

LXXV/0025/0001/2

1966

Tri-continental

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VIET-NAM FIVE LESSONS, ONE VICTORY

by Truong Son

The victory of the 1966-'67 winter-spring campaign and five lessons on military strategy.

During the period 1965-66 the US forces tried to take advantage of the dry season and in September they launched their troops into so-called "mopping-up operations." In the year 1966-67 they started similar operations in October. Today they are obliged to limit themselves to clearing the runways of the airports and bases of debris. The disasters in Tay Ninh during the aforementioned period cost General Jonathan Seaman and Ambassador Cabot Lodge their jobs. Today the strategy of William Westmoreland and Ellsworth Bunker is treading this same well-beaten track.

The Vietnamese people resist the invader with their own way of life and in their own manner of fighting and, in the face of force, with their own concepts and their own ideology which carry them into battle with the best of strategies: a people's war. The strategy of the People's

Liberation Forces to strike at the invaders in various ways simultaneously sought and achieved the objective of compelling the US forces to adopt defensive measures and to convert their bases into small enclaves surrounded by patriotic forces. The experts recognize that the Vietnamese attacks are undoubtedly sustained, powerful and coordinated, with smooth synchronization of military confrontations and political struggle.

In this article —which *Tricontinental* publishes at length as an extensive extract, made by its editorial staff, containing the essential points and the military and political declarations— the experience gained between the winter of 1966 and the spring of 1967 is studied in depth, that experience from which we may derive tactics and strategies of universal value, especially for the peoples of the Third World. Truong Son, an authorized military commentator of the South Vietnamese National Front for Liberation, seems to draw two conclusions from his didactic analysis: the contest between the US invader and the Vietnamese patriots is a struggle between two forces which are governed by opposing rules of war; and, by inference, it is necessary to know the enemy as oneself.

Having sustained a staggering initial blow in the 1965-66 dry season and other bitter setbacks in the ensuing rainy season in both parts of our country, Johnson and MacNamara, though still shutting their eyes to hard facts, could not help but be aware of the following:

—Far from faring smoothly, the US strategy of a “limited war” of aggression, waged with American expeditionary troops as the main force, had made heavy weather of a time beset with difficulties and complexities.

—In the execution of the said strategy the lightning war and lightning victory policy had proved, through the test of time, devoid of any sound basis.

—The temporary elation generated by the introduction of the US expeditionary force to rescue the Saigon army in 1965 had evaporated and given way to a nightmare haunting the American imperialists, now confronted with thorny problems. What were the prospects of the war in South Viet-Nam? How could it be brought to a military victo-

ry? How could the political objective in South Viet-Nam be achieved? What should be done in the immediate future? And so on and so forth.

In such a situation, though already somewhat disappointed, the Americans still demonstrated their obduracy and hoped for a military solution; at the beginning of the 1966-67 dry season they firmly decided to launch another strategic counteroffensive involving two and a half times more troops, two to three times more war matériel, firepower included, and financial resources than in the previous dry season.

For their part, the armed forces and the people of South Viet-Nam, led by the Central Committee of the National Front for Liberation, had taken a decision of a strategic character which found expression in these basic objectives:

—To defeat one million American and puppet troops, to foil their so-called "two-pincer strategy" and smash their second strategic counteroffensive.

—To aggravate the U S puppets' impasse and loss of initiative and confront it with new forces to bring about a much greater defeat.

—To create for themselves a new strategic situation enabling them to forge ahead and win more important victories.

Our successes in the winter and spring of 1966-67 and their significance were as great as the enemy's failures were costly.

According to incomplete figures, during the period from early October 1966 to late March 1967, the Liberation Armed Forces wiped out more than 150 000 officers and men. (not including 60 000 puppet deserters), half of them American and satellite troops; some 40 infantry and artillery battalions and tank and armoured squadrons, over 200 companies and 250 platoons of the U S and satellite forces were annihilated; 1 300 tanks and armoured cars, 233 guns and over 1 500 aircraft were destroyed. The number of troops knocked out was two and a half times larger than during the previous

dry season, while the quantity of weapons and other war matériel destroyed increased by several times. As before, the N F L controls four-fifths of the territory and three-quarters of the population of South Viet-Nam.

This is the greatest victory we have ever achieved. It is one of far-reaching significance from both political and military points of view. It has undoubtedly opened the enemy's eyes to the fact that after two years their "limited war" did not bring about any strategic success, and that this time they have been plunging farther and farther into a tunnel whose end is not in sight. It has undoubtedly brought home to them the hard facts that, with more than one million American and puppet troops, they were incapable of wresting back the strategic initiative they had lost and were forced to retire to a more defensive position with less combat and operational effectiveness—a situation that this vast army has proved unable by its own action to force upon us.

Our dry season victory has probably shown the aggressors that

their "limited war" has already gone beyond the scope of Taylor's "strategy of flexible reaction," and that instead of turning the tide of events in their favour they have become involved in a political and strategic situation that has become increasingly complicated both in South Viet-Nam and throughout the world and particularly in the United States itself.

To us this victory has demonstrated that the absolute political superiority of the South Vietnamese revolution has been preserved and powerfully developed; that the absolute moral superiority of the people and the Liberation Armed Forces has endured the trial of strength with the enemy more steadfastly than at any other time. It has also shown us that in the face of a million-strong army and a mass array of steel we were capable of attacking with great effectiveness, of maintaining our initiative in strategy, operational conduct and fighting, and of winning control over the battlefield with original combat methods. This explains why it is that the

longer we fight, the stronger we become. Clearly, our dry season victory has created a more stable political and strategic situation fraught with new elements, new possibilities, and new premises which will surely bring us much greater successes even though we shall have to struggle hard and relentlessly against the adversary's wicked and perfidious maneuvers in the days ahead.

We embarked on the winter-spring campaign from a firm strategic position and maintained our initiative on the battlefield thereby retaining the means to act and to fight as we wished and to force the enemy to accept battles of our own choosing.

Consequently, we progressively increased our operational and strategic effectiveness.

A question of great importance arose concerning strategic conduct: which side would secure the initiative of action on the battlefield and control it on both military and political planes? For he who gained the upper hand on this point would win. This objective was hotly contested but we won and are now in a superior

position. Thus we may indeed conclude that our strategy and our fighting methods have triumphed over those of the enemy.

Our 1966-67 victory testifies once again to the correctness of our political and military lines and the grim determination of our people and armed forces. It also demonstrates the effectiveness of the close co-ordination between our great, northern rear and our huge front in the South.

Our victory is linked with the wholehearted support and assistance of the socialist countries and of our friends throughout the world.

With this great victory we have considerably steeled ourselves and matured. We have also acquired valuable experience that should be summed up.

**I—TO ASCERTAIN THE
ENEMY'S STRATEGIC
OBJECTIVE, CORRECTLY TO
ASSESS HIS RULES OF
ACTION AND HIS
CAPABILITIES IN ORDER TO
DEFINE OUR OWN
STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE AND**

COMBAT METHODS

To know the enemy and oneself is a principle which any belligerent should abide by to secure victory in a war. In South Vietnam, particularly during the winter of 1966 and the spring of 1967, this principle required that we should ascertain the adversary's scheme and strategic objective he was resolved to attain, and should know his rules of action and capabilities. Only by so doing could we define our own strategic objective and pursue it with all our determination. For prior to any engagement, operation or campaign, the first thing that the command at every level normally has to establish is the enemy's situation and, relying on past experience and on all data available, ascertain his plans, the methods used to conduct his activities, and his capabilities.

For this purpose, starting in the summer of 1966, the N.F.L., the L.A.F. Command and Front bodies at various levels, had focused their attention on study-

ing the enemy's situation in the following respects: What was his strategic design for the dry season? How effective were his troops and how great his capacity? Where would he use them? What rules would govern his action? At that stage of course we could make only preliminary evaluations but these had to be fundamentally accurate. Otherwise, our actions would lack coordination and force us into strategic and tactical inactivity. Apart from other causes, we owed our 1966-67 victory to the fact that from the very outset we had in the main accurately assessed our opponent's strategic plans and rules of action.

1. We had accurately appraised the strategic objective that the enemy was determined to attain. In the spring of 1965 we had already foreseen that in the 1965-66 dry season the adversary would certainly meet with heavy setbacks, and that in the following rainy season he would carry out routine activities in preparation for a large-scale counteroffensive in the 1966-67 dry season,

● involving probably up to one million American, puppet and satellite troops, among whom the number of G I's might reach 400 000. This prediction was of great importance for the ideological preparation of our armed forces and people as well as for our organizational preparations. Though we did not anticipate every eventuality we had forecast by then—and were strikingly correct—that, after sustaining big losses with a 700 000-strong army in the 1965-66 dry season, the enemy could not turn the tide in their favour in the following dry season with even a million men. We had thus accurately foreseen the ferocious determination of the US imperialists to attain their strategic objectives, their great ambition, the extensive force they would field as well as their brutal and treacherous tricks which were however littered with weaknesses and complications. In other words, the strength and means of execution that they would use to achieve their purpose would be beset by negative factors and the seeds of

failure.

From this assessment we arrived at certain conclusions serving as guide-lines for our action. For instance, we should not underestimate the aggressor's determination to achieve this strategic objective; apart from weak points he possessed strong ones to which we should pay the closest attention; we should prepare resolutely to crush his new strategic counteroffensive; objectively we were in a position to win in the 1966-67 campaign provided we exerted strenuous efforts. Such a significant victory would create new premises for greater victories.

2. To grasp the enemy's rule of action so as to foil his plans in every theater of operation.

In order to know the adversary one should not proceed incoherently. Rather, one must learn his rules of action.

One should tackle the problem with great care because it requires data, the ability to analyse and draw the necessary conclusions and a sound judgment. One of our successes over the past two

years has been our ever improving knowledge of the U.S. forces' rules of action. This formed a basis for us to work out our own rules of action. The contest between the enemy and ourselves on the battlefield is a struggle between two forces governed by opposing rules of war.

The following are some of those rules that we had correctly gauged and ascertained:

a) Coordination between the "search and destroy" and "pacification" pincers. In the South what the adversary calls "search and destroy" and "pacification" operations means essentially the use of both American and puppet armed forces and military action.

b) Combination of the offensive and the defensive. In the previous dry season our opponent laid emphasis on the offensive while coupling it with the defensive. Now his counteroffensive strategy was to combine the offensive and the defensive in an effort to firmly strengthen the defensive, preserve his forces, bases and defensive zones by fanning-out raids, by preventing our prepara-

tions for attacks, breaking our grip and enlarging the cordons around his bases while mounting attacks in order to prevent or restrict our large-scale operations. Unlike the French defence, the American defence was mobile. But after two years of confrontation their rear and rear bases enjoyed no safety and they found themselves forced to fight longer battles than they had expected. To adjust themselves to the situation, they resorted to new measures such as deeper raiding thrusts, occupation of more territory, more prefab fortifications with a surrounding no-man's land, etc. As to their offensive, it did not differ from that of the French. However, to better suit the situation they attached importance to both large and medium-size operations, lasting for many days on end and continuing simultaneously on several fronts. They combined "pacification" and defensive activities to deliver steady and strong blows, to strike after or in the course of "sweeps," to hit after tightening the noose, to destroy and deci-

mate at the same time, etc. All those tactics had been tested by the French in Indo-China and Algeria and had not staved off their failure for they were nothing short of a passive and expedient makeshift and as such could not help the U.S. aggressor militarily or politically.

c) Combining actions inside and outside South Viet-Nam to encircle and isolate it. By intensifying their war of destruction in North Viet-Nam, the Americans tried to halt the assistance provided by the northern rear to the big southern front. Simultaneously, they stepped up their operations on land in the South and their air strikes against the North. They used their air force, navy and ground artillery in an attempt to isolate the front from the rear hitting both fronts simultaneously.

d) Combining military, political and diplomatic actions. The enemy extended his activities in all the hill-forest, rural and urban sectors. He combined his military and political counter-offensives on these three fronts

and his diplomatic counteroffensive—his “peace negotiation” hoax—with a view to bringing military pressure to bear on us and deceiving and bribing the people politically and economically. All this was done in the hope of impairing our revolutionary combativeness and our people’s resolve to fight.

3. To appraise correctly the capabilities of a million-strong army to devise efficient combat methods.

Preparing to confront and fight off one million American and puppet troops, the South Vietnamese armed forces and people, using their experience in the 1965-66 dry season and the revolutionary and scientific appraisal of the correlation of forces and the strategic positions of both sides came to the following conclusions: the enemy had very substantially increased his numbers and war matériel but not his combat effectiveness; from a defensive, losing position his million-strong force could exert no appreciable strategic effect nor devise strategically effective

combat methods as they had in the European and Pacific theatres.

In World War II, no more than six months after the deployment of their forces, Japan and Germany had secured strategic, if temporary, victories. In the South of our country, two years after it committed its expeditionary forces, the United States is still unable to attain any strategic objective. Why? To answer this question one has to understand the many complex underlying causes. The following are some immediate ones:

—The United States unleashed its "limited war" after the failure of its "special 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 these are important, basic ones.

The strategy of the US aggressive "limited war" has to rely on two strategic forces, the American and puppet troops. The latter, being too weak, undermine the

strength of the former.

—The US local rear support is also very weak while its social and political bases in South Vietnam are very shaky; the puppet administration which constitutes its prop is 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, have the initiative on the battlefield and are not alone in their fight.

II—TO MAINTAIN AND IMPROVE OUR UNREMITTING 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 1966-67 dry season, while widening the target area of our actions we have been speeding up the tempo and increasing the

scope of our attacks on the enemy. We have also been holding and developing our control over the operational fronts.

These are the prominent features of the situation on the battlefield during the dry season: On our side, the L A F's continual offensive position and control over the battlefield developed evenly and in depth, leading to a series of offensive actions and counteroffensive actions with an offensive character from mid-October 1966 to mid-February 1967. At the same time we lured adversely situated troops out of their positions to hit at them, successfully countered their "search and destroy" operations and large and medium-size terrorist raids, and struck them in the vicinity of their bases deep to their rear. Strengthened by their earlier successes and thanks to adequate preparations in every respect — moral, organizational and technical — the armed forces and people of South Viet-Nam soon unleashed their offensive and delivered telling blows simultaneously on many

fronts from Quan Tri, Thua Thien and Central Trung Bo to the Western High Plateau, 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 the L A F., our three spearheads — military struggle, political struggle and agitation among enemy troops — on the hills and in the forests, and rural and urban sectors. All people's war methods were put into operation against all the adversary's forces — American, puppet and satellite — to wipe them out, frustrate their "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 side, more troops were committed in the dry season and deployed rather early. Instead of massive fielding on all fronts as before, they carried out attacks and "pacification"

activities by 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. They attacked in the hills, in the forests, in the plains and around urban centres. As they had lost their strategic initiative, the trend in the main towards the defensive all through the dry season became more pronounced. This was the case even though they had been able at times to mount big campaigns such as operation Junction City (Tay Ninh) to hit at us before we came into action or to engage us as on Highway 9 (Quang Tri). The number of troops fielded in operation and "pacification" activities rose in comparison with the previous dry season. Operations of division size and upward also doubled within a year. Nevertheless, the dry season trial of strength has resulted in the South Vietnamese armed forces and people holding firmer positions in the operational fronts and a greater initiative of action.

Their opponent has been driven into an ever more defensive and puzzling situation.

From the above, the following conclusions may be drawn:

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

2. We must 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 battlefields and to drive the enemy into a more disadvantageous position.

In order to do this, the liberation forces and people satisfactorily met the following basic demands: First, to be firmly determined to fight and vanquish one million American and puppet troops.

Second, to extend our "people's war" — fought by all our people on all fronts — and bring it to a higher stage. We used 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 battle-

field, to strengthen the three categories of our armed forces, and resolutely to attain by all means our three strategic objectives, namely, to wipe out enemy forces, safeguard and expand the liberated areas, and hold and promote the people's control of the battlefield.

Third, to push forward our offensive on all the hill-forest, rural and urban regions. The realities of the revolutionary war in South Viet-Nam have demonstrated the necessity of attacking the enemy in all these three regions, both politically and militarily.

Fourth, constantly to develop among the fighters and people on each front the sense of being always ready to cooperate with other fronts, to achieve harmonious coordination between all regions. Equally effective actions in all parts of a given region generate strength but they do not suffice.

Fifth, to consolidate our rear and liberated areas, to preserve and expand our bases. We have to build our liberated zones into a

solid rear area from all the military, political and economic points of view, and thereby strengthen our bases.

The realization of the points mentioned above involves a relentless struggle to gain and maintain the initiative during the whole process of the war. From the point of view of military strategy, of armed struggle in particular, this initiative may be expressed briefly as combat methods and 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 tactics.

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

To compel the opponent to fight as we want him to constitutes the governing principle for 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

choosing, and how do we achieve this so as constantly to keep him on the defensive and maintain our initiative? From experiences drawn from our recent victory over one million enemy troops, these main conclusions can be reached:

a) Force the enemy to scatter and spread thin his forces.

b) Prevent the opponent from using his best combat tactics.

c) Do not allow the enemy to encircle and split our forces and strive to counter him strategically, operationally and in combat; promote the see-saw pattern of the war to the greatest degree possible in an effort to encircle and split his forces strategically.

d) Deprive the enemy of the possibility of taking consistent defensive and efficacious offensive actions by bringing to bear such strategic people's war methods as guerrilla warfare, communications-demolition operations, concentrating forces on definite targets, etc.

e) To prevent U.S. forces from serving as a shield for puppet

troops.

f) Not to give the adversary the opportunity to mount engagements with combat effectiveness and operational and strategic effect.

g) To prevent the enemy from taking control of contested areas, even those adjoining big U.S. puppet bases and urban centers.

As a result we shall tie him down to an ever more defensive position and the more he thrashes about the further he will embroil his strategy and tactics. We shall continue to create a more advantageous strategic position and hold and develop our initiative in offensive. This is the vital question wherein lies our strength and the enemy's weakness in the conduct of military strategy in South Viet-Nam.

III—TO UNDERSTAND THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE DESTRUCTION OF THE ENEMY FORCES AND THE PROMOTION OF THE RIGHT OF THE PEOPLE TO BE MASTERS OF THEIR COUNTRY; TO IM-

PROVE THE COORDINATION OF MILITARY ACTION, POLIT- ICAL STRUGGLE AND PER- SUASION AMONG ENEMY TROOPS

In his war of aggression on a neo-colonialist pattern, the enemy couples military operations with political and economic maneuvers under his "two-pincer" plan — "search and destroy" and "pacification" — aimed at three objectives: destruction of the Liberation Armed Forces, occupation of territory and submission of the people. These are closely related. He maintains that unless he defeats the L A F, he cannot occupy territory, nor suppress the population. And, should he fail in the task of occupation, he will be deprived of a territory to deploy his troops in and unable to restrict the scope of the L A F activities. However, occupation without the people's submission would simply amount to scattering his forces to face annihilation in sweeping numbers and, as a result, continuing to fight without rear support in the

locality. In reality all his plans and schemes to achieve these three strategic objectives have been foiled from the very start, ever since the launching of his neo colonialist war of aggression in South Viet-Nam.

For the enemy met with repeated attacks and powerful counterblows from the L A F and the people of South Viet-Nam. Both the "pacification" and the "search and destroy" pincer programs were broken down; the "pacification" program came to naught with heavy losses to military forces and "pacification" teams. From their successful struggle on two fronts against the "search and destroy" plan and the "pacification" program, the L A F and the people have drawn the following practical conclusions: First, the relationship between the destruction of enemy forces and the upholding of the right of the people to be masters of their country should be understood in accordance with the characteristics of the South Viet-Nam revolutionary war and our line of strategy.

Second, we should regard the combination of military and political struggle, and the coordination of the three offensive thrusts — military and political attacks and persuasion among enemy troops — as basic methods of struggle to emphasize constantly the effects of the annihilation of enemy troops, to maintain and extend the people's control, and to counter "pacification."

Experience in numerous areas has demonstrated that unless we brought into full play all our forces and every form of struggle, and adequately combined political and military efforts, we could not solve the problem of defending the territory and people in the face of enemy deployment of a dense and formidable network of occupation forces. Hence this fact: although in places the enemy has set up nearly one hundred garrisons and posts, he cannot subdue the people who still control the situation. Our people call such places "a liberated area with enemy posts." From the lessons they have learned at the cost of their lives, the liberation forces

and people of South Viet-Nam conclude that only by adhering to these forms of struggle can they stand firm in the face of their opponent's relentless attacks, and eventually foil all his schemes. That is our approach to the problem. And that is why military and political struggles must be closely combined.

Military and political forces play equally important strategic roles and generate equally significant effects. Political struggle serves military struggle, which in turn supports the former to win victory in the war by our own methods, and eventually to accomplish the political task of the South Viet-Nam revolution.

IV— TO IMPROVE UNCEAS- INGLY THE FIGHTING EF- FICIENCY AND THE OPERA- TIONAL AND STRATEGIC EFFECT OF THE PEOPLE'S WAR UNIQUE COMBAT METHODS

In this winter-spring period a

● bitter contest has taken place in the operational fronts between our and the enemy's combat methods. Our people's war methods have clearly shown their superiority. They have become more intense, reached a higher standard of development, and repeatedly held in check all U S tactical initiatives.

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

—Our activities developed evenly in all fronts with all the three categories of armed forces fighting well and scoring major victories. We undertook major and minor engagements, large and small scale operations, and those of long duration bore definite characteristics and yielded good results. Offensives, counteroffensives, counterraid and anti-pacification actions were equally successful.

—The impact of this strategy lay in its being aimed directly against the right troops and targets, in its affording us the possibility of scattering, decimating and an-

nihilating military and political forces while reducing our own losses.

—Our tactical forms of fighting developed considerably. In every front, in every area and army unit, we devised new and extremely diversified combat methods: spiked and mined traps; sniping; ambushes; nibbling and surprise attacks; assaults; artillery shelling; actions against heliborne troops, landing and armoured personnel carriers; attacks inside and outside fortifications, on camp bases and rear bases; also a combination of all these methods, fighting round the clock in the plains and in the hills and forest areas stretching up to the border, and so on.

The superiority, originality and effectiveness of the people's war methods have been shown by the realities in the South Viet-Nam theater in the following condensed points:

1—These fighting methods reflect a rational distribution of combat tasks which notably increases the fighting capabilities of the Liberation Armed Forces and of the

fourteen million people of South Viet-Nam.

Just as an agricultural cooperative in North Viet-Nam owes its high labour productivity to a proper division of responsibilities among its members, so combat and operational effectiveness derive from a rational distribution of combat tasks.

2—We have utilized all our weapons, from the most rudimentary to the most modern, and have 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, which we use skilfully and extensively, we have caused heavy losses to the G I's. And it is not without reason that these American "playboys" dread the spiked pits and booby traps laid by our guerrillas and people, into which they fall every day. The American press has admitted that 25 percent of the casualties sustained by the U S marines sta-

tioned in the 1st. Tactical Area resulted from traps of all kinds. U S troops are still more frightened by our infantry weapons, and by our cannons and mortars of various types, which raised their casualty list to a new level in the first few months of the current year.

3—To defeat the enemy, one usually employs a big force against a smaller one and vice-versa, or a combination of both these methods. Usually, when dealing with operational and combat action, one almost exclusively has in mind the use of a big force against a smaller one in order to secure victory. In practice, however, we resort to varied methods and win splendid successes, fielding now more troops than the enemy, now less, now as many as he does. Not only in guerrilla warfare but also in large unit operations we employed all those methods, depending upon the circumstances; when it was necessary and conditions were favourable, we deployed a large force to overwhelm the enemy's inferior

numbers, in this case, fought rapidly and caused wholesale destruction of his important units. On the other hand, we tried to seize every opportunity to fight a larger force than ours by bringing into full play all our forces, by restricting to the minimum the adversary's powerful firepower and his high mobility in combat and operation, and, through our strong position and the superior quality of our troops, by overwhelming the opponent to achieve victory.

4—We were able to undertake small and large scale actions and to combine these two forms of fighting. In South Viet-Nam evenly developed small-scale actions have made it possible to defeat enemy forces over a very extensive area, to pin them down and scatter them. We also frequently resorted with flexibility and determination to large unit actions of various sizes, and with powerful blows improved our capacities to destroy the enemy. This has clearly demonstrated that if we concentrated on large unit actions only and overlooked

the development of minor and medium-size engagements, it would be practically impossible, and indeed very dangerous, to mount large scale operations. It would be equally wrong to confine ourselves to small unit actions.

5—We defeated the enemy in all situations; inside and outside fortifications in hinterland bases, by day and by night, in the hill-forest, rural and urban fronts. Ours are flexible, diverse and highly effective combat methods since they prevail over those of our adversary in every conceivable combat situation.

While attaching importance to destroying enemy forces on the move, those who have just landed from the air or are in provisional encampments, etc., by means of ambushes, surprise attacks or artillery shelling and so on, the L A F and the people of South Viet-Nam tried to take advantage of every opportunity to strike at them at their bases, and in extremely bold attacks. Sometimes, using few troops, thus limiting the effect of the

enemy's firepower, they scored major successes and reduced their own losses. On the other hand, while they lured the enemy into the hill-forest battlefields and forced him into accepting battles of their choice so as to annihilate him, they also resolutely harassed and attacked him in the plains and urban centers. By striking accurately at his principal bases in towns and cities we not only wiped out part of his forces and advanced our armed and political struggles but we also stabbed him in his very heart.

6—Our armed forces and people were capable of independent action, sustained action for a definite period, and operational action. Our combat methods derived their superiority from the fact that they made it possible for every fighter and every unit to search out the enemy independently, to eliminate him or to cooperate closely with other fighters and units, according to a common plan in each operation and series of operations.

7—We combined activities of various types to attack the enemy in the military, political and economic fields. Ours are combat methods in a people's war directed against the adversary in all respects. This spirit permeated every one of our combat guidelines, every form of fighting, every tactic. In practice, certain engagements had no great military value but assumed a far-reaching political and economic importance. Our attacks on Saigon and the provincial capital of Quang Tri (April 6, 1967) for instance, are significant not only on account of the annihilation of a number of enemy officers and men and the destruction of a quantity of war materials, but especially on account of their great political impact on the U S puppet command and the Saigon administration. Apart from their military effect, our operations to destroy communications again and again sealed off the land connection between Ca Mau and Saigon, which forced the puppet authorities to import nearly one

million tons of rice, thereby causing them many difficulties. Herein lies the strong overall effect of our attacks on the military, political and economic fronts.

Reality on the battlefield has given the South Viet-Nam armed forces and people good reason to claim and take pride in the superiority and strength of their original combat methods. These reflect a 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, who possess a very high revolutionary consciousness and are tempered in the crucible of war. They have powerfully improved the creative and 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 strategic conduct and execution is to have creatively developed and gradually per-

fectured the above-mentioned methods so that these constantly boost our effectiveness in combat and our operational and strategic impact on the battlefield.

V — TO ATTACH IMPORTANCE TO THE GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF OUR TWO FORCES, AND OF 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 speaks eloquently of our great success in the growth and development of our forces. This is a result of the correct interpretation of both the combat and strategic guiding principles which we have observed and implemented with the utmost care. This was undertaken in accordance with the specific conditions of our country,

our own fighting methods and the trend of development in the South Viet-Nam theater and in order to vanquish an adversary who possesses a great troop-strength and overwhelming superiority in war matériel. The following are examples of these achievements during the winter of 1966 and the spring of 1967.

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

In the face of the U S intensification of the war, which was fraught with very serious consequences, we never wavered during the process of building up and developing our forces. We firmly adhered to our strategic guiding principles and others ruling the combination of military and political struggles. We were always able to define the strategic position of our armed and political forces in the South Viet-Nam revolution. We satisfactorily meshed the inter-relations of these two forces as we developed them and thus made possible their powerful

and well-balanced growth and effective exploitation.

Parallel with the growth of our political forces, we strove our utmost to increase our armed forces. The three categories of our troops had matured evenly in a planned and well-balanced manner in keeping with the realities of each operational front and the combat tasks of each category.

Born of the political movement and the political forces of the people, the militia and guerrilla forces had undergone extensive development, taking on multifarious and appropriate forms of organizations and bringing the strength of the whole people into action against the enemy.

Our regional troops have been augmented and strengthened on every front into strong, mobile units capable of independent action, of cooperating with and fighting alongside our regular forces and of coordinating their activities with militiamen and guerrillas to wipe out enemy troops, defend the population, expand guerrilla warfare and

support political struggle.

Our regular forces have also matured and acquired great fighting capacity and good mobility. They are expert in confronting their opponent in every form of tactics, with every combat method, in any strength or terrain. They can now quickly destroy complete units of American, puppet or satellite forces including infantry, tank and armoured car units.

Thus, each category of our armed forces has a high fighting spirit enabling it to accomplish its tasks. Each of them have been rationally deployed on all operational fronts and can to the best of their abilities play the role and bring about the strategic effect expected of them. They achieved close coordination in every front, in every major action, every operation and every engagement, thus establishing the pattern of unremitting offensives against the enemy. At any time, a unit of one category could replace one of another category in order to harass the enemy, while men of the other unit attend a

refresher course or take a rest.

Second, in the process of building up our armed forces, we correctly settled the relationship between quantity and quality. In order to prepare ourselves to defeat one million enemy troops, and basing our preparations on the guiding principles of our strategy, we advocated the establishment of revolutionary armed forces to include a widespread and powerful militia and guerrilla force, and crack regional and regular troops in appropriate number.

One of the key methods to bring into play such refinement of organization is the improvement of the quality of the armed forces. This quality involves high combativeness, determination to remain on the offensive, light numerical strength, strong and well equipped troops, good technical and tactical capabilities, good organizational ability of cadres and a qualified command, a high sense of discipline, creative combat methods suitable for the technical and other material means available and their wise applica-

tion.

The great successes of our armed forces and people throw a strong light on the principle governing the build-up of forces in revolutionary wars, that is, 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, for the longer one fights on this basis the more successes one scores, and the stronger one becomes.

So, with an appropriate number of top quality troops, with our armed forces properly arrayed on the operational fronts, with the coordination of their activities and those of the political forces, with the favourable general position of our people's war, and with particular emphasis on combat methods, the liberation forces and people of South Viet-Nam are in a position to defeat their opponent, even though he is superior in numbers.

The above comments are related to the five lessons learned from our successful implementation of military strategy. They are the

result of creative actions by the fourteen million people and Liberation Armed Forces of South Viet-Nam, actions reviewed time and again by the N.F.L. Central Committee over more than ten years. We have, by and large, made a good application of these lessons, but in certain places, and at certain moments, there are still shortcomings which we should strive to correct so as to assure a steady advance.

We have been fighting against one million American and puppet troops. We shall fight two million if necessary. And if necessary we shall fight five, ten, twenty or more years.

Having tasted the bitterness of living as slaves for generations and having enjoyed the sweetness of life, our people are aware that nothing is more precious than independence and freedom.

For independence and freedom, let us march on and fight the U.S. aggressors!

For independence and freedom, let us march forward resolutely and defeat the U.S. aggressors!

We are sure to win!