu, Thị Càu, Đồng Quan and other citadels to surrender. Some 100,000 enemy troops surrendered. Tens of thousands of other puppet troops returned to the country.

Under Lê Lợi's and Nguyễn Trãi's leadership the victory against the Ming troops was a victory of the people's war. However, this people's war was different from the national defense war in the Trần dynasty. It was a national uprising that developed into a liberation war. In some localities the revolutionary troops developed into armed forces and coordinated their action with the mass uprisings. When the banner of the just cause was brandished, all the people arose. They applied a thunderous, decimating fighting method, annihilating enemy troops and toppling the dominant administration, liberating the entire country and regaining national independence. If there were no mass uprisings we would not have toppled the administration at the basic level nor enhanced our prestige and created operational areas for the revolutionary troops. Likewise, if there were no revolutionary troops-- who developed into the armed forces and launched large-scale annihilation battles -- we would not have defeated the aggressive war nor crushed the administration. The coordination between the national armed forces and the armed masses in the anti-Ming resistance was a new development compared with the national defense war in the Trần dynasty. This development was manifested most clearly in the large uprisings of the masses.
In the wake of their victories, Lê Lợi and Nguyễn Trãi rapidly developed the country, bringing the centralized feudal regime into a new phase of prosperity. The development of the Lê dynasty's military organization fully reflected that prosperity. Inheriting and developing the tradition of "all people are soldiers" and the experiences of the Lý and Trần dynasties, the Lê emperor also organized a rural army at the central level, forces at the regional and provincial levels, and village soldiers and militia units. Princes and lords had no private armies. The army ranks were reduced, with a greater number of the soldiers being discharged and allowed to return to farm life. Only about 100,000 soldiers were kept on active duty. A family registration system was applied to recruit and call able-bodied citizens into military service in the event of war. "The family registrations are maintained accurately and reviewed every three years so that not a single man is left out. In case of emergency soldiers as well as civilians are called into military service on the basis of the family registrations. Everybody must report to the local authorities and become a soldier." That was an experience in organizing the armed forces in peacetime, in strengthening national defense in coordination with developing the economy and in preparing the country to wage war to defend the Fatherland against foreign aggression. Naturally this was also designed to consolidate the feudal state's rule.

In the 16th Century the feudal system in our country began to decline from its golden period. For several hundred years the feudal clans fought one another. The civil war between the Trịnh and Mac dynasties lasted over half a century. Then came another fierce civil war lasting almost 50 years between the Trịnh and Nguyễn clans. This led to a partition of our country for almost one hundred years. The declining feudalists intensified oppression and exploitation of the peasantry. Fearing that the people might rise up, they ordered the seizure of weapons and limitation of arms production by the people.
They used the army to ruthlessly suppress the peasants' struggles. Many uprisings and wars staged by the peasants successively unfolded on a large scale, particularly during the 18th Century, and were climaxed with the Tay Son Uprising led by Nguyễn Huệ.

The Tay Son Uprising marked a new phase of development of uprisings and wars and of the coordination between the armed citizens and the army in our country. It originated in the peasant movement and developed into a national movement and in the close cooperation between these two movements at a time when the feudal class was declining and succumbing to the invaders. The national salvation flag was handed over to Nguyễn Huệ, the outstanding national hero who successfully led the peasant movement. Consequently the peasant uprising and the national war at that time gathered new offensive momentum.

In the beginning, with the slogan "seizing the wealth of the rich and give it to the poor," the uprising successfully motivated the peasants and other segments of the poor. The uprising spread everywhere, developing into a peasant war to topple the feudal regime in the country and into a national war to ward off aggression by foreign feudalists.

The armed forces of the peasant uprising developed into national war and was built up from the popular forces, which were gradually organized into an army with the extensive participation of the peasantry and people from other classes. This was a new step in the development of our people's military organization in terms of political objective, numerical strength, degree of organization and military arts. The first militia group at Tay Son was plainly an armed organization of the poor, composed of peasants, craftsmen... who armed themselves with various types of weapons: sticks, machetes, knives, swords, rifles .... As the uprising developed, wherever Nguyễn Huệ's troops went they were joined by the peasants
and other strata of oppressed people who rose up to crush the rule of the declining feudal class. Nguyễn Huệ was known far and wide. His army grew rapidly.

From these uprisings, Nguyễn Huệ organized the Tây Sơn army, an army of the peasantry. Later this became an army of the people. The degree of organization and equipment of that army improved greatly. There were infantry troops, cavalry troops, elephant-borne troops and naval troops. There were firearms and cannons of all calibers, and many large combat ships. Some of these were so big that they carried war elephants, hundreds of soldiers and cannons. Nguyễn Huệ even installed cannons on ships and on the backs of elephants to make them a type of field artillery.

With the backing of a popular uprising staged mainly by the peasants and other strata of poverty-stricken people and with an army of great skill and mobility, the Tây Sơn troops under the leadership of Nguyễn Huệ scored new brilliant feats in the history of our nation.

Through famous battles during which the Quy Nhơn citadel was leveled, Quảng Ngãi was seized and Phú Yên was liberated and through five successful attacks on the Gia Định citadel, the Tây Sơn troops overthrew the rule that the feudal Nguyễn dynasty had built for more than 200 years. Later with the great victory in the Rach Gầm-Xoài Mút area where tens of thousands of Siamese troops were annihilated, Nguyễn Huệ foiled the aggressive thrusts of the Siamese invaders.

Then through swift military operations the Tây Sơn troops captured the Phú Xuân citadel, marched toward the Giang River and routed the Trịnh troops within ten days, with the all-out participation of the uprising people.

"Moving his troops to the North by boat" (Footnote: an official Tây Sơn summons) Nguyễn Huệ launched a surprise attack and captured Vi Hoàng and liberated Thăng Long. Within less than a month the Trịnh feudal regime's rule built for more than 300 years was overthrown, thus preparing the groundwork for the reunification of the country from Bắc Hà to Gia Định.
Unwilling to relinquish its throne, the Lê clan invited the Manchu troops to invade our country. Faced with the danger of foreign domination, Nguyễn Hữu immediately moved his troops to the North. In a lightning-like troop movement, with strong offensive momentum and with the determination to "win victory in one battle" and to defeat the invaders and in order to show them that "this heroic southern land already has its ruler," (Footnote: Nguyễn Hữu, Exhortation to Troops in Thanh Hóa) Nguyễn Hữu, the peasant national hero — now became king — in the victorious Ngoc Hôi-Dông Đa battle, within five days defeated 200,000 Tsing troops and crushed their aggressive attempts.

The Tây Sơn Uprising — a peasant movement developed into a national movement — with the support of the people in a broad, armed uprising and of a strong army, toppled three reactionary feudal regimes in the country, crushed two aggressive wars by foreign countries and brought about reunification of the country, thus safeguarding national independence. This was indeed a brilliant military feat, a great accomplishment of the revolutionary peasants of our country and our people. It was unprecedented in the history of our country, and was very uncommon in the history of the peasant movement in the world.

Up to the 19th Century, entering the historic contemporary epoch, our people was confronted with a very serious challenge. The French imperialists began their invasion against our country. They were a new enemy, a powerful capitalist nation from the west with major economic and military potential, different from the feudal invaders of the past. In the country the feudal regime had long since declined and the feudal class no longer played the role of a progressive force in national history and became extremely reactionary, thus throwing the society of our country into chaos and collapse. The feudal state constantly used the army to suppress the peasants' revolts. The feudal state's army became hostile to the people and was completely deprived of the masses'
support. Meanwhile, the revolting peasants armed themselves and repeatedly staged hundreds of large and small uprisings against the feudal class’ harsh domination and ruthless repressive activities.

Faced with the French imperialists’ aggression and with the ever more serious danger of foreign domination, the peasants everywhere rose up to struggle. The Nguyễn dynasty refused any reforms and continued to suppress the people. For the selfish interests of its class, the Nguyễn regime preferred to surrender to the invaders than side with the people, losing the country to the French imperialists. However, our people continued the fight regardless of the shameful surrender of the ruling Nguyễn regime. Under the almost one hundred years of French domination our people always upheld the indomitable national struggle spirit, repeatedly arose and organized militia forces to resist the invaders. Their uprisings were called the movements of Trương Công Đình and Nguyễn Trung Truc in the South, and the movements of Phan Đình Phùng, Nguyễn Thiên Thuất and Hoàng Hoa Thầm in the North. Our people, together with the militia, fought bravely and continued to fight from one generation to another. However, they were unable to achieve victory due to a lack of proper policy and proper leadership under the historic conditions of a new time. Only with the emergence of the Vietnamese working class and of our Party did the history of our people experience a major change.

The history of uprisings and wars in our country and the history of the organization of our armed forces demonstrate that our people have a very glorious tradition of resisting foreign aggression -- the tradition of a small country whose entire population is united closely and pools all its efforts to defeat more powerful enemies. Past national uprisings and national wars in our country obviously were people’s uprisings and people’s wars that were developed to a relatively high degree.
To successfully launch these national uprisings and wage these national wars, in the field of military organization our people had -- at an early time -- to enforce the principle of "all the people are combatants." As a result the majority of the people contributed to this effort under various forms. The highest form was the participation of the masses in the armed struggle beside the army. That is why in national uprisings and national wars -- except in a few cases in which there were either only the armed forces of the masses or only the army -- our people's military organization in general was usually composed of both the national army and the armed forces of the masses. However these two forces had different organizational structures, levels of development, positions and roles depending on condition and concrete historic situations. Therefore, uprisings and people's wars in our country developed the entire people's strength and creatively applied the traditional military tactic of using a small force to defeat a large force, the few to cope with the many, "the short to control the long," and "the weak to subdue the strong."

Obviously, coordinating the armed masses with the national army and the national army with the armed masses became a principle of military organization and of military tactics in order to achieve success in the national revolts, national wars, wars to protect the Fatherland and national liberation wars of our Vietnamese people in the past.

A military organization is first subordinate to the political regime and the class character of the state. It adheres to the character and objectives of rebellions and wars. The reason why our people's military organization received broad mass participation to fight the enemy together with the entire people was, first of all, the just cause of our people's revolts and wars. The political objective of these revolts and wars was to win back and protect national independence.
In the past uprisings and national wars between the revolutionary units organized by the representatives of the feudal class or the army of the feudal state and the majority of the masses there was a unanimity of minds on the national interests and the struggle objective, even though this unanimity was limited by the character of the feudal class and by historic conditions. That is why the existence of these revolutionary units and the national army was due to the masses' warm patriotism, spirit of national unity and stalwart struggle. The masses positively joined and supported the army and participated directly in fighting the enemy and thereby achieved coordination between the army and the armed masses. The village and highland forces were also able to develop their fighting strength. The masses' armed forces were at times developed and, together with the national army they achieved close combat coordination, thereby developing the strength of the entire country. The "all citizens are soldiers" theory created conditions for every patriotic citizen to participate in the national salvation duty and to contribute to defending the Fatherland. The feudal class also adopted definite democratic forms to mobilize the masses to arise and fight, as pointed out in the previous passages. National heroes had progressive thoughts when building the army, thoughts that reflected the just cause of the uprisings and wars. These heroes taught soldiers to carry out the following slogans: "Sacrifice Oneself For The Country," "Rather Die Gloriously Than Live Shamefully," "Unanimity Of Mind Must Be Achieved In The Army From The Highest To The Lowest Echelons" and "A Victorious Army Need Not Be Large But Harmonious From Top To Bottom."

In case a feudal state used the army not to defend the country but to put down rebellions -- that is to repress the people -- or in the face of foreign aggression if the ruling class placed its selfish interests above the national interests and used the army to cope with the people's movement and did not oppose the aggressors, the situation was different. This often happened when feudalism was on the decline. The "all people are soldiers" feudal
system was abolished. Drafting people into the army to serve the feudal state was regarded by the people as a scourge. The already existing contradictions between the feudal class and the people were becoming increasingly sharp. The people stood up to oppose the feudal state and the reactionary army in various ways, including armed struggle, and formed their armed organizations to topple the feudal state and annihilate its army.

A military organization based on a feudal system also depended on material and technical conditions and on the production level of the regime. The development of technical equipment, from crude bows and crossbows to "Liên Châu" crossbows using bronze-tipped arrows, other kinds of weapons, stone catapults, cannons, flame throwers, big ships and elephant-mounted guns was one of the decisive factors in determining the organizational structure, fighting methods and fighting strength of our people's armed forces in the past.

It should be mentioned that at that time, although they were strong, in their own country the aggressor enemy was under the same type of feudal regime as we had. Therefore they had greater numerical strength but in terms of armament they were not necessarily better than our forces. Sometimes they were even inferior to us. The problem faced by our people and national military organizations in the past was how to use a small force to fight a larger one and how to use the few to cope with the many, the armament of both sides being generally on the same level. Only in the present era, in our struggle against the aggressive armed forces of imperialism, do our people have to face the problem of using an army with fewer weapons and having a country with a more backward economy than the enemy to oppose and defeat the aggressor troops who have greater numerical strength and who are equipped with more modern weapons.

The fact that the broad participation of the masses in the past uprisings and national wars in our country proved the correct viewpoint of historical materialism and proletarian military science on the role of the masses of people in history in general and in the uprisings and wars
in particular. It was also proof of the marvelous Marxist-Leninist theories on arming the masses and building the army in uprisings and wars staged by the revolutionary classes and the oppressed people against the exploiting class' rule and against foreign aggression.

Compared with the situation in the European countries during that same historic period we can come to the conclusion that if the history of many wars in Europe in the Middle Ages was the history of mutual killing among the feudal class supported by mercenary armies, the history of wars in our country during this period was essentially the history of national uprisings and wars, that is people's uprisings and people's wars.

The tradition of the "entire people pooling their efforts to fight the aggressors" and their experience in people's uprisings and people's wars and experience in military organization -- which includes the national army and the people's armed forces -- are valuable traditions and experiences of our people. These are also characteristics rare in the people's military history. Therefore with the emergence of the Vietnamese working class and our Party and in view of Marxism-Leninism and our Party's political and military lines, these valuable traditions and experiences have been further developed by our Party and the Vietnamese people in new historic conditions in order to defeat the most cruel aggressor enemy of the era.