Vietnamese Studies
AMERICAN FAILURE

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Foreword

The events of 1968 have supplied glaring evidence of the failure of the Americans after three years of "local warfare" in South Vietnam and "escalation" against North Vietnam. This issue deals with their military failure, especially in the year 1968. It comprises:

- An article on how the strategy of people's war has got the better of the enormous American military machine in South Vietnam. Written before the Tet 1968 offensive by Truong Son, the military commentator of the NFL, it remains more than ever topical.

- An article by General Van Tien Dung on the reasons for the failure of the air war of destruction waged by the Americans against North Vietnam.

- A general view of the military situation in South Vietnam in 1968.

- A report on the battles in Tri-Thien, from Huế to Khe Sanh.

- A report on the battle of Saigon.

- An outline of the failure of "pacification".

- The story of the hard fighting in Cu Chi, a guerrilla base near Saigon.

It is our belief that these articles will give a concrete idea of the essential aspects of the war in Vietnam, pending more thorough studies of these problems in some future time.

VIETNAMESE STUDIES
December 1968
Our winter 1966-
spring 1967 victory
and the lessons
drawn from it
According to still incomplete figures, from early October 1966 to late March 1967, the PLAF wiped out more than 150,000 enemy officers and men (not counting 60,000, puppet deserters), over half of them being American and satellite troops; some 40 infantry and artillery battalions and armoured squadrons, over 200 companies and 250 Platoons of the US and satellite forces were annihilated, 1,300 tanks and armoured cars, 233 guns and over 1,500 aircraft destroyed. The number of troops knocked out was two and a half times larger than in the previous dry season, while the quantity of weapons and other war materials destroyed increased by several times. As before, the NFL controls four-fifths of the territory and three-fourths of the population of South Vietnam.

Our Winter 1966-Spring 1967 victory is the biggest we have ever scored.

(...) Once again our Winter 1966-Spring 1967 victory testifies to the correctness of our political and military lines, the grim determination of our people and armed forces. It also demonstrates the effectiveness of our fighting methods and the close, all-sided co-ordination between our great rear (North Vietnam — Ed.) and our great front (South Vietnam — Ed.). Our victory is linked with the whole-hearted support and assistance of the socialist countries, of our friends all over the
world. With this great victory we have considerably steeled ourselves and grown up; we have also acquired valuable experience, which should be summed up.

1. To ascertain the enemy's strategic objective, and to discover the laws governing his actions and his capabilities in order to define our own strategic objective and combat methods.

To know both the enemy and ourselves is the key to victory in any war. In South Vietnam, and specifically during the Winter of 1966 and the Spring of 1967, this principle required that we should, first and foremost, ascertain the adversary’s schemes and strategic objective and discover his laws of action and capabilities. Only then could we define our own strategic objective. For prior to any engagement, operation or campaign, the first thing for the command at all levels to do is to study the enemy’s situation and, relying on past experiences and on all data available, ascertain his schemes, the way in which he will act, his capabilities.

For this purpose, right since the Summer of 1966, the NFL Central Committee, the PLAF Command, and Front bodies at various levels, had carefully studied the enemy’s situation in the following respects: What would be his strategic design in the dry season? How large would the strength of his troops be and how big his capacity? Where would he use them? What would be his laws of action? Of course, at that stage we could make but preliminary evaluations which, nevertheless, should be fundamentally accurate; otherwise, our actions would lack co-ordination and land us into strategic and tactical passiveness. Apart from other causes, we owed our Winter-Spring victory to the fact that from the very outset we had in the main accurately appraised our opponent’s strategic schemes and laws of action.

1) We had accurately appraised the enemy's strategic objective.

In the Spring of 1966 we had already foreseen that in the 1965-1966 dry season the adversary would certainly meet with heavy setbacks and that in the following rainy season he would carry out only routine activities while preparing for a large-scale counteroffensive in the 1966-1967 dry season, involving probably up to one million American, puppet and satellite troops, among them perhaps as many as 400,000 GIs. This prediction was of great importance for the ideological preparation of all our armed forces and people just as for our organizational preparations. Though we could not of course anticipate all eventualities, we rightly forecast that, after sustaining big losses with a 700,000-strong army in the 1965-1966 dry season, the enemy could not, in the next, turn the tide in their favour even with one million men.

In the rainy season, having studied the situation in each theatre of operations and in South Vietnam as a
whole, and related world events as well, we arrived at some conclusions which formed a basis on which to ascertain the enemy's strategic objective:

- First, from early 1965, when the Americans launched their "limited war" of aggression, to mid-1966, the situation in South Vietnam had developed to our advantage. In effect, it was unfavourable to them in the following points:

  a) Politically, it had gone from bad to worse in spite of their efforts to improve it.

  b) On the battlefield, though the Americans and their puppets had not yet suffered truly heavy losses, they had been unable to achieve any of their strategic objectives. The Saigon army had further weakened while the Yankees, in spite of some strong points and fresh reinforcements, had been driven into a political, strategic and tactical crisis. Particularly, their "lightning war and lighting victory" strategy had collapsed. Such a situation disturbed the Americans in their conduct of the war.

  c) Our armed forces and people, who had won victories over the US and puppet troops from the very start and grown stronger as they fought, kept the initiative and were masters of the situation in all operation theatres. Against the enemy's wish, instead of falling back upon guerrilla activities, all three categories of the PLAF were capable of launching either small, medium, or large-scale actions, depending on the circumstances.

- Second, the US war of destruction in North Vietnam had failed to reach its basic objectives, whereas our resistance had been highly successful. As a result, North Vietnam's economic and defence potential had been substantially strengthened.

- Third, in the world and in the United States itself, the US "limited war" of aggression and escalation to North Vietnam, as well as the US bitter losses in both parts of our country, had provoked ever more serious chain-reactions. They had aggravated US isolation, and reinforced opposition to its policy in Vietnam. All this added to its setbacks despite the commitment of several hundred thousand expeditionary troops and caused it to lose face. This made the Americans nervous and gave them a headache, for they could neither win a quick victory nor find a satisfactory settlement to the Vietnam problem within a short period of time.

- Fourth, though somewhat disheartened, the Americans, obdurate by nature and possessed of substantial forces, still clung to the hope for a military solution, for decisive victories on the battlefield.

On the basis of the aforesaid conclusions we predicted that the enemy would exert great efforts and concentrate big forces for a major counter-offensive in the 1966-1967 dry season. Considering its concrete objectives, this counter-offensive would not basically differ from the previous one, except that the aggressor now was eager to turn the tables on us, even to snatch a decisive victory within a short time with a
view to settling the Vietnam issue. For US future in Vietnam and in the world, the future of the Democratic Party in the United States and of Johnson himself, who was hoping for another presidential term, etc., were at stake. That was why, while aiming at those fundamentally unaltered concrete objectives, the Americans were prompted by intricate motives and political intentions, as intricate as the co-ordination of their military, political and diplomatic manoeuvres.

We had thus accurately foreseen that the grim strategic determination, big ambition, extensive forces, great brutality and treacherousness of the US imperialists were however fraught with many weak points and elements of passivity. In other words, their strength and the means that they would use to achieve their purpose contained negative factors and seeds of failure.

From this assessment we arrived at some conclusions which were to serve us as guide-lines for action: We should not underestimate the aggressor’s determination to achieve his strategic objective; apart from weak points he still possessed strong ones to which we should pay the utmost attention; we should prepare resolutely to crush his new strategic counter-offensive; objectively we were in a position to win the Winter 1966-Spring 1967 campaign provided we made strenuous exertion. Such a greatly significant victory would create new premises for even bigger ones.

2) To grasp the enemy’s laws of action so as to foil all his operational plans.

In order to know the adversary thoroughly, one should not proceed haphazardly, the important question being, instead, to grasp his laws of action. This is a painstaking task, as it requires accurate data, the ability to analyse things and draw the necessary conclusions, and a sound judgement. One of our successes over the past two years has been our ever deeper knowledge of the US forces’ laws of action. And this forms a basis for us to work out our own rules of action.

In South Vietnam, though plagued by many weaknesses and defects, our enemy attaches great importance to technique, strategy and tactics, his own as well as ours.

To know the laws governing his military actions we should first of all start from these points: his military, political and diplomatic intentions and strategic objectives, his armed forces and their capabilities; the over-all situation on the battlefield, our strong and weak points that are known to the enemy, and so on.

A number of those laws we had ascertained:

a) Co-ordination between the two jaws of the “search and destroy” and “pacification” pincers. Here in the South what the adversary calls “search and destroy” operations and “pacification” essentially means the use of both the American and puppet armed forces and military action.
These two problems related to his strategic objective had been tackled simultaneously in the 1965-1966 dry season. However, he then concentrated more efforts on striking at our regular forces in the hope of breaking our “backbone” first. In this dry season he was still sticking to this “search and destroy” objective but was paying particular attention to “pacification” and striving to better co-ordinate these two actions.

That was one of the enemy’s most important laws of action. His approach to the problem seemed to be correct and promising, too. But the Staley-Taylor plan had appeared even more promising, which did not prevent its ultimate failure. That a plan is promising is one thing; whether it comes to fruition is quite another thing. Besides, that “correct” approach to the problem was something the enemy was not very happy about. First he would have to spread his forces even thinner; second, his strategic objective was too vague as it did not specifically center on anything; third, the Americans and their puppets had no definite way of utilizing their mobile and occupation forces; fourth, the enemy would reap still worse political results while the prospect of a military victory would appear to be even more remote and he would not know when the US expeditionary force could get out of the South Vietnam quagmire.

Guided by such laws of action, using fairly large numbers of troops, brutal and perfidious by nature, the enemy would try again and again various tricks and methods, which we should not underestimate.

However, that plan did not spring from a strong but weakening strategic and political position, from a sense of frustration born of seven years of repeated unsuccessful “pacification” and “search and destroy” actions. It had many shortcomings, which we should exploit to reach our own strategic objective.

b) Combination of the offensive and the defensive. In the previous dry season our enemy had laid emphasis on the offensive while coupling it with the defensive. Now his counter-offensive strategy was to combine the offensive and the defensive in an effort to firmly strengthen the defensive, preserve his forces, bases and defensive zones, conduct fanning-out raids to foil our attacks, break our grip and enlarge the cordon around his bases, and at the same time to mount attacks in order to prevent or restrict our large-scale operations. Unlike the French tactics formerly, the Americans’ defensive was mobile. But after two years of confrontation, their rear and bases enjoyed no safety and they found themselves bogged down. To adjust themselves to the situation, they resorted to new measures such as deeper thrusts, occupation of more territory, prefab fortifications, security “belts”, etc. As to their offensive, it did not differ from formerly. However, to better suit the situation they attached importance to both large and medium-size operations lasting many days, and conducted simultaneously in several theatres. They combined offensive, “pacification” and defensive activities to deliver steady and strong blows, to “catch the fish” while or after “scooping out the water”, to hit after
tightening the noose, to destroy and decimate at the same time, etc. All those tactics had been tested by the French in Indochina and Algeria but had not staved off their failure. For they were but a passive expedient and as such could help the US aggressors neither militarily nor politically.

c) Combination of action inside and outside South Vietnam to encircle and isolate it. By intensifying their war of destruction against North Vietnam, the Americans hoped to halt the assistance provided by the great rear to the great front. Simultaneously, they stepped up their ground operations in the South and their attacks on the North with their air force, navy and ground artillery in an attempt to cut the front from the rear, hitting at both simultaneously.

d) Combination of military, political and diplomatic actions; extension of activities in all areas: hill-forest, rural and urban. The enemy combined his military and political counter-offensives on these three fronts with a diplomatic counter-offensive, his "peace negotiation" hoax. By using military pressure, political deception, and economic bribery they hoped to impair our revolutionary combativeness and our people's resolve to fight.

The above was a summary of the enemy's laws of action. Fully aware of them, the South Vietnam armed forces and people at the very outset of the 1966-1967 dry season worked out a correct policy, and showed the greatest determination to inflict ever bigger setbacks on the enemy.

3) Correctly to appraise the strategic capabilities of the enemy's million-strong army in order to devise efficient combat methods.

Confronting one million American and puppet troops, the South Vietnam armed forces and people, with the experience gained in the 1965-1966 dry season, had come to the following conclusions: the enemy had very substantially increased his effectives and war materials but not his combat effectiveness; from a defensive, losing position, his million-strong troops could neither launch any appreciably effective campaign nor devise any strategically effectual combat methods, as they had in the European and Pacific theatres.

That the Americans had a big force at their disposal was one thing, but how they could use it, how it could fight to secure a victory of strategic significance was quite another. Trying hard to find the causes of US failures, Westmoreland had ascribed them to insufficient troop strength. In the early days of this dry season, with nearly one million men available - the strength he had dreamt of - he was forced to admit that on the South Vietnam battlefield the problem facing the United States was not just one of numbers but also of fighting methods.

What results then - in the Americans' own view - should they score to obtain a "strategically significant success"? Some points may be raised:

- First, the enemy did his utmost to force our regular troops back into scattered guerilla actions. For him, this would mean that strategically he would
Studies have achieved a victory allowing him to end the war in terms of large-scale operations and enter the phase of "pacification", liquidation of guerillas and consolidation of his rear. And thus, on the battlefield, the anxiety caused the Americans and their puppets by the NFL regular forces’ large-unit operations would be removed. They would be free to concentrate on ending guerilla warfare and to create a strategic situation in their favour so as to eventually regain the initiative. It was for this purpose that sizable forces were committed to repeated "search and destroy" operations against our regulars in key theatres in the last two dry seasons.

— Second, the Americans were bent on forcing our regular forces to fight positional warfare in disadvantageous conditions so that they might bring into play their best combat methods and superior firepower and inflict heavy losses upon us. They would thus force us to give battle on their own terms, and wipe out or decimate our regular troops particularly in what they considered key theatres. In this way, they hoped to change the balance of forces in their favour and pave the way for a strategic change advantageous to them and for a decisive victory within a short time.

— Third, it was the wish of our adversary to "pacify" a number of large zones so as to stabilize and expand his rear while disturbing and narrowing down ours, and to consolidate his foothold with an eye to future military counter-offensives. As a result, he would have encroached upon some more territory and "caught" some more population, thereby separating our people from their armed forces in order to destroy our guerilla bases and to put an end to guerilla warfare. It was with this in mind that during this dry season the Americans made great exertions for the implementation of the "pacification" program, combining it with "search and destroy" operations into a pair of "pincers". They had pinned much hope on their "pacification" plans, which they thought would disorganize our people’s battle array and create a strategic situation favourable to them.

— Fourth, they wanted to clear various strategic communications and reopen these vital arteries in an endeavour to link their bases together and end their isolation, thus giving their troops more mobility with a view to a steadier defensive and a more efficacious offensive.

— Fifth, it was the enemy’s intention to isolate the South Vietnam revolution, cut off the assistance from North Vietnam and consequently weaken the revolutionary war which had been successfully developing in the South. He concentrated considerable efforts on neutralizing the strategic importance of the North with regard to the South, even escalating their war of destruction there. Naturally, should he succeed in severing relations between the great rear — socialist North Vietnam — and the great front — South Vietnam — and in bringing to an end the moral support and material assistance from that great rear, which was connected with an immense one, the socialist camp, then the adversary would have achieved a notable strategic effect, at least to some extent minimizing the
great strategic defeat looming large for him in South Vietnam.

In the Americans' view, only by realizing the aforementioned points could a strategic effect be achieved. But this is something they will never be able to achieve. And this failure which has become a fact bespeaks the poor value and strategic ineffectiveness of US forces in the South Vietnam theatre.

A number of Western military authorities who have studied US strategy there also hold it up to ridicule.

In World War II, barely six months after the deployment of their forces, Japan and Germany had, though only temporarily, secured strategic victories. In the South of our country, two years after it committed its expeditionary corps, the United States is still unable to attain any of its strategic objectives. Why?

To answer this question one has to get at many complex underlying causes. The following are some immediate ones:

— It was after the failure of its "special warfare" that the United States unleashed its "limited war".

— For this reason, it has been on the defensive from the very outset.

— The US forces are not so strong as people think; they do have strong points, but their weaknesses are many and are important, basic ones.

— The strategy of the US aggressive "limited war" has to rely on two strategic forces—the American and the puppet troops — the latter being too weak and, as a result, undermining the strength of the former.

— The US local rear is also very weak while its social and political bases in South Vietnam are very shaky, the puppet administration which constitutes its prop being rotten to the core.

— The US forces are not confronting the army of a bourgeois country, but a people's war, in a land where the armed forces and people hold a winning position and the initiative on the battlefield, and are not fighting alone.

In the final analysis, the outcome of any war depends on two basic factors — objective laws and subjective efforts.

We may thus conclude that US strategy in South Vietnam is caught in a pair of "pincers": the reactionary, unjust nature of the US war of aggression doomed to failure, and its faulty conduct. Such an erroneous conduct of the war did not stem from chance but from objective causes, which explains why the more the aggressor tried to remedy his mistakes the more errors he committed. The US imperialists may be able to land men on the moon but they will be absolutely incapable of resisting the laws of social development, still less of buying any substitute with dollars.

The US aggressive war is waged in a new era which witnesses a new relation of forces in the world and in Vietnam. That is why, in spite of their large numbers and their modern war materials and techniques, the
American troops cannot bring their potential into full play, for it is limited by many complex factors. The natural result is failure—in both the political and military fields.

Unless one grasps those factors, one cannot understand the Vietnam situation in its essence. L.B. Johnson, the United States President and Commander-in-Chief most boastful of his country’s might, has committed serious blunders in appraising the characteristics of his time. Hence US neo-colonialist policy and aggressive "limited war" in Vietnam have met with one setback after another, the causes of which Washington has so far been unable to determine.

II — To maintain and improve our steady offensive position, hold and develop our initiative on the battlefield and force the enemy into fighting battles of our choice.

Since the beginning of the 1966-1967 dry season, while widening our actions we have been speeding up the tempo and increasing the size of our attacks on the enemy. We have also been holding and developing our control over the various theatres of operations.

Here are the prominent features of the situation on the battlefield during the dry season:

On our side, the PLAF’s steady offensive position and control over the battlefield kept developing evenly and in depth, leading to a series of offensive actions and counter-offensive ones with an offensive character from mid-October 1966 to mid-February 1967. At the same time we lured adverse troops out of their positions to hit at them, successfully countered their "search and destroy" operations, large and medium-size terrorist raids, and struck them close to their bases and also deep in their rear. Strengthened by earlier successes and thanks to adequate preparations in every respect—moral, organizational and technical—the armed forces and people of South Vietnam soon unleashed their offensive, delivering telling blows simultaneously in many theatres, from Quang Tri, Thua Thien and Central Trung Bo to the Western High Plateaux, Eastern Nam Bo and the Nam Bo plains.

The offensive took place on both the military and political fronts with the participation of both our military and political forces, the three categories of PLAF, our three spearheads—military struggle, political struggle and agitation among enemy troops—in all areas: hill-forest, rural and urban. All people’s war methods were put into operation against the adversary’s forces—American, puppet and satellite—to wipe them out, frustrate both “pacification” and nibbling operations, as well as to preserve and expand the liberated areas, maintain and promote the right of the population to be masters of their land.
On the enemy’s side, more troops were committed in the dry season and deployed earlier than in the previous year. Instead of massive actions in all theatres as before, they carried out attacks and “pacification” activities in priority sectors, launched large-scale “search and destroy” and “pacification” operations in which they raided the same places again and again and for many days running, on the hills, in the forests, in the plains and around urban centres. As they had lost their strategic initiative, on the whole the trend towards the defensive became more obvious all through the dry season, though they were able at times to mount big pre-emptive campaigns such as operation Junction City (Tay Ninh) or counter-attacks, as on Highway 9 (Quang Tri). The number of troops fielded in military operations and “pacification” activities rose in comparison with the previous dry season; division-size operations also doubled compared with the previous year.

Nevertheless, the dry-season trial of strength has resulted in the South Vietnam armed forces and people holding an even firmer position and greater initiative of action. As for their opponent, he has been driven even more deeply into the defensive.

From the above, the following conclusions may be drawn:

1) To attack unremittingly is the most active and the most effective method to maintain and extend our control of the battlefield.

The Liberation forces and people are in a winning and offensive position while the Americans and their henchmen are in a losing and defensive one. Both sides are deploying large forces, both have set strategic objectives and the determination to achieve them. We have acquired much experience and the enemy, too, is trying hard to learn his own lessons. Our struggle to maintain and promote our initiative and his efforts to wrest back the initiative continue unabated. Our armed forces and people in South Vietnam hold that the adversary is bending all his energies to extend his strategic counter-offensive with very big forces in an attempt to turn the tide of the war in his favour, and that unless we resolutely attack without let-up to keep and strengthen our control over the battlefield, not only shall we be unable to wipe out his forces and win ever bigger successes, but he will deplete our troops and drive us into a defensive position.

So, the most effective way to preserve and develop our control of the battlefield is to attack resolutely, unremittingly, everywhere and at all times, leaving the enemy no respite.

While the strategic initiative we have secured is the objective basis of our revolutionary war, unremitting offensive on the battlefield precisely constitutes the subjective condition for the maintenance and expansion of that strategic initiative, even if the Americans should bring their strength up to 400,000, 500,000 or more officers and men. Relentless offensive is the resultant of all our military, political and other forces on the battlefield and elsewhere, including our diverse combat methods and different forms and sizes of attacks -- all these component forces being directed
at maintaining and developing our initiative in our revolutionary war.

The South Vietnam liberation forces' and people's approach to the problem was correct: they accurately defined their strategic objective and showed great resolve to achieve it. This explains why they won repeated and ever bigger victories. That was what actually happened on the battlefield. Didn't our unremitting, powerful, and well-coordinated offensive in the dry season cause numerous difficulties of a strategic character to the one million US and puppet troops? The Americans had to spread very thin their troops, their mobile forces were not proportionate to their total effectives, the trend towards the defensive in face of our attacks from Quang Tri and Thua Thien down to the Nam Bo plains became more and more obvious. Our continually offensive position secured for the South Vietnam armed forces and people the initiative in their operational plans. That was our big achievement in strategy and tactics. It bespeaks our firm grasp of the conception of active and resolute offensive in revolution and revolutionary war, and reflects the close combination of the objective requirements of the South Vietnam revolutionary war and our own subjective conditions, our all-out efforts to surmount every difficulty, achieve ever greater victories and bring our resistance war against US aggression, for national salvation, to a higher stage.

2. To keep our forces well in hand and concentrate their activities on meeting our basic requirements in order to maintain and develop our control of the battlefield and to drive the enemy into an even more disadvantageous position.

To this end the South Vietnam liberation forces and people successfully accomplished three tasks:

First, they landed the enemy in a still more critical political situation. He had always been in an absolutely unfavourable political and moral position. Politically, he was faced with a crisis in South Vietnam, in the world and in the United States itself. The morale of his troops — both officers and men; American, puppet and satellite alike — was on the downgrade. This situation necessarily sprang from the unjust character of the US war of aggression and became particularly serious due to the enemy's heavy losses on the battlefield (more and more GI corpses were brought home, more and more puppet troops killed and disbanded every day) and deep contradictions besetting US war escalation. That political passivity and crisis had a direct and very strong impact on the military field where, in effect, he met with further complications and setbacks. From the beginning of the dry season, the PLAF and people of South Vietnam had perfectly realized this very basic weakness of the Americans and started an all-out political and military offensive, aggravating their contradictions and rendering their political position much worse than before. So long as we succeed on this point we can hold and develop our initiative on the battlefield and remain masters of the situation.

Second, we drove the enemy into a more acute military crisis. Clearly, in face of the development of
the war in the Southern part of our country, whatever the number of troops he fielded he could not win any strategic victory. Tied down to a distressed strategic position he did not even know how he could ever hope to win and, in spite of his increasing buildup, always felt short of effectives and without strategic effectiveness. Such a state of affairs made his subjective efforts futile, made the war ever more costly to him in both human lives and material resources, and pushed him ever farther into the blind tunnel.

Third, we drove US tactics and operations into an impasse. Overconfident of their big build-up and strong firepower, the Americans had expected that their tactics and military operations would retrieve their defensive, faulty strategy. Indeed, they earnestly hoped that by wresting back the initiative in combat and operations they could step by step regain the strategic initiative that they had lost. So, to check and foil their operations and tactics of all types, thus driving them into a tactical and operational crisis and restricting to a minimum the combat effectiveness and operational effect of the US and puppet forces, would amount to frustrating their hope to regain the initiative.

In order to preserve and extend their control of the battlefield, the liberation forces and people satisfactorily met the following basic demands:

First, to be firmly determined to fight and vanquish the one million American and puppet troops. Stimulated by their successes, resolved to fight, strengthened by abundant experience and having made careful preparations, all our armed forces and people started this Winter-Spring campaign with the resolve to emulate one another in inflicting more defeats on the enemy. All South Vietnam was boiling with hatred for the aggressors and the traitors, and with the determination to wipe them out and achieve brilliant feats of arms. Everywhere, hundreds and thousands of examples of bravery, intrepidity and indomitable spirit emerged from among the PLAF and the people: These were splendid manifestations of our resolve to vanquish the one million American and puppet troops, glowing examples of revolutionary heroism, and evidence of immeasurable strength. Our absolute political and moral superiority forms precisely the solid basis of our unabated offensive capacity and of the maintenance of our initiative; it is the chief architect of all the victories of the PLAF and people of South Vietnam, an extraordinary force that was decisive for our victory over a million-strong army in this dry season.

Second, to extend and bring people’s war—fought by all our people on all fronts—to a higher stage. We are using the integrated forces of a highly developed people’s war to defeat the enemy’s aggressive professional army, to maintain and develop our control of the battlefield, to strengthen the three categories of our armed forces, and resolutely to attain by all means our three strategic objectives, namely, to wipe out adverse forces, safeguard and expand the liberated areas, maintain and promote the people’s control of the battlefield. From experience learned at the cost of blood the South
Vietnam people and armed forces know that only by doing so can they be masters of the battlefield.

Third, to push ahead our offensive in all regions: hill-forest, rural and urban.

The realities of the revolutionary war in South Vietnam have demonstrated the necessity of attacking the enemy in all these three regions, both politically and militarily. We have to strengthen our initiative not only in the hill-forest and rural theatres but also, gradually, in urban centres.

Fourth, constantly to develop among our fighters and people in each theatre constant readiness to co-operate with other theatres, so as to achieve harmonious co-ordination between all theatres. Evenly effective actions in all parts of a given theatre generate strength but they do not suffice. A much bigger strength will emerge if the actions in all theatres are closely co-ordinated. Unco-ordinated attacks that we have to mount at times are useful. But if we stage many engagements in which our actions are properly co-ordinated either for some time or for a whole campaign, the resulting effect will increase substantially. The effectiveness of people's war, of the three categories of our armed forces, of military and political struggle, will be brought into full play. From their own experience the South Vietnam liberation forces and people maintain that only then can they be, as they in fact are, masters of the battlefield.

Fifth, to consolidate our rear and liberated areas, to preserve and expand our bases. We have to build our liberated zone into a solid rear from the military, political and economic points of view, thereby strengthening our bases. At the same time we must fight the aggressor and consolidate the areas under our control in many respects such as setting up anti-US combat villages, strengthening the militia and self-defence forces, settling the land problem, eliminating traitors and spies and, above all, boosting production and practising thrift along the lines of a national and democratic economy.

The realization of the points mentioned above involves a relentless struggle to keep the initiative during the whole process of the war. From the point of view of military strategy, of armed struggle and fighting in particular, this initiative should be expressed in and wrested by means of our combat methods. The basic principle governing these is: We must force the enemy to fight battles of our choice so that he cannot bring into play his best combat methods and his strong points.

3) To force the enemy to fight battles of our choice is a prerequisite of control of the battlefield.

To compel the opponent to fight as we want him to constitutes a principle governing the utilization of his forces by any commander. The question is whether objective conditions are available for the implementation of this principle.

What do we mean by forcing the enemy to fight battles of our choice, and how to achieve this so as to keep him constantly in the defensive and maintain our initiative? These are the main conclusions drawn from our victory over the one million adverse troops in this dry season:
a) To force the enemy to scatter and spread thin his forces. In other words, make him disperse his troops with a view to hitting at him everywhere while our own stand ready for attack in all places and are in a position to concentrate their actions on priority areas and sectors. This was possible because we held the initiative and could make the fullest use of the three categories of our armed forces, properly arrayed in all theatres of operations. In practice, the enemy had to disperse his troops on extensive areas from Highway 9 down to the Mekong delta and found himself in a very scattered strategic battle-array and was consequently caught in intricate dilemmas, between concentration and dispersal, mobility and occupation, defensive and offensive.

b) To prevent the opponent from using his best combat methods. These consist in fielding large units in a definite line facing his adversary's and backed by a safe rear, in such a way as to be able to move his troops freely from a given point to another, and with his combat and operational objective well in sight, to use as best he can his strong fire-power and high mobility to wipe out adverse troops in an entire campaign as well as in each engagement. As for us, we fight without a clear-cut front-line, without an objective set once for all, operating rapid concentration and dispersal, turning up and fading away unexpectedly, fielding now a big force, now a minor one or combining large-unit and small-unit engagements, attacking the enemy in many places at the same time, in front, in the rear, on the flanks, penetrating to the very heart of the enemy formation deployed for an engagement or a whole operation. As a rule our troops rely on their fighting spirit and resourcefulness to win in the most unexpected circumstances.

c) Not to allow the enemy to encircle and split our forces while striving to do it to him strategically, operationally and in combat; to promote the imbricate pattern of the front to the highest degree so as to encircle and split him strategically. We engage our opponent both head on and in his rear, from within and without, give battle quickly and move off, making it impossible for him to cope with the situation, splitting his forces and creating favourable opportunities for us to wipe him out rapidly. That was why many of his operations in this dry season, designed to encircle the PLAF, only hit a vacuum and worse still, resulted in his troops being surrounded, split up and badly mauled.

d) To deprive the enemy of the possibility of steady defensive and efficacious offensive actions by bringing into play such strategic people's war fighting methods as guerilla warfare, attacks on communication lines, concentrating forces on a definite target, attacking him relentlessly from all sides and launching powerful simultaneous counter-attacks of all sizes and in all forms as in Tay Ninh, Quang Nam, Ben Tre, the Western High Plateaux, Quang Tri, Thua Thien, Tan An, Cholon, and other places thereby rendering both his offensive and defensive actions futile. In this dry season our well-mounted assaults on the Long Binh
ammunition depot, and on the Da Nang, Tan Son Nhat, Can Tho, Pleiku, Chu Lai and Quang Tri airbases, as well as our artillery shelling of Highway 9, disrupted all the enemy’s defensive tactics in South Vietnam.

e) To prevent US forces from serving as a shield for puppet troops. We must continue inflicting bitter losses on the GI’s and at the same time resolutely wipe out puppet troops and disintegrate the Saigon army which, though slighted by the Americans, constitutes a military prop and a political asset for the US neo-colonialist policy in South Vietnam.

f) Not to give the adversary the chance of mounting engagements with combat effectiveness and operational and strategic effect. As for us, we should make the best of our strategic and other advantages like climate, terrain and the people’s support to achieve what is denied to our enemy. In spite of a huge military build-up and an immense quantity of war materials, our opponent sustained heavy losses and scored no result. To put it in capitalist-business terms, he paid too high a price in money and blood, and yet his balance-sheet showed a big deficit. As for us, we often won great victories, very great victories, with relatively small forces, for instance in attacks on airfields and storage depots, in which we achieved results comparable to actions by important air forces.

g) To prevent the enemy from holding control of the battlefield, even in areas adjoining his big bases and urban centres. We fight in all three regions (hill-forest, rural and urban), combine troop annihilation with liberation of territory and extension of the people’s control, combine military offensive with political struggle and persuasion work among the enemy forces, combat actions with insurrections, foil “search and destroy” operations while smashing “pacification by priority sectors” plans.

By carrying out the above points we force the adversary into fighting battles of our choice, or as people say, “eating soup with a fork”.

As a result, we tie him down to an ever more defensive position, and the more he flings himself about, the further he embroils his strategy and tactics. As for us, we are able to create an ever more advantageous strategic position and hold and develop our initiative in offensive. There lie our force and the enemy’s weakness with regard to the conduct of military strategy in the South Vietnam theatre.

According to classical military science, the point is hard to understand. Such is, however, the living reality offered by war in South Vietnam: in face of an opponent with much less effectives and military equipment, a most modern army, one million strong, has proved unable to mount decisive strategic battles to turn the tide of the war in its favour. And not only that, but it has also lost all freedom of action, simply because from the very outset that colossal army has been “captive” of its own passive strategy, whereas its opponent has enjoyed freedom of action.

With this in mind, we understand all the better the great value of our Winter 1966-Spring 1967 victory.
III — To grasp and satisfactorily settle the relationship between the annihilation of enemy forces and the maintenance and promotion of the right of the people as masters of their country; to strengthen the combination of military action, political struggle and persuasion work among adverse troops.

In his war of aggression on the neo-colonialist pattern, the enemy couples military operations with political and economic manoeuvres under his "pincers" plan — "search and destroy" and "pacification" — aimed at three objectives: wiping out of the PLAF, occupation of territory, and subjugation of the people. These are closely related. He holds that unless he knocks down the PLAF, he can neither occupy territory, nor subdue the population. And failing in the occupation task, he will be unable to deploy his troops and restrict the scope of PLAF activities. However, occupation without the people's submission would simply amount to spreading thin his forces, which would face gradual annihilation. In fact all his plans and schemes designed to achieve these three strategic objectives have been basically foiled from the very start, since the launching of his neo-colonialist war of aggression in South Vietnam.

After drawing lessons from their failures in the previous dry season, the US aggressors exerted new "pacification" efforts combined with their "search and destroy" plan. They relegated the bulk of the puppet army to "pacification" activities and made a clearer division of responsibilities among the GI's, the Saigon troops and the "pacification" cadres, these being wicked and bloodthirsty agents recruited on the spot in various localities. The new "pacification" program was concentrated on four key-areas around Saigon, Da Nang, Binh Dinh and An Giang. Large-scale "search and destroy" raids such as operations Attleboro, Cedar Falls and Junction City were aimed at expanding the occupied areas and providing a "security shield" to the puppet forces and "pacification" cadres. Conversely, utterly barbarous, "burn all, kill all and destroy all" actions undertaken in the course of terrorist and nibbling operations were combined with "search and destroy" raids, exploited their results and directly served the task of "wiping out" the PLAF.

But the enemy met with repeated attacks and powerful counter-blows by the PLAF and people of South Vietnam. Both the "pacification" and "search and destroy" jaws of the "pincers" were broken, the "pacification" program went bankrupt with numerous military forces and "pacification" cadres put out of action.

Through their successful struggle on two fronts against the "search and destroy" plan and the "pacification" program, the PLAF and people have drawn the following practical lessons:

First, the relationship between the wiping out of enemy forces and the upholding of the right of the people as masters of their country should be grasped and settled in accordance with the characteristics of
the South Vietnam revolutionary war and our strategic line. All liberation wars have these same tightly related strategic objectives: liberation and holding of territory, protection and liberation of the people. In addition, people’s war in South Vietnam has distinctive features. It has specific methods of struggle based on the common characteristics and general laws of liberation war and revolution. Ours is a country with a small territory and population. The enemy is doing his best to encroach on our land and enslave our people through wicked military actions and very treacherous political and psychowar tricks. In South Vietnam the annihilation of adverse troops and the right of the people as the country’s masters are constantly linked to the realities of the revolutionary war and depend on our strategic line and guiding principles. On this basis the South Vietnam armed forces and people have always maintained that, together with the wiping out of the enemy, the territory and population problems constitute intertwined strategic questions of paramount importance. The revolutionary movement and the development of people’s war in South Vietnam are closely connected with the control of the land by the people. Those are also problems concerning front and rear, fighting the enemy on the one hand and protection and replenishment of our resistance potential and destruction of the opponent’s rear and on-the-spot war potential, on the other.

The outstanding examples set by Long An, Quang Nam, Cu Chi and other places in breaking all “pacification” attempts have strongly impelled armed and political struggle and resulted in the destruction of substantial enemy military and political forces, and in the powerful advance of our own. This is due to clairvoyance, initiative, creativeness and determination in our handling of the relationship between annihilation of enemy troops and safeguarding of the people’s control.

Knocking out adverse troops aims at maintaining and extending the people’s control, and vice versa. We should not therefore over-emphasize the former task, though it ranks first in any war, to the detriment of that of controlling territory and defending the population. Reality has shown that failing to maintain and widen the people’s control of the land, we cannot succeed in the annihilation task. Neither should we overrate our objective regarding territory and population and overlook the annihilation requirement. For, obviously, short of attacking the adversary so as to wipe out both his military and political forces, there is no question of holding territory and defending the people, let alone extending the latter’s control. Besides, the destruction of enemy armed forces, the defence of the territory and the maintenance of the people’s control constitute an over-all strategy which, if only partially implemented, sometimes may not be successful. In the final analysis, it is a comprehensive strategy involving many aspects.

The problem has been understood and posed correctly by our command at every level, in every area and army unit, which precisely explains why in
both direction and execution that double objective was included in our plans. We have never ceased holding firm the initiative of action and have thus found multifarious and efficacious forms of fighting to carry out abreast the wiping out of enemy troops, the defence of the territory and the extension of the people's control. In many places we knew how to take advantage of annihilation actions to enlarge the people's control, to consolidate and expand our bases, and conversely, to use the successful expansion of the people's war to score bigger and bigger military and political achievements.

Second, we should regard the combination of military and political struggle and the co-ordination of the three offensive thrusts — military and political attacks and persuasion work among enemy troops — as basic methods of struggle to constantly enhance the effect of troop annihilation, maintenance and extension of the people's control, and to counter 'pacification.'

Combined political and armed struggle constitutes the basic method of the South Vietnamese people's revolution. It is also the basic method to wipe out enemy troops and secure the people's control, the great strength of which has been illustrated by our numerous victories. Co-ordinated with the powerfully and evenly developed military struggle is the high tide of political struggle, which involved 11 million people in 1966, twice as many as is 1965. Ideological and organizational work to mobilize the masses in rural areas and urban centres keeps progressing. Land distribution and the struggle for reduction of land rent and interest rates assume an extremely important significance. The various boost-production drives have brought about far-reaching results while the united front policy and the nationality policy have recorded striking successes. The political offensives on the puppet army and administration have also proved more and more effective. Persuasion work among enemy troops, though still leaving room for improvement in some areas, has on the whole made a substantial contribution to the disbandment of over 60,000 of them in the Winter of 1966 and Spring of 1967. These activities have played a major part in our successes in combat and operational actions in many regions at the same time as they have actively helped the political struggle of the popular masses.

The experience gained in numerous areas demonstrates that unless we bring into full play all our forces and every form of struggle, and adequately combine political and military struggles, we cannot solve the problem of defending the territory and people in face of the enemy's deployment of a formidable military force into a dense occupation network. Hence even in places where the enemy has set up nearly one hundred posts, he cannot subdue the people, who remain in control of the situation. From the lessons they have learnt at the cost of their blood, the liberation forces and people of South Vietnam conclude that only by sticking to those forms of struggle can they stand firm in...
face of their opponent's relentless strikes, and eventually foil all his schemes.

IV — To unceasingly increase combat effectiveness and the operational and strategic effect of people's war fighting methods.

In this Winter-Spring period a bitter contest has taken place on the battlefield between the enemy's and our own combat methods.

Our people's war methods have clearly shown their superiority. They have grown richer, have been brought to a new degree of development, and have repeatedly held in check all US tactical innovations.

Nothing testifies to this more eloquently than the realities on the battlefields themselves. Here are a few remarks:

— Our activities unfolded evenly in all theatres with all the three categories of armed forces fighting well and scoring major victories. We undertook big and minor engagements, large and small-scale operations, and those of long duration bore a specific character and yielded satisfactory results. Offensives, counter-offensives, counter-raids and anti-pacification actions were equally successful.

Our combat methods have been more or less thoroughly worked out and used in close combination not only in each theatre but in every area, every campaign, every operation and every engagement as well.

Guerilla warfare has risen into a high tide everywhere, spreading adverse forces thin and tying them down in many theatres from Quang Tri and Thua Thien to the Nam Bo plains. Large-unit fighting advanced steadily, with the PLAF hitting hard and ending the fight swiftly, striking still harder towards the closing phase. Strong attacks on the enemy's bases and headquarters hit home at every turn. Repeated and widespread actions against communications and logistic bases were undertaken, often many times against the same place, and were well-mounted and well-fought.

— The increasing impact of such a fighting method lay in the fact that it was directed against the right troops and targets, that it afforded us the possibility of wiping out, decimating and disintegrating enemy military and political forces while reducing our own losses.

In the annihilation of enemy vital forces, we particularly aimed our blows at such important personnel as officers, pilots, armoured car drivers, artillerymen and technicians. We also attached importance to the destruction of technical equipment and other war materials. We struck not only at H.Q.'s but also at logistic bases and communications and caused numerous difficulties to the adversary's supply service. We concentrated our blows not exclusively on the GI's but also on puppet and satellite troops, and did not neglect the wiping out of wicked thugs, puppet reactionary authorities and "pacification" teams.
While confronting the US forces, we strove to impair the co-ordination between their various arms and services, between their air and ground forces, armour and infantry, the latter and artillery, and to neutralize their operational and tactical mobility so as to weaken US infantry even further.

—Our tactical forms of fighting substantially developed. In every theatre, in every area and army unit we devised new, most diversified combat methods: spiked and mine traps, sniping, ambushes, nibbling and surprise attacks, assaults, mobile warfare, artillery shelling, actions against heliborne troops and armoured personnel carriers, attacks inside and outside fortifications, on camps and rear bases, combination of all those methods, fighting on a round-the-clock basis in plain, hill-forest and border areas, and so on.

The superiority, originality and effectiveness of people's war methods have been shown in a condensed manner in the following points:

1) Those fighting methods reflect a rational distribution of combat tasks which notably increases the ability of the Liberation Armed Forces and the fourteen million people of South Vietnam to annihilate the enemy.

Just as an agricultural co-operative in North Vietnam owes its high labour productivity to a proper division of responsibilities among its members, so are combat effectiveness and operational effect derived from a rational distribution of combat tasks. Thanks to their most diversified forms, our fighting methods suit all and each of our forces, civilians and army men, all sections of the people, people of every age, since they fit the health conditions and the abilities of everyone, who, therefore, can take part in the fighting, using the method which is the most suitable to him. Otherwise how could one explain that everyone — artilleryman, scout, war-supply carrier, guerilla, self-defence member in a government office, ordinary people from nine-year-olds to old folks, even a woman just up from childbirth — managed to kill enemy troops? With such combat methods our fourteen million compatriots in South Vietnam, organised into a solid bloc, form a close-knit people’s war battle-array extremely dangerous for the enemy. In this resides the marked mass character of those methods, as well as their creativeness, originality and high effectiveness.

2) We have brought into play all our weapons, from the most rudimentary to up-to-date ones, and created an integrated force with a very great destructive power.

With our combat methods everything in our people's hands can be turned into a weapon against the enemy, even a stick, a carrying pole or a heap of stones. With rudimentary weapons used very skilfully, cleverly and widely, we have caused heavy losses to the GI's. And it is only natural that these American “playboys” dread the spiked pits and booby traps laid by our guerillas and people, into which they fall everyday. The American press has admitted
that 25 percent of the casualties sustained by the US marines stationed in the 1st Corps Area resulted from traps of all kinds. US troops are still more frightened by the effectiveness of our infantry weapons, our guns and mortars of various types, which have raised their casualty list to a new high in the first months of the current year. Thus, by using to the fullest extent possible the efficacious weapons at our disposal, our combat methods have constantly increased the results of our annihilation actions. They have enabled us to combine the action of different units and services and, together with the utilization of various techniques and weapons, have produced not only a devastating effect in combat but also an operational and strategic effect. Their superiority is to bring into play both our rudimentary and modern weapons and to combine these two sorts of arms with a view to generating an integrated force in all theatres as well as in each engagement, raising fighting effectiveness incessantly and turning this gradually into an operational and strategic effect.

3) To defeat the enemy, one may employ either a big force against a smaller one or inversely, or combine both of these methods. Usually, when dealing with operational and combat action one almost exclusively has in mind the use of a big force to secure victory over a smaller one. In practice, however, we have resorted to various methods and won splendid successes, fielding now more troops than the enemy, now less, now as many as he does. Not only in guerilla warfare but also in large-unit operations we have employed all those methods, depending upon the circumstances. When necessary and in favourable conditions we deployed a large force to overwhelm the enemy in inferior numbers and, in this case, fought rapidly and destroyed wholesale his important units. On the other hand, we seized every favourable opportunity to fight a bigger force than ours by bringing into full play all our forces, restraining to a minimum the adversary's powerful firepower and high mobility in combat and operation, and taking advantage of our strong position and the superior quality of our troops to overwhelm the opponent and achieve victory. Whether we confront a bigger, a smaller or an equal force, we invariably have to create for ourselves a stronger position than the enemy's and apply appropriate methods, otherwise we cannot possibly win. The question is what is meant by a strong position and how to build it up. We should rid ourselves of outmoded conceptions regarding concentration of forces, numerical superiority and better weaponry. Thus construed, a strong position does not stem merely from the number of troops but also from clever combat methods, high fighting spirit, resourcefulness, favourable terrain, surprise factor, correct appraisal of the enemy's weaknesses, etc. We can win either with a weaker or a stronger force than the enemy's and combine these two tactics to wipe out the opponent in both separate engagements and whole campaigns.

4) We are able to undertake both small and large-scale actions and to combine these two forms of fighting. In South Vietnam, evenly developed
actions have made it possible to knock down enemy forces over very extensive areas, to pin them down and spread them thin. Large-unit actions of various sizes are also frequently resorted to with flexibility and determination, resulting in powerful blows to enhance our annihilation capacity. This has clearly demonstrated that if we only went in for big-unit actions and overcooked the development of minor ones and the close combination of these with middle-size engagements, it would be impossible and even dangerous to mount large-scale operations. It would be equally wrong to confine ourselves to small-unit actions. Because, failing to resolutely create every facility for eventual large-unit actions, not only could we not boost our operational effectiveness and change the relation of forces in our favour, but we should find ourselves incapable of carrying on and promoting even small-unit actions. In the South Vietnam theatre our combat methods have evolved from small to large-scale fighting, and with the combination of small, middle and large-scale combat actions we have substantially increased the effectiveness of both guerilla warfare and big-unit fighting. In each operation we have carried out this combination in a balanced and flexible way, fielding now a large force first and a small one next, now the other way round, now small and big units simultaneously. We could thus hit the enemy without let-up, one engagement paving the way for the next, our combatants becoming stronger as they fought, and scoring ever more important successes towards the closing phase.

5) We have defeated the enemy in all situations, inside and outside their fortifications, in their bases, by day and by night, in all three areas: hill-forest, rural and urban.

Our combat methods are flexible, diverse and highly effective as they prevail over our adversary’s not only in situations of a single type, for a definite time and in a definite theatre, but also in situations of various types, for different durations and in theatres of different sorts. While attaching importance to knocking out enemy forces on the move, just after their landing from the air or in their provisional encampments, etc., by means of ambushes, surprise attacks, mobile warfare or artillery shelling and so on, the PLAF and people of South Vietnam have taken advantage of every opportunity to strike at them in their fortifications (strong points or rear bases) in skilful and bold attacks. Using sometimes only few troops, they succeeded in limiting the effect of the enemy’s firepower, scoring major successes and reducing their own losses. While paying due attention to luring the enemy into hill-forest battlefields to annihilate him, they actively and resolutely stuck to him and hit hard at him in the plains and urban centres. By striking accurately at his nerve centres in towns and cities, not only did we wipe out part of his forces and impel forward our own armed and political struggles but we also stabbed him in his very heart. By raising the effectiveness of our combat methods we enhanced the role and strategic importance of different operation theatres and regions, thereby
creating for ourselves a position of unremitting and well co-ordinated offensive. Thus, we pinned and spread thin adverse troops everywhere and at the same time delivered him heavy annihilation blows, so that he could not cope with the situation in spite of his large numbers and huge technical apparatus.

6) Our armed forces and people are capable of both independent action and sustained and combined action over whole campaigns. Our combat methods derived their superiority from the fact that they make it possible for every fighter and every unit either to independently search out the enemy to knock him out or to closely co-operate with other fighters and units according to a common plan in a whole series of actions or a whole campaign. That is why we fight the enemy in every theatre, in every area, at any time and in every direction: our combatants engage enemy troops wherever they are. They carry out independent activities simultaneously with small and large-scale operations and coordinated actions lasting for many days. The liberation forces and people of South Vietnam have fully developed the capabilities of every group and every unit in every area to stick to the enemy and strike at him. Better still, they know very well how to conduct co-ordinated actions in a whole theatre according to a single plan, launching small, middle and large-size operations. This is a correct combat method which should be promoted. They can mount successfully not only separate engagements but entire operations, whole series of offensive and counter-offensive actions, counter-raids and attacks on communications and enemy rear bases. This is a very important factor to increase unceasingly our combat effectiveness and the operational effect of our fighting methods, strengthen our unremitting offensive position and maintain and extend our control of the battlefield.

7) We combine activities of various types to attack the enemy in the military, political and economic fields. Ours are people's war combat methods directed against the adversary in all respects. This spirit permeates every one of our combat plans, every form of fighting, every tactics. In practice, certain engagements had no great military value but assumed a far-reaching political and economic importance. Our attacks on Saigon city and the provincial capital of Quang Tri (April 6, 1967) for instance, owed their significance not only to the annihilation of a number of enemy officers and men and the destruction of a quantity of war materials, but especially to their great political impact on the US-puppet command and the Saigon administration. Apart from their military effect, our communication-demolition operations again and again cut off the land connection between Ca Mau and Saigon, which has forced the puppet authorities to import nearly one million tons of rice, thereby causing many difficulties to them. Here lies the strong comprehensive effect of our strikes on the military, political and economic fronts.

In brief, people's war combat methods used in South Vietnam have been brought to a high degree of development and are possessed of an extremely great strength. This strength springs from the resolute offensive spirit of the masses, from their wonderful
intrepidity, their boiling impatience to wipe out enemy troops. It also reflects the organizational, strategic and tactical abilities of the liberation forces and people of South Vietnam as much as their strong fighting abilities. These combat methods have a markedly revolutionary, thoroughly scientific and very widely popular character, which explains why the longer they fight the more successes they achieve and the stronger they become. Those methods keep growing in diversity and flexibility. They have repeatedly triumphed over all US methods: search and destroy, airmobile, defensive sweeps, defensive bolt, etc; just as they have broken all the tactical experiments that the Americans have painstakingly carried out during this dry season.

The realities on the battlefield have given the South Vietnam armed forces and people reason to assert and be proud of the superiority and strength of their original combat methods. These reflect a most rational distribution of combat tasks designed to develop to the fullest extent possible the strength of our fourteen million countrymen and of the three categories of our armed forces, possessed of a very high revolutionary consciousness and steeled in the crucible of war. They have powerfully enhanced the creative independent thinking of the popular masses and the organizational and planning capacity of our people's war. It is safe to say that the most successful experience gained by our liberation forces and people in the direction and execution of our strategy is to have creatively developed and gradually perfected the above-mentioned methods so that they have constantly boosted our combat effectiveness and operational and strategic effect on the battlefield.

V – To attach importance to the building and development of our two forces and the three categories of our troops; to settle correctly the relationship between quantity and quality.

The victory of our army and people over one million American, puppet and satellite troops by itself eloquently bespeaks our great successes in the building and development of our forces. These successes have resulted from our correct grasp of combat methods and strategic orientation, worked out in a creative manner and with the utmost exertion, in accordance with the specific conditions of our country, our own fighting methods and the trend of development in the South Vietnam theatre, in order to vanquish an adversary having a great troop-strength and overwhelming superiority in war materials and technique. The following are some manifestations of such successes:

First, we have developed both our political and armed forces in a powerful and well-balanced manner.

In face of US intensification of the war, fraught with very serious consequences, while building and developing our forces, we have never wavered and have firmly grasped our strategic orientation and the principles on
the combination of military and political struggles. We have correctly defined the respective strategic positions of our armed and political forces in the South Vietnam revolution. We have satisfactorily settled the relationship between these two forces, thus making it possible for them to grow up powerfully and in a well-balanced manner, and to bring their effectiveness into full play. Indeed, never have our political forces undergone such an impetuous development as in this Winter-Spring period. They encompass all strata of the population, all patriotic-minded elements, regardless of social class, religious creed, nationality, and political tendency, in a vast struggle against the US aggressors and the traitors, for national independence, democracy, neutrality and progress towards reunification of the Fatherland. On the basis of this widespread movement, the political army of the popular masses — the mainstay of the political struggle — has also been strengthened in number and quality. The political front and the political army have been enlarged in the hill-forest, rural and urban areas. Those are precisely the forces which have accounted for all our successes in political struggle, and which have made an active contribution to the building up and fighting strength of our armed forces.

Parallel with the strengthening of the political forces we have done our utmost to increase our armed forces. The three categories of our troops have grown up evenly, in a planned and well-balanced manner and in keeping with the realities of each theatre of operations and the combat tasks of each category of troops.

Born of the political movement and the political forces of the people, the militia and guerilla forces have gone through a widespread development, taking on multifarious appropriate organizational forms and bringing the whole people's strength into action against the enemy. Our fourteen million compatriots in South Vietnam have been militarily organized, equipped and trained, and politically educated to deal with the situation and tasks facing our country. They entered the dry season boiling with the determination to defeat the one million enemy troops. Through the trials, we have built up many guerilla and self-defence units which have distinguished themselves with excellent fighting and production records. Our guerillas are strong not only because of their courage and fairly good equipment but also because of their very clever combat methods which have proved able to knock out whole sections and platoons, be they American or puppet troops.

Our regional troops have been strengthened in every theatre into strong mobile units capable of independent action, of cooperating with our regular forces in large-unit fighting, and of coordinating their activities with militiamen and guerillas to wipe out enemy troops, defend the population, expand guerilla warfare and support political struggle. Together with evenly developed and efficacious guerilla warfare, their operational efficiency has been gradually raised and consequently they have been able to put out of action whole US companies and whole puppet battalions.
Our regular forces have also grown up and acquired a great fighting capacity and good mobility. They are expert in confronting their opponent in every tactical form, every combat method, every scale of fighting and every terrain condition. They can destroy rapidly and entirely one or several American, puppet and satellite battalions with armour support.

Thus, each category of our armed forces is possessed of high fighting spirit and is capable of accomplishing its tasks. Particularly, all of them have been rationally deployed in all theatres of operations and can play their role adequately and bring about the strategic effect that we expect from them. That is why, during this Winter-Spring campaign, they have achieved close co-ordination in every theatre, every major drive, every operation and every engagement, thus setting up a pattern of unremitting offensive on the enemy. At any time, they can relieve each other, for training or rest. Meanwhile, adverse troops are worn out as they are kept on the move to cope with our activities in many strategic directions. As admitted by the US commanders, their mobile units in the East Nambo theatre such as the 1st Infantry Division, the 25th Division, the 173rd and 196th Brigades, hardly have any time for rest.

In our people's war in South Vietnam, the strategic position of the three categories of our armed forces has been strongly strengthened and this can be seen on the battlefield in the well-balanced development of guerilla warfare and large-unit fighting. Reality has clearly shown that there cannot be large-unit fighting, so long as guerilla warfare is nonexistent. The latter is the biggest asset of any liberation war. As we fight against a neo-colonialist enemy in South Vietnam, guerilla warfare holds a most important, basic strategic position. At the same time, in favourable conditions and to meet the revolution's objective requirement, we have resolutely and creatively promoted large-unit fighting, for failing to do so our revolution and people's war would mark time instead of forging ahead, guerilla warfare itself could not hold on, and, naturally, we should not be in a position to win the war. Indeed, to vanquish the US aggressors and their henchmen in accordance with our rules of action, large-unit fighting necessarily plays a very important strategic part. Guerilla warfare should be co-ordinated with large-unit fighting and conversely, both playing a decisive role in our present armed struggle on people's war pattern.

Second, in the process of building up our armed forces, we have correctly settled the relationship between quantity and quality. In order to prepare ourselves to defeat the one million enemy troops, and basing ourselves on our strategic guiding principles, we have advocated the building of revolutionary armed forces including a widespread and powerful militia and guerilla force, together with crack regional and regular troops in appropriate numbers. Such an organizational form can bring into full play the strength of our armed forces and people to secure big successes, and
conforms to the combat methods of people's war in South Vietnam and to our economic, geographic and population conditions. At the same time it makes it possible for us to wage a protracted war, to carry out production and replenish our people's strength, so that the longer we fight the stronger we become and that we shall surely defeat a numerically superior enemy.

One of the key methods to develop the strength of such a comprehensive organisation is to improve the quality of the armed forces. This involves high combativeness, determination to maintain the offensive, well-streamlined organization, good equipment, high technical and tactical capabilities of the troops, organizational ability of the cadres and a competent command, a high sense of discipline, creative combat methods, good supplies, etc.

In essence, the problem is to raise the fighting capacity not only of each big unit but also of each company, each platoon, each section, each three-man group, each officer and man of the regular, regional, militia and guerilla forces. On this basis we constantly increase our combat and operational effectiveness with a view to the accomplishment of the armed forces' strategic task in the war.

The South Vietnam liberation troops and people also hold that a high-quality unit of the armed forces is one that not only fights well, and satisfactorily discharges other everyday military responsibilities, but also takes part in production, depending on the situation and its own possibilities. Not only militiamen and guerillas, but regular troops, too, should produce to improve their living conditions and to a certain extent reduce the people's contribution to their sustenance.

The great successes achieved by our armed forces and people throw a strong light on the principles governing the building up of forces in revolutionary wars: to build while fighting, to closely combine fighting and building in order to win, and to win in order to build and develop the armed forces according to the following guide-line: the longer one fights, the more successes one scores, and the stronger one becomes.

So, with an appropriate number of top-quality troops, with the combination of the three categories of our armed forces properly deployed, with the co-ordination of their activities with those of the political forces, with the excellent battle array of people's war, and particularly with their highly effective combat methods, the Liberation forces and people of South Vietnam are in a position to defeat their enemy's superior numbers through the high quality of their own forces.
People's war against air war of destruction
War of Destruction against North Vietnam: Part of the US Imperialists’ War of Aggression against the South.

1) The US war of destruction against North Vietnam is a new-type war. It is not a separate war, but part of the US war of aggression against South Vietnam, conditioned by the evolution of the aggressive war in South Vietnam and aimed at staving off US defeat on the South Vietnam battlefield.

It bears the character of a limited war: the main striking force used in this war is not US infantry, but its air force and navy, chiefly the air force. Hence it has only limited objectives, the achievement of which is to help toward a decision in US favour in the ground war of aggression conducted by US infantry in South Vietnam. Naturally, in the first months of their attacks on North Vietnam, the US aggressors nurtured the illusion that they could bomb and strafe our people in both zones into submission.

The US imperialists are fully aware of the role of socialist North Vietnam, the revolutionary base of the whole country, the great rear of the South Vietnam revolutionary war.

That is why, right at the start and through all various stages of its war of aggression in South
Vietnam, the US has not for a moment given up the dream of destroying North Vietnam. From 1961 to 1964, following its strategic failure in face of the “concerted uprising” movement of the South Vietnam people and during its “special war” against the South Vietnam revolution, the US smuggled many groups of spies and commandos into North Vietnam, trying their best to foment counter-revolutionary troubles in an attempt to undermine North Vietnam from inside.

In early 1965, as their “special war” strategy in South Vietnam was facing complete failure, in order to avert the total bankruptcy of their aggressive plan and save the puppet army and administration from imminent disintegration, the US imperialists hurriedly unleashed their air and naval forces against North Vietnam and hastily dispatched a large expeditionary corps to South Vietnam, coupling these moves with fallacious “peace negotiation” offer (Johnson’s April 1965 Baltimore speech) in an effort to force the Vietnamese people within a short period of time to bow to the brutal force of the aggressors. But US bombs and shells have failed to subdue our armed forces and people in both zones. They have only strengthened our national unity, stiffened our resolve and impelled forward our increasingly successful struggle.

The US imperialists, out of passivity, had to switch from “special war” to “local war” through a more and more massive commitment of US expeditionary troops and further escalation of their fierce attacks on North Vietnam. The aggressive war in South Vietnam and the war of destruction against North Vietnam have been going together like a man and his shadow.

The concrete objectives of the US war of destruction against North Vietnam are as follows:

— To shake the determination to fight US aggression, for national salvation, of our people in both zones;

— To prevent North Vietnam’s assistance to South Vietnam, bolster up the morale of the puppet army and administration, isolate and stamp out the South Vietnam revolutionary war;

— To sabotage North Vietnam’s socialist construction, weaken her economic and national defence potential.

Besides, by attacking North Vietnam, a member of the socialist camp and a sovereign country, the US has challenged the socialist camp and other independent countries, and tried to strike at the prestige of the world’s revolutionary forces and intimidate the world’s revolutionary peoples.

In face of the ever greater setbacks it has suffered in North Vietnam and the evident impotence of the US air force and navy, the US has been forced to gradually restrict the ambitions of its objectives. Now, it no longer speaks of preventing, but only of “creating difficulties” to, and “limiting” North Vietnam’s assistance to South Vietnam. This is also a way to admit US failure in its war of destruction against North Vietnam.
2) By waging their war of destruction against North Vietnam, the US aggressors have undoubtedly made an enormous blunder. As an aftermath of their losing and passive position in South Vietnam, their war of destruction in North Vietnam right at the start has been stamped with the mark of passivity and failure on the strategic plane. It carries in itself many very fundamental weaknesses.

Political weakness has proved fatal to the US war of destruction, because it is tying down and considerably restricting US military strength, which is not unlimited.

By creating an infamous precedent of unprovoked attack against a country of the socialist camp — a sovereign nation which has never done any harm to the United States — the US imperialists have been driven into most serious political isolation. From this state of things has emerged a law of the war of destruction: the more the US widens its military activities and the higher it escalates, the more it is isolated politically.

Consequently the US cannot deploy massively its ultramodern air and naval forces in a surprise, lightning and large-scale attack so as to inflict big losses on us. The criminal that US imperialism is has had to "escalate" rung by rung, trembling and probing, now escalating and now de-escalating, constantly finding himself in a state of perplexity and passivity. The modern US air force, with its very expensive up-to-date jet planes of different types, designed for a large-scale nuclear war, has had to wage a completely different war for which it is completely unprepared. It must use scattered forces to strike again and again at thousands of small targets which are constantly on the move. Hence its inability to make full use of all combat methods in which it excels and to bring into full play the functional, tactical and technical capacities of its modern weapons and technical means. The longer it fights, the more the US air force proves incapable of fulfilling the tasks assigned to it and the heavier the losses it sustains.

US attacks against the North have been aimed at improving US situation in the South. The more the US fails in the South the more it feels the need to step up attacks on the North, which causes it heavier and heavier losses and aggravates its passiveness in both zones of Vietnam. This is another fact which assumes the character of a law in the war of destruction. It explains why as the fighting goes on the US air force has grown weaker. US escalation in early 1966 (following the so-called 37-day bombing pause) and in early 1967, which consisted of intensified raids on industrial establishments and populated areas including the capital, Hanoi, and Haiphong, continual bombardment of the coastal areas by naval artillery, shelling across the 17th parallel from positions south of the demarcation river, mining of rivers and canals, etc., is closely associated with the US plans for strategic "counter-offensives" in those two years and their lamentable failure.
Thus, owing to the disastrous decision to use the air war of destruction in North Vietnam to retrieve the losing ground war in South Vietnam — the main battlefield — the US has been forced to scatter its air and naval forces over a new theatre, which has made it impossible for it to concentrate its forces to support its ground operations in the main theatre. US passiveness and failure on one battlefield has thus been extended to many battlefields. Drawing the balance-sheet of US failure in Vietnam, Maxwell Taylor admitted that no issue concerning the Vietnam situation had provoked such protracted quarrels and discussions as the bombing of North Vietnam.

3) The US war of destruction in North Vietnam, however, has not always evolved in a one-way direction according to the rule that the more the US fails in the South the harder it strikes at the North. The point is whether or not the US is able to continue its escalation indefinitely.

Reality has shown that because it has escalated its war from a losing position and sustained ever more defeats in the process, the US cannot escalate indefinitely.

Its forces being not unlimited — as shown by the realities of the war — and being moreover subjected to ever heavier losses in both parts of Vietnam, once the political goals of the neo-colonialist aggressive war in Vietnam show no chance of ever being attained despite the deployment of an unforeseen enormous military force, and once continued escalation has proved incapable of solving anything, the US must either change its goals or de-escalate.

This trend found a clear expression in Johnson's decision on a "limited bombing" of North Vietnam as from March 31, 1968. This decision was in no way motivated by any "restraint" on his part or by anything other than US heavy military and political failures. It gives a clear indication of the real capacities of the US air force following its big losses in aircraft and pilots over recent years in both North and South Vietnam. It is our people's unflagging and valiant fight, on both the military and political fronts and in both the South and the North, that has forced the White House to "de-escalate." It is still fresh in everybody's mind that in the last months of 1967 the US furiously intensified its attacks on North Vietnam, the most typical of which were the concentrated and frantic strikes against Hanoi and Haiphong and the sustained bombardments of the southern part of the Fourth Military Zone. However, far from achieving the objectives of its war of destruction, the US met with well-deserved punishment. The number of US aircraft shot down, pilots killed or captured, and war vessels set on fire or damaged increased at a quick tempo.

Then in the first wave of their general offensive, the South Vietnam armed forces and people in the early days of Spring 1968 dealt such heavy blows at the US air force that even now it has not been replenished. For several consecutive months, the USAF's capacity to attack North Vietnam dropped visibly. As
a matter of fact, with its war efforts at the present level, the US is meeting with growing difficulties and is hardly in a position to attack North Vietnam with the same fury as in the past. The US has to concentrate its remaining forces on a given sector in order to effectively prevent North Vietnam’s assistance to South Vietnam and give an efficient support to the US and puppet troops on the South Vietnam battlefields in their desperate defensive efforts in the current phase of the general offensive and widespread uprisings of the South Vietnam revolutionary war. So, Johnson’s announcement of “limited bombing” of North Vietnam was, in the final analysis, only a public confession of the abysmal military failure of the US and the limited power of the USAF on the battlefront. It also revealed the tremendous political failure of the US imperialists in face of the increasing pressure of public opinion in the US and the world for a permanent and unconditional halt to the bombing and all other acts of war by the US against the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.

Naturally, because the war of destruction against North Vietnam is closely linked to the war of aggression against South Vietnam, because they are bent on clinging to South Vietnam and still have considerable war potential at their disposal, the US imperialists are still able to make up for their losses and to resume their escalation.
of their tasks as the great rear base towards the
great front. The revolutionary war in South Viet­
nam is far from being isolated or weakened. The South 
Vietnam armed forces and people, overcoming the 
greatest obstacles and most severe trials and relying 
on their own strength and the great rear base—socialist 
North Vietnam—have been unceasingly and vigorously 
pushing on with their strategic offensive, defeating US 
strategic counter-offensives one after another and forc­
ing the US aggressors, after the 1966-1967 dry season, 
back to strategic defensive at the very moment 
when their war efforts had reached a very high level 
in terms of both troop strength and armaments and 
money. Early in the Spring of 1968, taking advantage 
of the enemy’s heavy setbacks and great confusion, 
the South Vietnam armed forces and people, unleashing 
the powerful strength stored up in the process of 
struggle, launched an earth-shaking general offensive 
which is still going on. The US defensive position as 
well as its aggressive will against South Vietnam has 
been disrupted, weakened and continuously on the 
downgrade. A new, very glorious phase of the revolu­
tionary war in South Vietnam has begun, that of con­
tinual attacks and widespread uprisings aimed at 
weeping out as much US and puppet manpower as possible, 
overthrowing the puppet administration at all levels, 
expanding control over the country and step by step 
wresting back all power for the people.

Unquestionably, instead of undermining the South 
Vietnam revolution and checking its irresistible growth, 
the US imperialists’ war of destruction against North 
Vietnam will not save them from ever greater setbacks 
in both zones of the country and will inevitably end 
in total fiasco.

2) The North Vietnam armed forces and 
people have wiped out a substantial part of 
the US strategic air and naval forces, comprising 
aircraft of all types including the biggest, the B.52, 
and the latest, the F.111A; killed or captured thou­
sands of, pilots; and sunk, set afire or damaged over 
a hundred warships and commando boats of the US 
and its puppets. Never before in US history have the 
US aggressors lost such a big number of aircraft and 
pilots. Even with its vast material resources the US 
has not yet been able to make up for the losses. They 
have decreased the military strength of the US 
in general and its air force in particular, seriously 
affecting the global strategy of the US imperialists in 
their odious role as international gendarme.

This victory of our people is not only of important 
military significance but also of paramount political 
meaning. For the US Air Force and Navy have always 
been the main trump-card of the military forces on 
which the US aggressors rely to intimidate and suppress 
other peoples. Not long ago, they still used them as 
a boogy to support their imperialistic aims. Now all 
the weaknesses and impotence of their trump-card 
have been laid bare by the resistance of Vietnam, 
whose population is much smaller than and whose 
equipment is much inferior to those of the US. 
The latter is groggy from the serious losses in 
manpower and war means of its air and naval forces
and more particularly from the loss of this trump-
card. The US imperialists' prestige as a "great power"
has sunk to a lamentable low in the eyes of the world
peoples and even of their "allies" and satellites, who
used to regard the US as an invincible great power
which could rule the roost anywhere and at any time.

3) Far from being weakened, socialist North
Vietnam has become far steadier and stronger
in all spheres—political, military, economic,
and national defence.

The political unity and solidarity of the people
around the Party, the Government and President Ho
Chi Minh have been firmer and their determination
to defend the North and liberate the South higher
than ever. The North Vietnam armed forces and peo-
ple, tempered in trials, have gained invaluable experi-
ence in their sacred fight to help the South Vietnam
revolution and to defeat the modern air and naval
forces of the US in North Vietnam. In only a little
more than 3 years, our people's armed forces have
grown up more rapidly than in many previous peace-
time years. All the three categories of our armed forces
have made giant strides forward in both quantity and
quality. Strengthened by many new, modern armed
branches and services, our armed forces can expertly
man supersonic jet planes and missiles, have recorded
many extraordinary exploits against the US air and
naval forces, and are fully prepared and fully able to
defeat the US ground forces if they are reckless enough
to invade North Vietnam.

People's War against...

Never before have our people had so powerful an
army as at present. In spite of enemy bombs and
shells and right in the midst of fierce and continual
attacks by the enemy we continue to make steady
strides forward in socialist revolution and in successful
socialist construction. The socialist relations of pro-
duction keep consolidating; the technical revolution
keeps forging ahead; cultural, educational and medical
work is constantly developing; the people's life remains
stable. Our armed forces and people are fighting and
working with the calm and proud attitude of the victor,
full of optimism and confidence in the future.

The extraordinary and all-sided growth of North
Vietnam constitutes a tremendous achievement for the
armed forces and people both in the North and through-
out the country. It has created great moral and material
possibilities for the victory of our armed forces and
people throughout the country at present and for their
whole revolutionary cause in the future as well.

4) Our people enjoy increasing aid from the
socialist camp, wide sympathy and support
from the world peoples, and have driven the
US aggressors into serious political isolation.

The arrogance of the US imperialists' unprovoked
attack against a country of the socialist camp, a sover-
eign nation, has been an intolerable challenge to the
socialist camp and peace-loving people in the world.
The legitimate and successful fight of our people has
gained increasing sympathy and support from our camp
and from the whole of progressive mankind. The fra-
ternal socialist countries are supporting and assisting
our people more and more actively — politically, economically and militarily. The world people’s demand for an end to the bombing and all other acts of war by the US against the DRVN is becoming a broad and very powerful movement. Even the closest “allies” of the US dare not come out in defence of its extremely brazen and immoral acts. Not a few US officials themselves have realized that by pursuing its war of destruction against North Vietnam, the US not only will get nowhere, but will suffer heavier military defeats in both parts of Vietnam and face greater political isolation in Vietnam, the United States and the world.

Our great victories and the enemy’s dismal defeats in the military, political and diplomatic fields have dealt a hard blow at the US aggressive will in Vietnam. In the war of destruction against North Vietnam this will has receded an important step. It is against this historical background that Johnson had to order the “limited bombing” of North Vietnam and send a US government’s representative to Paris for talks with the DRVN Government’s representative.

**Lessons and Causes of our Victory**

The armed forces and people of North Vietnam have drawn many lessons which constitute very important causes of our victory.

1) **The Party’s firm and sound leadership is of primary importance to our victory over the war of destruction by the US aggressors.**

Basing itself on very high revolutionary resolve and deep understanding of Marxist-Leninist views of class struggle and reality, the Party has seen through the basic scheme and all the moves of the US in its war of destruction and accordingly worked out and correctly and imaginatively implemented the lines, policies, objectives, strategy and tactics of the people’s war to defeat the US aggressors: to resist US aggression and save the homeland, to mobilize and organize our people’s fighting forces so that they will “go wherever the enemy is” and are determined to win complete victory over the US aggressors; to build socialism in North Vietnam in keeping with wartime conditions while preparing for long-term construction after victory; international solidarity on the basis of Marxism-Leninism aimed at winning the sympathy and support of the socialist camp and of various nations and revolutionary forces in the world for the cause of our people, while making an active contribution to the fulfilment of our internationalist duties. The Party has taken the following decisions: In all eventualities, to join forces with our South Vietnam compatriots to defeat the US aggressors; to make transport and communications the immediate, central task of the whole Party and people, and greatly step up the assistance of the great rear to the great front; to beat off, with resolve and imagination, all attacks by the US air force and navy, while
countering in every way other acts of destruction by the enemy; closely to co-ordinate armed struggle with political and diplomatic activities in order gradually to defeat the war of destruction; to build while fighting, thus increasing the strength of socialist North Vietnam in all fields.

2) On the strength of the steadiness and absolute superiority of the socialist regime in North Vietnam, to create an inexhaustible power with which to defeat any enemy.

The great strength of the people’s war in its confrontation with the US war of destruction in North Vietnam resides in the firmness and incontestable superiority of our socialist regime.

The socialist revolution in North Vietnam, with the basic completion of the revolution in the relations of production, has in the main done away with class antagonisms in North Vietnamese society, brought about a very great political and moral unity among the people, and raised their sense of collective sovereignty. Fostered by the Party, revolutionary heroism has developed our national tradition of dauntlessness, on the basis of the Party’s sound revolutionary lines, the superiority of the socialist regime, and the people’s sense of collective sovereignty.

Socialist ownership in North Vietnam—in the form of ownership by the whole people and collective ownership—has also made possible an expert and rational organization to achieve a sound division of work and a combination of all available forces so as to fulfil, with the best quality and highest efficiency, the most complex tasks of the total war fought by the whole people.

It is precisely thanks to the socialist regime, in which men acquire higher and higher cultural and technical standards, that the three kinds of armed forces of our people have, within a short time, mastered the use of various modern weapons and war means, while the various branches of the national economy have made many discoveries and technical innovations for a constant rise in labour productivity, and forever greater amounts of products to serve the armed forces, national construction and the people’s living, the defence of North Vietnam and the liberation of South Vietnam.

The strength of the socialist regime in North Vietnam springs from the combination of political, moral, organizational, spiritual, and material factors. Its unquestionable superiority finds a concentrated expression in the men—new, socialist men with high class-consciousness and ardent patriotism, matchless determination and valour, readiness to face all sacrifices and hardships, a high sense of discipline, adequate cultural, scientific and technical knowledge, physical stamina, men who are loyal, unassuming and simple in their way of living, full of lofty feelings and ideals.

3) Resolutely and creatively to develop people’s war to the highest degree and make it invincible so as to defeat the US aggressors in
South Vietnam and completely defeat their war of destruction in North Vietnam.

The people's war with which we face the war of destruction at present is quite a new type in the history of wars, a total war waged by the whole people with a new content: the entire people: fighting enemy aircraft and warships; with their three kinds of armed forces acting as the core; fighting enemy aircraft and warships and countering enemy artillery, at the same time organizing civil defence, intercepting enemy commandos, strengthening public security, and foiling enemy psychowar: fighting while continuing socialist construction; defending North Vietnam while fulfilling our duties toward South Vietnam; keeping transport and communications going to serve the fight against the war of destruction in North Vietnam and accomplish our duties as the great rear to the great front.

The people’s armed forces have been creatively applying the principles of people’s war in the fight against enemy aircraft and warships. While fighting they have increased both their numerical strength and qualitative standard, and have drawn many lessons which have enriched our nation’s military art. These include the experience in making use of every available weapon and means—from infantry weapons to A-A guns of every caliber, aircraft and missiles; the combination of the army’s anti-aircraft forces (including A-A batteries, the air force, missiles, radar and the navy) with the widespread fight against enemy aircraft by the infantry, the militia and self-defence forces, with the army’s A-A forces as the core; new methods of fighting, mobile, versatile, resourceful, and fearless, weaving a spiderweb of fire at all altitudes and in all directions, effective, capable of hitting modern aircraft of every description in any place, at any time, in any weather conditions. Our A-A forces have brought down the biggest number of enemy aircraft, living up to their role as the mainstay of air defence of the Vietnam People’s Army. They have made the utmost efforts to master modern technique, and have developed their own, original ways of fighting, successfully opposing a small force to a much bigger one, and winning splendid victories. The militia and self-defence forces have become skilled in handling modern equipment, and many of them, with women and old folk among their members, have achieved resounding exploits. The artilleries of all the three kinds of people’s armed forces have also gone into action, countering and duly punishing American artillery on the southern bank of the demarcation river, sinking or setting ablaze many warships and commando boats of the Americans and their puppets. The navy, in co-ordination with friendly units, has performed brilliant feats against enemy warships and aircraft.

Other new facets of life in North Vietnam are civil defence, maintenance and development of transport and communications, and stepped-up production, all in war-time conditions. They characterize the people’s war in
its confrontation with the US war of destruction, and provide our people with new experience. Trenches and shelters are used not only to protect ourselves but also to attack, to fight, and to carry on production on the spot and under all circumstances. The struggle in the field of transport and communications has recorded unprecedented successes, and is an immortal epic in praise of the workers and people on all the roads and ways. Our achievements in industrial and agricultural production, in education, culture and public health, have brought added glory to the Vietnamese nation's tradition of industriousness, gallantry, optimism and love of life.

The South Vietnamese people and their armed forces have also actively contributed to North Vietnam's victory over the US war of destruction. Angered by US aggression against socialist North Vietnam, they have translated into deeds this watchword: "If the US aggressors strike one blow at North Vietnam, South Vietnam will return ten." Overcoming all hardships and difficulties and developing their offensive to the highest degree, they have thwarted all US strategic counter-offensives on the South Vietnam battlefield. What is more, they have launched a general offensive which has incessantly been pushed on. The South Vietnamese patriotic armed forces and people have destroyed a large chunk of the enemy's military strength, including many aircraft, fuel depots, large quantities of bombs and ammunition, and put out of action large numbers of pilots, technicians, etc., while containing the US air force in South Vietnam, whittling it down, weakening it seriously and greatly blunting the sting of its attacks on North Vietnam. In a word, the South Vietnamese liberation armed forces and people have been closely co-ordinating their action with the armed forces and people in North Vietnam, inflicting heavier and heavier defeats on the US and aggravating its loss of the initiative in both parts of Vietnam.

4) Another cause of success: our all-out efforts to win sympathy and support from the socialist camp, the world's peoples and progressive mankind as a whole.

The strength of the victorious North Vietnamese armed forces and people and of their revolutionary cause as a whole also originates from the strength of the present era, which has seen the birth and growth of new revolutionary forces now acting on an all-round strategic offensive against US-led imperialism. Thanks to our just and successful struggle and to our Party's correct foreign policy we have received whole-hearted assistance, both moral and material, which is unceasingly increasing in volume and gaining in effectiveness, from the socialist camp, various nations in the world, and the whole of progressive mankind. Mainly relying upon our own efforts, we have turned such assistance into real strength to defeat US imperialism both
militarily in its war of destruction and politically in the international arena.

We are very grateful to the fraternal countries and the world's peoples for their assistance to our just cause, and regard it as one of the causes of our successes. We are resolved to fulfil our greatest national duty which is at the same time our greatest internationalist duty at this juncture: to defeat the US aggressors completely.

It is obvious that our big victory is the victory of the resolute, sound leadership of the Party, a victory brought about by our ability to bring into play the all-round and inexhaustible strength of the socialist regime, the victory of people's war fought with creativeness, brought to a high degree of development, and made invincible, and finally the victory of a foreign policy which has succeeded in enlisting the sympathy and support of the fraternal countries in the socialist camp and of the whole of progressive mankind.

Evolution
of the military situation in 1968
Many people were startled by the Tết 1968 general offensive launched by the popular forces; but it came as no surprise to those who had been following the events for a few years. For in spite of all appearances, the military situation had grown worse for the Americans ever since 1965.

Continuous Degradation

Let us briefly summarize events in the period between 1965 and 1967. In February 1965, the first all-out bombings of the DRVN started and the Marines landed at Da Nang the following month. Washington thought that this deployment of forces would be enough to shake the will of the Vietnamese people in both North and South to resist, and to compel them to accept the terms of an American "peace". That was the first miscalculation. Immediately, both the NFL and the Government of the DRVN proclaimed their firm determination to resist the aggression, at the same time setting forth the conditions for a genuine peace, inseparable from the wrestling back of independence, the withdrawal of all foreign troops from the country, and the interdiction of all external interference in Vietnamese affairs.
Washington brought its military power into play. By November 1965, at the start of the dry season favourable to big military operations, the US Command in South Vietnam had at its disposal an expeditionary corps of nearly 200,000 American troops, sent in to prop up a puppet army of half a million. Westmoreland thought that with their great mobility, especially ensured by a considerable fleet of helicopters, and their enormous firepower, without precedent in the history of wars, the American troops would easily “break the back of the Vietcong”, i.e. “search and destroy” the big units of NFL regulars and force them to return to guerilla warfare by small units. Meanwhile, US aviation would interdict all aid coming from the North for the South Vietnamese popular forces. Having lost the bulk of its regular forces and deprived of all help, the NFL would collapse, and the puppet troops would easily clear and “pacify” the territory. The US Command hurled its troops in five offensive directions, in the Da Nang region as well as on the High Plateaux, north-west of Saigon as well as along the coast of Trung Bộ; a plan was worked out for the occupation of the Mekong delta by American GIs. Washington thought the matter would be quickly settled, for it was unthinkable that the NFL would be in a position to stand up victoriously to the colossal American war machine.

That was the second miscalculation. Far from collapsing, the South Vietnamese resistance dealt heavy blows at the American and puppet troops, and all categories of popular armed forces as well as the NFL’s main-force units grew ever larger and more powerful. The DRVN hit back vigorously at raiding American aircraft while intensifying its aid to the South Vietnamese people.

Washington had to send in reinforcements. By the end of 1966, the US expeditionary corps had doubled compared with the previous year, numbering 400,000. And yet, with the means at its disposal thus reinforced, the US Command was able to launch its offensive only in one direction, towards Tay Ninh province, northwest of Saigon. In that counter-offensive of the 1966-1967 dry season, the US Command also exerted great “pacification” efforts. It thought it would catch the South Vietnamese resistance between the jaws of a strategic pair of pincers: the American forces, which would destroy the bulk of the NFL regulars, and the puppet military and police apparatus, which would crush the NFL’s infrastructure. These objectives were to be achieved through the recourse to all the resources of modern technique, by intensified bombings on the DRVN and the most barbarous methods. Vietnam, from North to South, would be crushed under the bombs, saturated with napalm and toxic chemicals, and would have to bow to American power.

That was the third miscalculation. The big operations launched northwest of Saigon—Attleboro, Cedar Falls, Junction City — in the period from October 30, 1966, to April 13, 1967, came to grief. They were not yet completed when already US troops found themselves in deep trouble in another theatre of operations, along Highway 9, near the 17th parallel. The Marines stationed there had to call infantry units to their rescue, which was contrary to all their traditions. Elite US
units were rushed about from one front to another, and this illustrates better than anything else the strategic passivity to which the US command had been driven.

Thus, by early 1967, the US and puppet troops had been reduced to the defensive: a few attempts at occupying the Mekong delta were quickly foiled. Westmoreland asked desperately for more reinforcements, which were sent to him in South Vietnam. At the start of the 1967-1968 dry season the US Command had at its disposal 500,000 GIs, who, together with mercenaries from satellite countries and the puppet army beefed up by renewed pressganging, made up a total force of more than one million men.

In spite of that vast deployment, the US Command was unable to launch a single large-scale operation, whereas the NFL, as early as October 1967, switched over to the offensive in Loc Ninh, northwest of Saigon, then in Dakto in the Central Highlands in November, and also in the Mekong delta in October, especially along Highway 1 which connects Saigon with the rich provinces of the southwest.

By the end of 1967, the US Command, although still having important forces at its disposal, faced a serious situation: it wasn’t sure in what strategic direction it should exert its efforts, and was in the dark as to when and where its adversary was going to strike. Should it defend Saigon in priority, or rather the northernmost provinces of South Vietnam, Quang Tri and Thua Thien (Tri Thi en in short), and especially the imperial city of Hue and the Khe Sanh stronghold?

As to “pacification”, by late 1967, all American officials with some knowledge of the matter had resigned themselves to seeing its complete failure. Almost the whole of the puppet army, plus 40 American battalions and 50,000 “rural construction” cadres, had been unable to save “pacification” from a total fiasco.

The Tet Offensive

At the start of 1968, the military situation in Vietnam was thus characterized by a few outstanding features:

— The US Command could array forces more important than ever, but had completely lost the initiative and was in absolute strategic uncertainty.

— The NFL was acting on the offensive on many theaters of operations, all three categories of armed forces — guerillas, regionals and regulars — having acquired unprecedented fighting power.

— “Pacification” had gone bankrupt, the US-puppet forces holding but a narrow rural fringe around the cities and along big communication lines.

— Air escalation against the DRVN had proved completely ineffective, while US aviation was running short of breath.

The main point was that the US Command was wholly incapable of defining the principal strategic
sector; until then it had been eastern Nam Bo, but by January 1968, Westmoreland had adopted the view that the northernmost provinces, especially the defence line along Highway 9, were the main front. And so important American mobile forces, about 50,000 men, were immobilized there, while strategic reserves were being dangerously drawn upon.

On January 20, American posts from Khe Sanh to Con Tien were severely pounded. To this front Westmoreland urgently despatched a brigade of the Air Cavalry Division (stationed at An Khê) to reinforce the 74,000 Marines involved there. NFL attacks continued on that sector, which seemed to confirm Westmoreland's views, but on January 31....

In the small hours of January 31, Da Nang, Hoi An, Bong Son, Qui Nhon, Tuy Hoa, Ban Me Thuot, Plei Ku....i.e. all important cities and centres as well as many US bases came under attack. Saigon remained calm however, and the US Command was keeping an expectant attitude, for it hardly knew what decision to make. In Saigon, many soldiers, police and civil servants were enjoying their Tet holiday.

At 2.30 a.m. on February 1, the city was shaken by violent explosions: the more important centres and services, the airport, the American embassy, the "Presidential Palace", the radio station, etc. (for details, read the article "The Battle of Saigon") came under attack. That day and the following one, Feb. 2, NFL forces attacked urban centres and American bases everywhere, the populations of the cities organising themselves to give help to the Liberation troops, hunt down puppet police and destroy archives and dossiers kept by the puppet administration. As reported by the AFP correspondent in Saigon, "it was probably the greatest battlefield of all wars. The whole of (South) Vietnam went ablaze, from Khe Sanh to Ca Mau."

All told, in the period from Jan. 31 to Feb. 2, 64 cities, towns, and district centres in 32 provinces, together with 24 air bases and American and puppet nerve centres were attacked.

The NFL flag fluttered over the imperial city of Hue, where the Alliance of National, Democratic and Peace Forces came into being, while Saigon saw the birth of the Alliance of National and Peace Forces.

The US Command no longer knew where to concentrate its elite forces, for while attacks were going on in Saigon and Hue continued to be occupied by the popular forces, the NFL quickly captured the Lang Vei position on the Khe Sanh front on Feb.7. The blow was all the harder since Johnson had wrested from the US military the pledge that Khe Sanh would not be a second Dien Bien Phu.

While from a purely military standpoint, Khe Sanh was drawing the attention of the American strategists, on the plane of general repercussions, the attacks and uprisings in the towns and cities provoked understandable bewilderment in the United States and in the world. Until then, it had generally been believed that the NFL—and, for that matter, all popular movements in all countries—could operate only in rural and
mountain areas, and that urban centres strongly defended, especially by American military power, and combed by a merciless police using ultramodern means, were beyond its reach.

During the first Indochina war, never had the Vietnamese resistance attacked militarily Saigon, Hue, Nha Trang, Da Lat etc., held by French and Bao Dai forces. It was a deep-rooted idea that the cities, impregnable bastions, were for the Americans places for jumping off and retreat, if not safe rest. But now the NFL forces were operating in the heart of the cities with the help of the population and the Americans and their puppets were forced to withdraw their troops precipitately from the rural areas, dropping "pacification" almost entirely and giving up all ideas of "searching and destroying" big NFL units.

That the strategic situation had been completely upset was evident to all. Crack American and puppet units had to be concentrated in Saigon and Hue. In Saigon the guns boomed on for 17 days, while the battle in Hue was to go on for four weeks.

The Americans and their puppets suffered heavy losses in men and materiel (planes, helicopters, electronic equipment, fuel depots...): 20,000 Americans and satellite mercenaries put out of action; 270,000 puppet troops killed, wounded or disbanded; 1,800 planes and helicopters destroyed or damaged; more than 1,300 tanks and armoured cars destroyed.

Another consequence, which was not less important: the puppet administration and police were disrupted; the population, with the help of the NFL fighters had cleared the towns and cities of the more bloodthirsty puppet agents, while a good part of the civil servants had ceased all activities. After the storm, the puppet administration was but a limbless body.

On Feb 28, in Washington, Johnson presided over a war council, and the American press spoke of a reorientation of American strategy. In spite of all the braggadocio of US propaganda, the Americans’ defeat was admitted and confirmed by the recalling of Westmoreland, made public on March 23. The latter’s request for 200,000 reinforcement troops confirmed the scope of the losses. General Abrams was appointed to replace Westmoreland. For a commander-in-chief to be replaced in the midst of a war, grave events indeed must have happened. On March 31, Johnson announced a “limitation of the bombing” of North Vietnam and his decision not to seek presidential nomination.

A new phase of the war began.

A phase marked on the NFL side by new factors. The strategic views of the People’s Command had proved wholly correct. It had decided that in spite of all reinforcements in men and materiel Westmoreland could no longer launch big offensive operations; it had decided that the relation of forces, both military and political, allowed a general offensive on the cities and popular uprisings everywhere. The NFL had proved that it was fully capable of achieving these strategic objectives, starting well-coordinated large-scale attacks all over the country, dealing hard blows...
to key enemy centres, and striking at the best-defended bases and lairs. The NFL had been able to recruit new military and political forces in the urban centres, to implant itself there, set up popular committees, and occupy many districts for a long time. It had been able to create a new strategic situation, new theatres of operations, new bases.

The Tet offensive had definitively shattered the American pincer strategy and deeply shaken the aggressive will of American imperialism.

The New American Strategy: “Clear and Hold”

WESTMORELAND had been profuse in optimistic declarations; his successor, General Abrams, was much more cautious and reserved, and for a good reason. After Tet, the US Command had carried out an “agonizing” reappraisal of its strategy.

The question now was no longer to go in search of big NFL units to destroy them, nor to “pacify” and reconquer areas which had been liberated by the NFL. The cities themselves, those last lairs of the neo-colonial regime, and the American bases were in danger. The point was to defend them at all costs against both the NFL armed forces and their populations in full effervescence.

Reinforcements sent in from the United States, Thailand, and the beefing up of the Saigon army of mercenaries brought US-puppet strength to 1,200,000 men. What with the intensive use of B-52 heavy bombers and, as before, of tactical aviation and artillery, the military machine at the disposal of General Abrams was more colossal than ever. And yet, how modest his objectives were!

Abrams contented himself with “clearing and holding”: clearing the cities and their outskirts, the American bases and their fringes, and the main communication lines; in other words, American strategy had become wholly defensive in character. One-third of US and puppet crack units were assigned to the defence of Saigon and the environs and to that of Da Nang and American bases and posts from Huế to Highway 9.

Within Saigon, police and military operations went on on a round-the-clock basis, and mopping-up operations were ceaselessly carried out with crack units (American 1st, 9th and 25th Infantry Divisions, 101st Paratroop Division, 199th Brigade and 11th Armoured Regiment) in the neighbourhood of the city during March and April. To cover up their defensive character, they were given high-sounding names: Operation “Certain Victory”, Operation “Complete Victory”. Populous villages and areas were savagely pounded by artillery and B-52s.

A certain optimism reappeared in American communiqués and declarations. US and puppet officials declared that any new NFL offensive on the cities was
now impossible, for the surprise factor would no longer work. In fact surprise had been but a secondary factor in the Tết offensive: what was important was the reversal of the strategic situation, the coming to maturity of the revolutionary forces throughout the country and in the cities, the quick growth of the popular armed forces from both the standpoints of tactics and technique, the gradual demoralization of the American troops, the accelerated disintegration of the puppet administrative, military and police apparatus.

Because of all those factors, the defensive efforts of the US Command might make new offensives more difficult but could not interdict them.

On May 4, from the 17th parallel to the Mekong delta, many urban centres and bases—Dong Ha, Huế, Plei Kr, Bình Dinh, Tay Ninh, Long An, My Tho—came under violent attack. NFL regular units reappeared within Saigon itself following violent clashes (for details read article on Saigon): the Khe Sanh sector, besieged by the popular forces, became in the words of American correspondents a hell for the Marines, on whom hard blows were rained. Late in May, NFL units destroyed a whole American flotilla in Giong Trom, Ben Tre province (Mekong delta).

May and June were marked by many rocket attacks on nerve centres, airfields, ammunition depots, barracks... in the Saigon-Gia Dinh area. All bases and posts within a 30-km. radius around Saigon were attacked. The US Command admitted that the last week of May was the bloodiest for the American troops since the start of the war: UPI on June 7 reported that of Washington's own admission American losses in Vietnam had outstripped those of the French expeditionary corps in Indochina in the period from 1945 to 1954.

American Defense Secretary Clark Clifford hastily ordered 34,000 GIs to be withdrawn from Western Europe and the 27th Marine Regiment to be transferred to Vietnam. By late June, if fighting had abated somewhat around Saigon, it took on an especially violent character on the Khe Sanh front (for details, read article "On the Tri-Thien Front"). In spite of the intensive use by the US Command of aviation and artillery—B-52s in particular—Khe Sanh became untenable for the Marines. On July 9, it was evacuated. The abandonment of Khe Sanh, which the US Command had pledged to defend and which American propaganda had turned into a symbol, was an eloquent illustration of the failure not only of American strategy but also of the most vaunted American techniques. At Khe Sanh it was almost conventional warfare, where theoretically American weaponry could be brought into full play; yet the Marines had to give it up.

Following the retreat from Khe Sanh, mop-ups launched by the Americans around cities and bases diminished in scope and tempo. Abrams had massive recourse to large-scale indiscriminate bombings, especially by B-52s. Before 1968, the Americans had savagely bombed many regions which they had been unable to control, but they still spared the cities and neighbouring areas, over which they claimed control. During and after the Tết battle, the Americans