A BITTER DRY SEASON
FOR THE AMERICANS

I


This is a vantage ground we have gained in the dry season as well as in the forthcoming development of the war.

By mid-1965 the South Vietnam army and people had basically defeated the 500,000 troops of the puppet army, the U.S. "special war" strategy had gone bankrupt. The United States hurriedly brought in
troops with the new strategic aim of directly committing American expeditionary forces to its neo-colonialist war of aggression.

Thus, it was because the United States had met with failure that American troops had to join the fighting, and they had to do so from a losing and defensive strategic position, in line with a policy beset with contradictions. It appeared that the Americans had to begin again to solve many political and military problems which had been upset in a very disadvantageous situation, whereas the South Vietnam army and people were in a winning position, developing their victories, carrying on their attacks, and holding strategic initiative along a consistent policy.

In face of our winning position, the acute contradictions in the policy of the American aggressors and their disadvantageous situation at the outset of the dry season had involved their activities during all this period as well as in the future, in embarrassment and deadlock. In spite of their big effectives, of the tremendous firepower and relentless action of their air force, artillery and motorized units, we continued holding strategic initiative whereas the enemy found themselves increasingly on the defensive. When the dry season set in, strategically, we and our adversary were not starting from the same point; we were in an advantageous position and they in a disadvantageous one. This strategic position is of great importance as far as the change in the balance of forces and the trend of the war are concerned. If one grasps the impact of this strategic position, one already has a sound basis to understand our victory in the dry season. Our advantageous strategic position is reflected in the following points:

- First, politically and morally, we enjoyed absolute superiority. This superiority reached a new height after we had inflicted great defeats on the 500,000-strong puppet army, while the combativeness of our army and people was on the upgrade. When the United States completely dropped its mask by bringing its own troops to South Vietnam, the just character of our self-defence war against aggression became even more evident.

- Second, our activities on the various South Vietnam battlefields became more and more closely coordinated on the basis of a sweeping change in the war situation as compared with the previous year. As is known, prior to Winter 1964-Spring 1965, people's war in South Vietnam, though having made quick progress, was still handicapped by a serious unbalanced development in TrungBo, the High Plateaux and NamBo, in the plains and in the mountain areas, in the cities and the countryside. However, this state of things had been in the main improved through our activities in Winter 1964 and Spring 1965, and our victories over the 500,000-strong puppet army. A new and completely different situation had emerged with the balanced and widespread development of activities on all battlefields. This made it possible for us to undertake co-ordinated actions on various theatres, which differ both in nature and geographical conditions, and to launch closely combined attacks by the three categories of armed forces.
on the enemy during the dry season. This also enabled us to everywhere deal them staggering blows and take avail of our victories so as to mount onslaughts and increase their impact to bring our people's war a step farther.

Third, the three categories of the South Vietnam Liberation Armed Forces had been developed harmoniously and deployed in a rational manner on all battlefields, including the areas of strategic importance for the enemy. The close co-ordination of their actions at a new level helped to achieve a higher degree of cooperation between guerillas' activities and concentrated operations. We had not only the guerilla and regional forces but also a sizable mobile force to strike the enemy. Everyone knows that once these three categories of armed forces have appeared and developed harmoniously momentous changes will take place.

This holds good when, for instance, regular forces with regiment size, instead of battalion size, can be fielded. And when a regular unit can have a foothold and operate in areas of strategic importance it is many times as effective as in other areas in wiping out enemy forces as well as in encircling, harassing or pinning them down.

The formation and disposition of these three categories of armed forces and their co-ordinated actions at this new level at the beginning of the dry season had created for us a position from which we could threaten the enemy everywhere, even in the cities, and compel them to scatter their forces in a much higher degree. We not only had enough troops to strike the enemy anywhere but also large mobile units to attack them at discretion. This put us in a position to decimate the enemy everywhere and to inflict heavier losses on bigger units, chiefly on the U.S. strategic mobile forces. This also compelled them, whenever they counter-attacked according to their strategic plan, to cope with us on other fronts in a defensive manner. And in these counter-offensives, either they could not spot our regular forces and suffered heavy losses at the hands of the guerillas, or they were counter-attacked and wiped out by our regulars at the most unexpected time and places.

Fourth, we had a firm rear consisting of four-fifths of the territory and three-quarters of the population of South Vietnam. This rear was moreover backed by a greater one, socialist North Vietnam. Its development, its strength and its full utilization constituted a factor of paramount importance in the creation of our advantageous strategic position. We had secured a firm foothold and also an all-round source of supply and replenishment. Though the enemy had frantically sabotaged our immediate rear in the South and intensified the war of destruction against the North, thus causing us difficulties, they could not shake our people's iron-like determination to resist U.S. aggression for national salvation, or hamper the ever more vigorous assistance, both moral and material, of the rear to the front. Our dry season victories are inseparable from the steady situation of our rear and its strength in every respect.

The advantageous strategic position described above permitted us to apply diverse and original tactical forms and methods of fighting of our own, compatible
with our strong points and suitable to the conditions of our terrain. It enabled us to develop our basic strong points and quickly overcome our difficulties and weaknesses throughout our confrontation with the enemy during the dry season.

As for the enemy, his defensive and disadvantageous strategic position is reflected in the following points:

- First, politically and morally, the enemy was in an inferior position, plagued by a political crisis and sinking morale. As a logical result of the unjust character of the aggressive war, this politico-moral inferiority became still more apparent due to the failure of the "special war" strategy and the contradictions in U.S. war escalation policy. It had increased many difficulties for the Americans of both political and military nature, and plunged them into fresh and graver crises in South Vietnam, in the world and right in the United States. They were in a defensive position on both the political and military fronts. Their political difficulties had seriously affected their military efforts. McNamara himself admitted that the political crisis in March and April this year had reduced the U.S. military activities by from 50 to 70 per cent.

- Second, the U.S.-puppet disposition of forces was beset with many defects from the viewpoint of both defensive and offensive, because it was a lamentable "legacy" of the failure of the "special war" strategy. The Americans had to begin again but not in the manner of a losing chess player who sets out for a new game, instead it was caught in a fix right after deploying their forces. As soon as the U.S. troops had set foot on South Vietnam they had immediately to take defensive and offensive actions at the same time. However, faced with our repeated attacks, they were at a nonplus in coping with us and found it very difficult to mount offensives for defensive purposes. As such these offensives were affected by many shortcomings right from the outset, which enabled us to counter and foil them. Therefore, whether to take the defensive or offensive remained a two-horn dilemma for the United States. The wrangles among such military commanders as Gavin, Ridway, Taylor and Westmoreland about which strategy to follow had reflected the Americans' deadlock in strategy and tactics.

In addition, the U.S.-puppet disposition of forces was scattered and intertwined with ours, and was moreover under constant attacks everywhere. Therefore, the Americans found any troop reinforcements insufficient and tried in vain to muster a very big mobile force to secure freedom of action for themselves. This disposition did not permit them to bring into full play the strong points of the U.S. troops in tactics, technique and command as well as their superiority in firepower. Locked in such a battle-array, the Americans still suffered from troop shortage despite their big build-up; their strong points were limited while their weaknesses were aggravated and became irremediable.

- Third, the Americans relied on two strategic forces — the U.S. troops and the puppet army — but both had their defects and were at odds with each other.

The puppet army which had just experienced a bitter military defeat, was faced with a political crisis, utterly
demoralized and on the way to desintegration. Though its effective remained numerous, its fighting capacity was in practice negligible. Neither could it be used for "pacification".

As for the U.S. troops, they were fighting without a goal and an ideal. Their morale sunk still lower in the course of the fighting. They had been organized and trained in one way but were forced to fight another way, and were thus "caught in the wrong foot". Had they continued to fight in the American way, their defeat would have been even more disastrous. A Western military commentator once ridiculed the U.S. troops for persisting in fighting the American way in Vietnam. Forced to wage a land war, the Americans, however, had only a weak infantry while the firepower of their air force, artillery and motorized units could not be brought into full play as they wished. Moreover, their strategic and tactical conceptions were confused and anti-scientific in many points. Now that they had landed ground forces in South Vietnam, they still relied on their air force to win the war. As a rule, to launch a counter-offensive one must rely on the infantry, but in practice the Americans have to depend on their artillery firepower and motorized units. In their military viewpoint, the infantry is but an auxiliary force, yet it now has to assume the main role. This is indeed a maze of contradictions.

Further, the American and puppet forces were at odds with each other, did not trust each other, and were unable to achieve close co-ordination. As a result, although their aggregated number was big, they could not form a single bloc having a strength corresponding to their size.

How to use the U.S. troops and the puppet army was also a headache for the Americans. When U.S. troops were first brought in, it was their plan to build and guard defensive enclaves and use the puppet army as a mobile force for raiding operations. Later they served as a mobile force to launch counter-offensives in coordination with part of the puppet mobile force, while the bulk of the puppet army assumed the task of "pacification". In the end, the latter could not play its role either as a mobile or a "pacification" force. Practically the U.S. troops have been assuming the main role as mobile forces and had at the same time to shoulder part of the "pacification" task.

Thus the U.S. troops who entered a losing battle, bringing with them their own factors of defeat; were made still more vulnerable by the losing position of the puppet army. Masters and servants found themselves in a position in which they were unable to save each other; they could not but grasp each other and sink together in the immense sea of people's war in the heart of the dry season.

—Fourth, the immediate rear of the Americans and the puppets consisted only of one-fifth of the territory and a quarter of the population who were not inclined to support them. The puppets were politically rotten to the core. They were torn by internal strife in their scramble for power and privileges, which increased their masters' embarrassment. Not only had the Americans failed to iron out the differences between their stooges but exposed themselves to the fire of
public opinion in the United States and the world. This was a peculiar point which reflected the contradictions in the U.S. neo-colonialist policy in South Vietnam, a permanent, acute and very urgent problem for the Americans, which could not be left unsettled and which they proved unable to settle. Meanwhile, the anti-American movement was gaining momentum in the U.S. controlled areas, including the towns, especially since the Americans intensified bombing, shelling and spraying toxic chemicals. Such a troubled situation in the U.S. immediate rear adversely affected the combativeness of the American and puppet troops, the replenishment of the puppet army, the deployment of the U.S.-puppet mobile forces as well as the communication, transport, supply and other services catering for their front.

The American counter-offensive took place in such a political situation, on such a battle-front, with such a U.S.-puppet force, such a rear and such an inconsistent and indefinite fighting method. No wonder the U.S. defeat was a foregone conclusion.

Obviously, the situation of the war which was in our favour before the dry season began, had created for us the most desirable strategic position so far. This strategic position enabled us to achieve all the three immediate strategic goals of the war—wiping out enemy forces, winning over more population and preserving our liberated zone. The enemy's position was the opposite. That was a very fundamental point which ensured our victory and portended the enemy's defeat in the dry season. This has been fully substantiated by reality.

Colonel Thompson, a British experienced commander in guerilla warfare in Malaya, and one-time adviser to the Americans and the Ngo Dinh Diem administration, has made a rather sensible remark: "The Americans' skilful and courageous use of helicopters and their firepower have kept them from grappling with the basic problem of this war: territory and population are not being held." Let us add: The U.S. aggressors did not only fail to preserve the land they had occupied and to win over the population, but also to achieve their foremost strategic aim which was to wipe out our forces. Instead it was the U.S. troops who got heavily trounced.

After the dry season, this strategic position continued to evolve in our favour and at the expense of the enemy. The present frustration among the ruling circles in Washington not only stems from the fact that the U.S. troops have been experiencing one defeat after another but chiefly from the fact that they are sinking more and more deeply into the quagmire of a very precarious strategic position. Pursuing an erroneous strategic line and finding themselves in a disadvantageous strategic position, the more the Americans wriggle, and the more troops and planes they bring in, the deeper they sink in the bog. It is safe to say that in such a disadvantageous position as theirs at present, even if they boost their effectives in South Vietnam to 400,000 or 500,000, all these forces will not be as efficient as the 250,000 men hurriedly introduced between mid-1965 and early 1966. This will only aggravate the Americans' predicament and failures.
THE SOUTH VIETNAM ARMY AND PEOPLE HAVE SHOWN A GREAT AND WELL-FOUNDED DETERMINATION

A great and well-founded determination gave a strong fillip to our war efforts. In order to turn our strategic initiative to account and win victories during the dry season, the South Vietnam army and people, under the correct and brilliant political and military leadership of the South Vietnam National Front for Liberation, and with the wholehearted assistance by the army and people of North Vietnam, fully realized what was to be done and were strongly determined to do it.

The determination to frustrate the enemy’s dry season campaign constituted one of the greatest driving forces to keep the march forward of the South Vietnam revolution. After pouring nearly 200,000 troops into South Vietnam in order to show their “determination to stay in South Vietnam”, the U.S. imperialists launched their dry season strategic counter-offensive with a view to wiping out our main forces, securing control of more inhabitants and more territory, recovering the lost initiative, and eventually carrying out further extremely dangerous military adventures in both parts of our country. In these circumstances, to make up our mind to foil the U.S. aggressors’ dry season plan was a matter of great strategic significance in our task of holding in check their local war, and was the greatest motive force to ensure the continuous progress of the Revolution.

To show the least hesitation and vacillation, and embark forthwith on finding ways to fight the U.S. troops would have been enough to bring about most serious consequences and would certainly have affected our position during and after the dry season. Having very clearly realized the U.S. imperialists’ mad intentions, and thoroughly understood that to foil the enemy’s dry season plan was of great strategic significance for the future development of the Vietnam Revolution, the South Vietnam army and people were strongly determined to frustrate that plan and ensure the steady progress of the South Vietnam revolution.

This was also the determination of our entire people, of the thirty-one million Vietnamese. The Vietnamese people are one nation, Vietnam is one country. The U.S. aggressors are the sworn enemy of our entire people. Not only the army and people in South Vietnam, but the army and people throughout our country were determined to check the U.S. dry season counter-offensive. This was their immediate task, part of a far-reaching one, namely, to liberate the South, defend the North, reunify the country. Therefore, our determination to fulfil our strategic plan during the dry season carried in itself a tremendous force of our entire people, which was the underlying cause of our victory.

This determination stemmed from the rational combination of the thorough revolutionary standpoint with the scientific dialectical method; it was an expression of our people’s resolve to defeat the U.S. imperialist
aggressors and their lackeys, of their firm conviction
in the final victory based on a correct appraisal of the
relation of forces of the two sides. Without a thorough
revolutionary standpoint we would not have dared to
attack the U.S. aggressors; without a scientific assess­
ment of our strength and the enemy’s, we would not
have believed in our victory and would not have
found the best methods to fight and win resounding
victories in the dry season.

The thorough revolutionary standpoint of the South
Vietnam army and people is the crystallization of their
class standpoint and patriotism, their deep conscious­
ness of the task of national liberation. This standpoint,
which has been tempered in the course of a long revolu­tionary struggle, is not impulsive and fitful, but
carefully thought out and profound; it has got into our
subconsciousness and has become a great and inexhaus­
tible driving force, and the source of all our
victories.

During the dry season its strength derived from the
following factors :

1 — First, the spirit of the army and people of South
Vietnam who were then winning repeated victories.

The assurance of the South Vietnam army and
people provided a new element for their determination
to win a strategic victory. They entered the dry season
with the spirit of combatants who had twice frustrated
the neo-colonialist policy of the U.S. imperialists
and their lackeys. They had checked the dictatorial rule
of these lackeys, and foiled the U.S. “special warfare”
waged with over 500,000 puppet troops organized,
equipped, trained and officered by the Americans who
thus had suffered two defeats, the second being heavier
and more painful than the first. We began our attacks
against the U.S. expeditionary force from a winning
position whereas the U.S. imperialists started a local
war from a losing one. This very fact considerably
strengthened our position and made it possible for us
to overwhelm the enemy, and at the same time sowed
the seeds of still heavier defeats for the swashbuckling
U.S. expeditionary troops. That is why throughout
the dry season we won ever-greater victories while the
enemy suffered ever more bitter defeats.

2 — Second, the determination of a people who have
much experience in the struggle against the imperialists
and have many times defeated them.

Our army and people are now at the front of the
struggle of the world’s peoples against the U.S. impe­
rialist aggressors. Fighting and defeating the U.S. im­
perialists both in the political and military fields, we
have shown that ours are among the peoples the most
strongly determined to fight the imperialist aggressors,
not deterred by the enemy’s armed might, however
great it may be. By fighting and winning victories over
the U.S. imperialists, the army and people of South
Vietnam have proved that a people who are united, one­
minded, resolved in their struggle, are quite capable
of defeating any imperialist aggressor, even the United
States, the international gendarme, the mainstay of the
world reactionary forces, the mightiest imperialist pow­
er of the capitalist world. If we fear the U.S. mate­
rial and technical power, we cannot achieve the smallest
success, let alone a great victory in the political and military fields, especially in the military field, as we did in the last dry season. After a fierce trial of strength with the enemy, we now have in hand all the necessary elements for correctly appraising the U.S. imperialists, clearly realizing their apparent power and their fundamental weaknesses, and consequently, further enhancing our determination to fight them, further strengthening our confidence in our victory. The strong determination of the army and people of South Vietnam to fight the U.S. aggressors has taken the form of a resolute struggle to frustrate their neocolonialist war of aggression, be it in the form of a “special war”, “local war” or in any other form to defeat not only the 500,000 puppet troops but also the U.S. troops who may number 300,000, 400,000 or more and to win final victory, however long and arduous the struggle may be, and whatever sacrifices we may have to make.

Our people are not only actuated by an indomitable spirit, a strong determination to win, they are possessed of abilities, traditions and experiences in fighting; they can find methods of fighting which are most efficient and best serve the cause of the revolution. We successfully resisted the Japanese fascists; we foiled the colonialist war of aggression of the French imperialists and the neo-colonialist “special war” of the Americans. After the dry season, we can draw this conclusion that we not only enjoy absolute political and moral superiority, have won a political victory, but have also gained a strong military position, and we are defeating the U.S. aggressors in the militarys field.

Nothing can save them from their ultimate military defeat. We are certain to triumph both in the political and military fields.

3 — Third, the indomitable spirit of a heroic people with a long tradition of struggle against foreign invasion.

Our people have struggled several thousand years against foreign invasion to survive and develop, and have defeated the mightiest aggressors in the world. They are deeply attached to national independence and have an indomitable spirit. Every time their Fatherland was threatened, the call to save it and their fellow-countrymen was responded by our people with a tremendous force.

The history of our people is a fund of experiences in resisting foreign aggression. While the war of resistance against the French colonialists guided by the Marxist military conception was the continuation and crystallization of our people’s tradition of fighting foreign aggression, the present war of resistance against the U.S. imperialists is the synthesis to a higher degree of this tradition and these experiences. Our people are firmly determined to fight the U.S. imperialists for national salvation; they are enhancing their heroism and fighting abilities to frustrate all military adventures of the enemy. Having to cope with such a people, the U.S. imperialists will inevitably be defeated.

4 — Fourth, our people’s ardent patriotism and bitter hatred for the enemy.

The patriotism and hatred for the enemy of the army and people of South Vietnam was exacerbated by the
massive introduction of American troops. This took place at a time when, armed by a grim determination, the tradition of countering foreign invasion, and most diverse fighting methods, they found themselves in a winning position. And significantly enough, they resolved to defeat not only the 500,000 puppet troops but also the U.S. troops who belong to the most powerful army in the capitalist world, to defeat their crack units. In the dry season, the U.S. imperialists thought that they were superior to us in four respects — air force, firepower, motorized units, effectiveness of ground troops — and could thus fall back to their conventional warfare. They mustered a pretty large strategic force and launched simultaneous counter-offensives in many directions, for many days on end, in an attempt to demoralize the army and people of South Vietnam. But the U.S. imperialists were disappointed in their wild dream. Far from shaken, the army and people of South Vietnam doubled their determination which they translated into most resolute actions, dealing unexpected thundering blows at the enemy. The whole of South Vietnam was seething with hatred for the aggressors and the traitors, with eagerness to wipe them out and was resounding with new victories. During the dry season, the “seek and wipe out American and puppet troops” motto generated an extensive emulation movement in all the Liberation Armed Forces and population. Heroic combatants and units distinguished by gallant actions in the wiping out of U.S. troops, emerged everywhere: Truong Van Hoa, Pham Van Coi, the guerillas of Cuchi, Quangnam, Danang, the regional troops of the Hoavang district (Quangnam province), of Longan province, the
not everyone could easily see all the contradictions that they had to solve. True, in their aggressive war the U.S. imperialists are torn by many contradictions regarding strategy and tactics.

— The introduction of an expeditionary force to massacre our compatriots has broadened and sharpened the contradictions between the U.S. imperialists and our people.

— The contradiction between the neo-colonialist policy and the use of an expeditionary force lead to many other irreconcilable ones: the Americans have to utilize simultaneously the puppet troops and their own while the contradictions between them and the puppets keep on growing; in spite of a large number of troops already on the spot they have not enough mobile forces; then there is the ever more acute contradiction between concentration and dispersion, between occupation and mobility, etc.

— The American troops have been built up, organized, equipped and trained for a kind of war different from the one being waged in South Vietnam. That is why the aggressors have to face with the discrepancy between strategy and tactics, between tactics and technique, between their subjective aims and the realities of the battlefields, etc. All this has gradually led to a crisis: and a deadlock in the direction and execution of strategy, tactics, etc.

2. Going from external manifestations into the real nature of things; accurately appraising the enemy's strong and weak points. It is a well-known fact that the U.S. imperialists command a large number of troops, plenty of money and armament. But they are not strong. Only by going from the external manifestations into the real nature of things can we correctly appraise the strength of the American aggressors.

— They are materially and technically strong, but they are being opposed by the courageous and capable Vietnamese people; the population, the terrain and the climate are not favourable to them; their modern armament and technique have not proved as efficacious as they had expected, and consequently, their strength has been very substantially reduced.

— Politically and morally, the American aggressors are very weak. This fundamental weakness has greatly affected all their military activities. Moreover, U.S. troops were brought into South Vietnam after 500,000 puppet troops had suffered serious defeats; following repeated setbacks, they were strategically driven into further and further passivity. Therefore, their aggressiveness and their frantic military activities were only fleeting external manifestations while pessimism and wavering constituted the essence of their strategy and morale.

The U.S. imperialists' strategic and tactical conduct of the war at first seems to be scientific, but in reality it is irrational, because they have never accurately appraised their own strength and their opponent's and especially because their over-reliance on material and technical power makes them blindly indulge in wishful thinking.

If in our analysis we had only taken into account the enemy's numerical strength and quantity of arms,
their modern technique and means of warfare, their economic and military potential (particularly their mobile forces, which were increased from ten battalions to five divisions within a short time) we would have overestimated the enemy’s strength and underestimated our own, and made inevitable mistakes when planning our strategy for the dry season, etc.

3. Fully understanding the role of practice. Only when we fully understand the role of practice can we have a basis to study and accurately appraise the enemy’s strength, to study and solve our problems in a manner appropriate to the conditions of our country.

We acquire knowledge about the enemy not only through the study of their books, combat regulations, but essentially through the study of their actions on the battlefield. Considering the American aggressors in the historical conditions of the war in Vietnam, we see that their military strength here does not represent their entire military and economic strength but only part of it. Then their military strength available in Vietnam, when put into action on the battleground, has been again greatly reduced on account of their many contradictions and their repeated setbacks. The Americans have shown many weak points in Vietnam which is unlike other theatres where people’s war is not widely developed and where there are clearly drawn front-lines. As a result, though they have a large number of troops, their fighting capacities are not great and, moreover, are diminishing rapidly. If we had mechanically based our calculations on the enemy’s numerical strength and armament, on their firepower, artillery, air force and motorized units, we could never have found the right answers to the questions raised by our combat plan.

— Our people’s war is the product of our country’s concrete historical conditions in the political, economic, cultural and social spheres; it inherits and develops our people’s tradition and experience in political struggle and armed struggle. Everything, from our political and military line to our military art, fighting technique, etc., bears a creative character particular to our people. For example, we have learned to combine armed struggle with political struggle in order to defeat the U.S. imperialists; to concentrate troops and firepower so as to secure a strong strategic, tactical and operational position, in coping the U.S. aggressors who dispose of considerable troops and high mobility. We have learnt all this through an analysis of the battles actually fought. Had we not taken into account the realities of Vietnam and our people’s tradition and experience, had we mechanically followed an established formula or copied servilely and without discrimination the methods of other countries, we would not have been able to solve our problems, and there would have occurred many mishaps harmful to the revolution.

4. Thoroughly grasping the law of development. Fighting is a race in which both opponents exert their utmost efforts. War is a very complex matter, it often evolves by leaps and bounds, which we must avail of to speed up its course and bring it to an end. To this effect, we must thoroughly grasp the law of development and, basing ourselves on realities, detect changes
on the enemy side and ours, foresee the situation in a scientific manner, and make strenuous efforts to accelerate the development of events in accordance with the law by which they are governed, with a view to gaining the initiative in the conduct of the war. For example, when we saw that the American aggressors were building up the Danang enclave, we created a stranglehold all around to wipe out G.I.’s; after the Antan and Lachau engagements we found it possible to knock out whole U.S. companies and seize weapons; during the Vantuong battle in which the enemy, bringing into play their combined ground, air and naval forces, did not succeed in annihilating a single company of our troops and, instead, suffered a heavy defeat, we detected many signs of their tactical crisis; at Datcuoc the possibility of wiping out a U.S. battalion at a time became a reality, etc. By closely following the developments in the enemy's and our situation, by drawing correct conclusions in time, and by making great efforts, we had created or availed ourselves of favourable conditions to push forward our war of resistance and win ever more significant victories.

Applying the revolutionary method of dialectical materialism, we have been able to draw correct and creative conclusions, which were free from rightist or “leftist” deviations, or mechanically deduced. And we can say that our military ability depends mainly on the manner in which we apply the method of dialectical materialism.

Combining a thoroughly revolutionary viewpoint with a scientific method of analysis, the National Front for Liberation accurately appraised the enemy’s strength and that of the South Vietnam army and people, and developed a correct strategy for the dry season. In a complex war against a complex enemy, to assess the balance of forces is no easy matter, neither is it easy to draw correct conclusions to map out the right course of action. We have to rely on a correct viewpoint and a good method for the study of a number of elements which may influence the position and strength of the enemy and our own, such as political and moral elements, strategic position, the conduct of the war, the armed forces; etc.

1. Political and moral elements: Considering the war aims of both sides, we are stronger than the enemy. The latter have been politically defeated. As the war goes on, we shall become more united and one-minded, our moral will grow while the enemy’s contradictions will increase and their moral will sink still lower. Political and moral elements here are no abstract things, but concrete forces which directly decided the military actions undertaken by both sides during the last dry season, and will do so throughout the war.

2. Strategic position: Strategic position is a very important factor in a war. It determines all military activities on the battlefield.

Our position is a winning one, a position of strategic initiative which has been gradually raised in the process of the war. The army and people of South Vietnam first destroyed the basis of the domination of the U.S. imperialists and their lackeys who ruled essentially through administrative organs and the use of military
force, then developed the offensive strategy of the revolution, gained the initiative in military strategy, foiled the "special war" strategy which relied chiefly on the puppet administration and the 500,000-strong puppet army. When the American aggressors were forced to bring in a big expeditionary force to carry out their dry season strategic counter-offensive, our attacks aimed at maintaining and developing our initiative and the enemy's counter-attacks to win back their own, led to extremely bitter fighting. During the dry season, the enemy suffered more severe defeats, were further driven into strategic passivity, although they disposed of a large number of troops, plenty of money and armament. Our strategic initiative was preserved and sufficiently promoted to make it possible for us to prevent the enemy from reversing the trend of the situation, whatever reinforcements they might put in.

3. Conduct of the war: On the basis of certain objective conditions a correct conduct of operations is a decisive factor of victory on the battlefield as it can rapidly overcome shortcomings and turn weakness into strength while an erroneous conduct may render ineffective a big force and transform strength into weakness.

With an outlook based on dialectical materialism and a revolutionary military conception the South Vietnam army and people have objectively and scientifically appraised the enemy's strength and our own, brought into full play the superiority of people's war, made good their material weaknesses, turned political force into military force, political superiority into military superiority, further aggravated the enemy's weaknesses and driven the enemy into increasing passivity. During the dry season, the South Vietnam army and people who were well aware of the enemy's strategic plan and their lack of strategic initiative, struck at their most important strategic positions while consolidating their own positions and repelled the enemy's strategic counter-offensives. All American crack divisions in South Vietnam were attacked and almost none of them remained safe, which aggravated the adversary's state of passivity.

With their idealistic world outlook and their bourgeois military conception the Americans frequently indulge in wishful thinking in their conduct of military operations and have committed mistake after mistake. Madly and blindly, they misjudge their own capabilities and their opponent's, overestimate their strength and underestimate that of the South Vietnam Liberation Armed Forces and people as well as the immense force of a highly developed people's war. In consequence, nearly all their operations before and during the dry season, particularly the ones at which they had hastily rejoiced, were foiled by the army and people of South Vietnam. Vantuong, Pleime, Baubang, Nhado - Bongtrang, etc. were evidences of the Americans' erroneous conduct of operations and passive strategic position. It is safe to say that our conduct of military operations was good whereas the U.S. aggressors' is very poor.

4. Armed forces: In any war the armed forces are a factor on which directly depends victory or defeat. The
strength of any armed forces lies not only in their size but essentially in their quality. As far as the size itself is concerned, the American and puppet troops numbered more or less than 700,000 during the dry season (and may be eventually further strengthened) without, however, enjoying absolute numerical superiority, since the army and people of South Vietnam have at their disposal three categories of powerful armed forces, and an inexhaustible reserve of manpower. In the matter of armament, the army and people of South Vietnam are weaker than the U.S. aggressors. But if we consider infantry — the most important factor of victory on the battlefield — we find that here the U.S. aggressors are not stronger than we. Besides, in the concrete conditions of the war in our country, it is not indispensable to have a number of troops nearly equal or equal to that of enemy troops to build up a strong position and defeat our adversary. As regards morale and military art, the army and people of South Vietnam are definitely superior to the U.S. aggressors. And a most important factor in the fighting capacities of armed forces is the officers. In the course of the fighting on the Vietnam battleground, with the training and test they have gone through in twenty straight years of armed struggle, by applying fighting methods in a creative manner, the officers of the South Vietnam Armed Forces are unquestionably superior to U.S. officers in bravery, resourcefulness and fighting experience; they are not inferior to the latter in strategic and tactical training, in ability to command. As for the U.S. officers, they have a poor morale, little experience in fighting, particularly in jungle warfare, and forced to fight the way imposed on them by their opponent, they prove to have little ability in organizing and commanding military operations.

Through the analysis and overall appraisal of the four points discussed above, we can draw this conclusion: with regard to military power, we are materially and technically weak, but we are strong in many fundamental aspects, while the enemy are materially and technically strong, but have irreparable fundamental weak points. In these conditions, we still have weak points that we should be well aware of, but we are quite capable of building up a strong position to strike vigorously at the enemy weak points, decimate their forces and wipe out their most important units, one after the other. Only with this conclusion can we explain why we were able to defeat the U.S. aggressors’ special war, frustrate their dry season strategic counter-offensive, why we succeeded in keeping and developing the initiative while the U.S. aggressors were driven into increasing passivity. Only with this conclusion can we strengthen our belief in our certain victory under any circumstances. The enemy’s military defeat and our military victory in the dry season have proved that the U.S. aggressors’ ultimate military defeat is unavoidable, that our ultimate military victory is certain, and cannot be prevented by any force on earth. Had we not clearly realized that we were fundamentally strong, not only in the political field but also in many aspects of the military field, we would not have been able to continue our strategic offensive during the dry season, and would have been forced to fall back on the strategic defensive. And in
such a case, the development of our position and our strength would have been slowed down, and would have made it possible for the enemy to turn their weak strategic position into a strong one, and to attack us. Had we not seen all our fairly strong points in the military field — despite a number of weak points in comparison with U.S. forces — we would not have been able to check the U.S. strategic operations during the dry season and consequently would have had to face serious consequences. Our great victory and the hard facts of the South Vietnam battleground during the last dry season (when the U.S. imperialists committed a large force to the fighting) have given the lie to the deceitful U.S. propaganda about the "unconceivable power of the U.S. forces", and enlightened those who feared their temporary strength and had not correctly appraised the fundamental strong points of the army and people of South Vietnam in both the political and military fields.

Undoubtedly, our determination to carry out our strategic plan was highly revolutionary and based on scientific grounds. It united the entire people and the entire army for winning victory over the U.S. aggressors; it testified to the perfect identity of mind between those who were in command and those who executed the orders. The more we fought, the stronger our determination became, the closer our unity and, consequently, the greater our victories.

The U.S. imperialists acted madly and blindly, and their counter-offensive in the dry season was full of contradictions: contradictions between the political position and the military operations, between the objectives contemplated by the U.S. Command and the half-hearted actions of U.S. troops. The more defeats the enemy suffered the more they wavered, the more acute their internal contradictions became, and consequently, the more severe their defeats were. Their strategic plan itself, which was an adventurist and short-sighted one, had always carried in it the seeds of defeat.

The defeat of the U.S. aggressors in the last dry season was the consequence of a reactionary policy and an erroneous strategy. This was not an outward appearance but the real nature of our enemy, not a fortuitous event but an inevitable one, not temporary error and failure but fundamental error and failure. No doubt this error and this failure are expanding, and the logical sequence is that the neo-colonialist war of aggression is digging the U.S. imperialists' graves in South Vietnam.

III

CORRECT AND CREATIVE CONDUCT AND EXECUTION OF STRATEGY AND TACTICS

At the beginning of the dry season, both the enemy and we disposed of big forces and had a firm resolution. We continued vigorously to push forward our offensive and were resolved to foil the enemy's strategic counter-
offensive in order to hold fast the initiative. The enemy deployed all his mobile forces composed mostly of crack units and launched many large-scale attacks on important strategic areas in an attempt to regain the initiative.

Why did we win glorious victories and continuously frustrate the strategy and tactics of the U.S. expediti­
onary force? Realities on the battlefield showed that our initiative and grim determination in strategy had inspired a correct and creative conduct and execution of strategy and tactics.

The essence of this strategy and tactics was to force the enemy to 'fight the way we imposed on them in order effectively to reduce the action of a big enemy army to that of a small one, turn its strength into weakness and decuple its weak points. As for the South Vietnam army and people, this enabled them to fight their own way and consequently to change their numerical inferiority into superiority and their weakness into strength, and increased their original strength tenfold.

This fundamental spirit deeply influenced all our strategy, operations and tactics, and helped us correctly solve major problems concerning the conduct of strategy and application of different forms of warfare, tactics and methods of fighting. Our resounding victories in the dry season over the large mobile units of the U.S. forces shed a stronger light on the superiority, invincibility and originality of the strategy and tactics of our people's war, and exposed the deficiencies and what was irrational in American strategy and tactics. Our methods of fighting fully suited our country's condi-
tions—climate, terrain and support of the population—and was in keeping with our traditional military art. On the battlefield, it enabled us to develop to a high degree our absolute political and moral superiority as well as our fundamental military strong points, and aggravated the absolute political and moral weaknesses of the enemy as well as their most important military defects.

Here are some examples of the correct conduct and execution of our strategy and tactics:

First, we upheld our spirit of attacking resolutely and unremittingly, gaining time and striking first at the enemy in order to deprive them of their initiative from the very beginning. This fell in line with the fundamental spirit of revolutionary military strategy which is constantly to be on the offensive, and faithfully reflected our situation and that of the enemy on the battlefield, namely: we were winning while the enemy were losing; we were holding the initiative while the enemy had lost it and the balance of military forces was being tipped in our favour.

What would have happened if we had wavered instead of striking first at that time? It goes without saying that the dry season battle would have taken another turn; the enemy would have been able to make thorough preparations, concentrate their forces and attack us first as they had planned; they would have been in a position to develop their strong point which was their large mobile forces, and gradually overcome their weaknesses resulting from the loss of their initiative in order to regain it step by step.
Second, we chose a correct direction of attack and a flexible and creative method of attack, and struck at the right objective; combined armed struggle with political struggle and persuasion work among the enemy troops; harmoniously co-ordinated our actions on various battlefronts, closely co-ordinated the activities of the three categories of armed forces, and guerilla actions with large-unit operations.

We applied with flexibility and creativeness the principle by which we should avoid the strong points of the enemy and strike at their weak points, and hit them not only on battlefields far from their bases and defended by small forces but right in strategic areas where they disposed of big forces and showed, however, weaknesses and deficiencies. We struck both American and puppet troops, we struck their mobile forces. We attacked them simultaneously on all fronts, compelling them to scatter their forces to the extreme limit, and, at the same time, mustering our own in a rational way to deliver them heavy blows.

Of course, we advocated striking the enemy both at their weak points and in their key-areas defended by rather big forces; this is because our strategic position and military strength allowed us to do so, and because in these places the enemy were very exposed. We attacked while holding the initiative of action, when a new battle array of people's war had been prepared and our strategic forces were ready to fight on favourable grounds. As for the enemy, they counter-attacked at the time they had lost their initiative, their forces were scattered and isolated and even their mobile forces committed to large-unit actions were pinned down in threatened places.

The South Vietnam army and people combined military struggle with political struggle and persuasion work among the enemy troops. This dual action simultaneously increased the enemy's embarrassment and thwarted their military counter-offensive plan as well as their political manoeuvres, namely the "pacification" program and "construction of the countryside" initiated by Cabot Lodge and Lansdale. It was aimed to enable us to scatter and isolate the enemy to a high degree. On various battlefields, in all localities and in all regions, in the front-line as well as in the enemy's rear, we closely co-ordinated our actions and fought them unremittingly, thus forcing them to spread thin their forces, and foiling their scheme of concentration.

With the reinforcement of some hundred thousand U.S. troops in the dry season, the enemy tried to check our large-unit actions by hook or by crook. At first, they hoped to compel us to wage guerilla warfare, but as the three categories of our armed forces had grown up and had a great stamina, our guerilla warfare had developed vigorously and our large-unit operations had achieved notable progress. Within a few months, from wiping out whole companies of U.S. troops at a time, the L.A.F. succeeded in annihilating whole battalions or even groups of battalions in a single engagement. Throughout the dry season, there was a harmonious co-ordination and effective mutual assistance between the three categories of armed forces, and between guerilla actions and large-unit operations. Thus two strong
strategic forces took shape not only on one battlefield or in one strategic direction, but on many battlefields and in many directions at the same time. Guerilla warfare with its paramount strategic importance not only decimated or wiped out many small groups of enemy troops which added up ran to a considerable total in many small actions, wore out the enemy and scattered them everywhere, but it substantially curbed the efficiency of their mobile forces. According to plan, U.S. mobile units would fight a week and rest a week to replenish their strength and make preparations for future engagements. For this reason, at the end of the dry season, all these units were exhausted, whereas our main forces were free to operate, field large numbers of men and launch large-scale attacks.

Thus on the one hand, we pinned down the enemy to the point where out of the five divisions of U.S. mobile forces only three could be active, their mobility being reduced by half and their air force and artillery kept busy and scattered on many fronts; on the other hand, we dealt with the remaining enemy troops available for action.

Third, we closely co-ordinated and stepped up various forms of people’s war: attacks on communication lines, around U.S. bases in the enemy’s rear, and large-scale offensives, thus compelling the adversary to parry our blows everywhere and sustain heavy losses.

Together with enticing the enemy out of their bases as at Pleime, Dongduong, North of Quangngai, mounting simultaneous vigorous counter-attacks such as at Baubang, Longnaguyen, North of Binhdinh, Zone D, Nhado-Bongtrang and annihilating entire units of American and puppet troops, the South Vietnam army and people made it a point to strike at the U.S. troops at guerilla-belts around their bases, and set up other death-belts for the enemy. Parallel with the wiping out of great numbers of enemy troops, we attached great importance to stepping up attacks on their supply lines, ordnance bases and reserve forces by hammering at their rear: airfields, store-houses, officers’ quarters and especially communication-lines, in order to land the adversary, particularly the Americans, in increasing difficulties. The close co-ordination of these methods of fighting sharpened the contradictions of the enemy between concentration and scattering of troops and between mobility and occupation.

This most efficient battle array of people’s war prevented the enemy from striking where they liked and fielding as many of his forces as they pleased. What happened on the battlefront has substantiated the fact that due to such a battle array the enemy were lured into a battlefield where they met their doom, forced to scatter their forces in order to cope with the situation on all fronts and, consequently, their passivity was aggravated and their casualties rose in the course of the fighting. To fight in such conditions is tantamount to running one’s head against a wall, which explains the bitter failure of our enemy.

Fourth, we developed and applied highly efficient and most diverse tactics to fight the American and puppet troops. These tactics were governed by the principle of wiping out the enemy’s forces, of preserving and fostering ours, and of closely combining the annihilation of the enemy with the liberation of the territory and
winning over the population. Their invincibility lies in the revolutionary man, in the political and moral factor as well as in other fundamental military strong points. It is for this reason that the tactics applied by the South Vietnam L.A.F. are full of creativeness and initiative, not uniform and jejune but diverse and flexible in the extreme; they are possessed of high efficiency in decimating and annihilating the enemy and have caused them further difficulties.

These tactics are multiform. In each region the guerrillas had their own way of fighting. The death-belt set up for the U.S. troops at Laithieu and Ben Cat differed from that at Danang and Chulai. The fighting hamlets of Cu Chi, with their wonderful system of trenches, differed from those of Phu Yen and Binh Dinh. Eastern Nambo and Central Trungbo fighters had their own way of attacking airfields and communication lines; Saigon had an excellent fighting tactic of its own. It is the same with large-unit actions of the regular forces and regional troops. The attacks organized in Central Trungbo differed from those prepared in Nambo; the attacks made in the mountain regions were not of the same pattern as those in the delta, and the attacks on American soldiers differed from those directed against puppet troops. All the attacks and ambushes mounted by the same unit against the enemy land forces, motorized units, helicopter troops differed from each other and two battles fought by the same unit unfolded in a quite different way. The co-ordination of various tactics and the shifting of one tactics to another operated with such flexibility as to disappoint the calculations of the enemy.

Before the dry season, when no major battle was given yet to American troops, many questions had been raised: could we wipe out whole U.S. units while the enemy had at their disposal big forces, a large number of planes, guns and motorized units, whereas we had neither motorized troops nor air force and only a small artillery? How should we fight to encircle the enemy and decimate them?

The realities on the battlefield have given the answers.

The might of the U.S. troops, as displayed by their tactics, lies in the concentration of big forces, in the firepower of their air force and artillery, in the high mobility of their helicopters and motor vehicles, and in the surprise attacks by tanks and M.III armoured cars. The tactical conception of the enemy was to rely entirely on their firepower and mobility, especially the firepower of their air force and artillery, and the mobility of their helicopters. In all engagements, they deployed a big force, arrayed their troops in prongs for encirclement, which at first sight looked very impressive and seemed to be well co-ordinated. But what happened on the battlefield has caused perplexity and anxiety among the American brasshats. A whole series of operations undertaken by U.S. crack divisions and brigades should have annihilated at least some adverse units - theoretically speaking, a U.S. regiment must wipe out a battalion of adverse troops -- but the enemy had to admit bitterly that throughout the dry season, no division nor brigade was able to knock out a single L.A.F.
As far as tactics alone are concerned, the explanation of this was that ours were better than the enemy's.

The striking and original features of our tactics are the following:

a) We realize our weak points to overcome them, and the strong points of the enemy to cope with them; we know where the weaknesses or the enemy lie to strike at them with all our strength; we skillfully make use of our small force to fight a bigger one, cleverly co-ordinate small, medium-size and big-unit actions, isolate the enemy's planes and artillery from their ground and motorized troops; we separate their ground troops from their motorized troops to annihilate them both.

b) We start action with concentrated attacks and overwhelming blows to wipe out and paralyse from the outset the enemy's key-points such as C.P.'s and artillery emplacements in order to curb and neutralize their strength in air force and artillery.

c) We vigorously promote our fortes which are mobile warfare, fighting by night and, when conditions permit, by day, fighting at close range, launching deep thrusts to split enemy forces, and fighting hand-to-hand — so much dreaded by the American troops — as a common tactic to wipe out the enemy quickly.

d) We rely on the revolutionary combativeness of our people, bring into full play the secrecy and surprise factors, our tradition of gallant close combat, while skilfully making use of our powerful reserve force, resolutely mustering combat forces and concentrating firepower for the battle. With a rational concentration of combat forces and firepower we can uphold the principle of securing a position of strength throughout the battle to wipe out the enemy part by part in accordance with the motto "quick attack and quick disengagement".

In practice, our tactics made it impossible for the enemy to fight according to their own; it helped us to keep our initiative of action and decuple our efficiency while driving our adversary into a state of perplexity and passivity throughout the battle and seriously reducing their efficiency.

Our strategy and tactics are revolutionary and scientific, the enemy's are anti-scientific and reactionary. The enemy are subjective and blind, being not able to make an accurate appraisal of their opponent and even of themselves. Consequently, in strategy the enemy are on the horns of such dilemmas as quick fighting or protracted fighting, offensive or defensive, how to make a proper use of the American and puppet forces, where should the main battlefield be, what should be the proper tactics after massive landing of troops, etc.

Our tactics are diverse and flexible, they constantly develop and change, while the enemy's are poor, rigid and outmoded and have gone bankrupt ever since the failure of their "special war" strategy.
It is crystal-clear that the strategy and tactics of people’s war are skilful, invincible, and continually develop, whereas those of the enemy are inefficient and beset with an unending crisis.

The 1965–1966 dry season was of a paramount strategic significance for us as well as for the enemy. The obvious result was that we won a big victory while the enemy experienced a bitter defeat.

Our military successes in the dry season were due first to the correctness of our political and military lines, to our cleverness in the conduct of people’s war, and the originality and creativeness of our military art. It was the outcome of our army’s and people’s determination to fight the American aggressors for national salvation, the bravery and resourcefulness of our army and people. It was the result of the valuable assistance of our brothers and friends all over the world. Through this first trial of strength, we know the U.S. imperialists better.

The military setback of the U.S. imperialists in the dry season was the initial failure of the “local war” strategy, and the third strategical mistake of the Americans, the first being their attempt to achieve neocolonialism through the Ngo Dinh Diem dictatorial regime, and the second being the launching of the “special war”. It is clear that the second mistake was bigger than the first. The more the U.S. imperialists relied on their material strength and technique, the bigger was their mistake and the more bitter their failure.

Our military victory in the dry season has provided concrete bases for the conclusion we had reached on the inevitable trend of our struggle, namely: in the future, even if the U.S. imperialists boost their military strength up to one million men, including G.I.’s and puppet troops, and make use of great quantities of up-to-date weapons and other war means, our army and people, will certainly frustrate their local war.

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