Conclusion

With the victory of the 1953–1954 winter-spring strategic offensive, the high point of which was the Dien Bien Phu campaign, our soldiers and civilians brought to an end the resistance war against the French colonialist aggressors and liberated North Vietnam. The struggle to liberate South Vietnam and unify the nation, however, still continued.

As we began this struggle, in half of the nation our people lived under a people’s government led by the vanguard Party of the laboring class. Our army was no longer the tiny armed force it had been just after its birth (1944–1945) or when the resistance war was just beginning (1945–1946). It had grown mature and powerful. Our army was the backbone of the war waged by our entire population on all battlefields from the North down to the South and had fought arm in arm with the revolutionary armed forces and the patriotic civilian populations of Laos and Cambodia. By the spring of 1954, with a number of division-sized units that had grown famous for their feats of arms, the People’s Army of Vietnam had eminently fulfilled its role as a powerful fist that struck “like a ton of bricks,” crushing the enemy’s strongest defensive fortified complex at Dien Bien Phu. The Vietnamese people’s armed forces had won a glorious victory over the professional soldiers of a large nation.

In spite of this, however, when measured against its new responsibilities and in comparison with the American expeditionary army, at that time our army was still very weak in its strength, weapons and technical equipment, and experience in modern warfare. Our army was still an infantry force only and did not possess the full mix of services and specialty branches. For this reason, although it had matured a great deal, in the face of its new responsibilities and its new opponent in battle, our army still would be forced to use small forces to fight big battles and use small numbers of soldiers to fight large enemy forces. Our army had to expand in response to the requirements of combat and force building, getting stronger and stronger the more it fought. This is what we learned from the experiences of our army in fighting and force building. Knowing how to apply this lesson played a critical role in helping our army successfully carry out its duties in the resistance war against the Americans.

The resistance war against the Americans was fought at a different stage in history from the period of the resistance war against the French.

This time our combat opponents were American troops, puppet troops, and satellite troops whose equipment was more modern than ours and who had been carefully trained to meet the requirements of modern warfare. These armies fought to carry out the extremely reactionary political policies of the American imperialists, the leader of world imperialism, a nation that had tremendous economic and military power, advanced science and technology, and that wielded great influence throughout the world.

Our army, on the other hand, had only just begun to plan to develop the service branches and specialty branches necessary for a regular, modern force. These developmental demands presented innumerable problems that we had to solve. Our greatest problem was to develop command and technical specialist cadre. Our situation was critical. Many brand-new tasks had to be carried out simultaneously to rapidly expand our forces and prepare for combat. Cadre and soldiers, high-ranking and low-ranking personnel, all had to study and train in order to carry out their responsibilities.

The work of preparing our army for a new resistance war was being carried out within a new context. The liberation of North Vietnam provided many basic advantages that would help our armed forces develop their organizational structure and their battle strength. The concentration of our nation’s labor force on construction in peacetime conditions provided many advantages that enabled the army to carry out the duties entrusted to it. Within itself the army also possessed many advantages it had not held during the resistance war against the French. Tens of thousands of cadre of all ranks had grown to maturity through the challenges of nine years of war. Large numbers of soldiers who had been hardened in combat were a significant resource for the future expansion of our cadre ranks. Strategic agencies such as the General Staff, the General Political Department, and the General Department of Rear Services, large main force units such as the infantry and specialty branch division-sized units, and local military leadership organizations such as the military regions, provincial units, and district units had all grown and matured. The entire army and the entire population had experience in fighting an all-out people’s war involving the entire population to combat an imperialist aggressor. Our will to fight for the independence and freedom of the nation, for the unification of the Fatherland, and for socialism had been strengthened and solidified. These factors provided a solid foundation for the creation of an invincible force that could defeat any opponent, even the American imperialist aggressors.

Through nine years of resistance warfare against the French colonialists, our Party, the leader of the people’s war in general, and the leader of every aspect of
of each nation. Understanding of this formula had grown stronger during the years of sacrifice and adversity of the resistance war against the French and now had become a special tradition and a matchless source of strength for the revolutions of the three Indochina nations.

The resistance war against the French colonialists lasted nine years, but the struggle by our soldiers and civilians against the American imperialist aggressors was even longer and more vicious. This time the combat opponents of our army were large, modern, well-trained, and rather well-supplied armies. Relying on their power, their modern weapons, their wealth, and their international position, the American imperialists deviously sought every possible method to force our soldiers and civilians to surrender. Five different Presidents of the United States mobilized over half a million American expeditionary soldiers and over half a million puppet and satellite soldiers, used almost every type of modern weapon and technology they possessed (except for nuclear weapons) and tens of millions of tons of bombs and shells, and expanded the war throughout the entire Indochinese Peninsula in an effort to carry out their aggressive intentions. So many hardships and shortages that our armed forces had to overcome! So many adversities, so much violence that our cadre and combatants had to endure, that they had to give their own lives to overcome.

Our armed forces entered this new battle as the victors at Dien Bien Phu. Under the enlightened leadership of the Party and of Chairman Ho Chi Minh, with the wholehearted support of our people, our army overcame great challenges in many different areas, demonstrating its outstanding revolutionary character and its solid fighting capabilities. The “soldiers of Uncle Ho” always stood on a higher plane than their opponents and always found a way to carry out the policies of the Party and the orders and instructions given them by higher authorities to secure victory. Our army’s need to expand rapidly into an army made up of many specialty and service branches presented many difficult and complex problems, which we solved in a correct, timely manner. The three massive expansions of our forces also were three occasions when the strength of our armed forces grew explosively, expanding from 170,000 troops (in 1958) to 300,000 (in 1963) then to 700,000 (in 1966) and up to one million (in 1973). Our three major developmental phases were also three phases marking the tremendous maturation of our combat power: the building of a regular army with upgraded equipment (1954–1964), the rapid development of our service and specialty branches, including air force, anti-aircraft artillery, missiles, radar, armor, sappers, artillery, engineers, signal, etc. (1964–1967), and the creation of large strategic units, 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th Corps (1973–1975). With our nation temporarily divided and a fierce war raging, many questions related to the leadership and command of the entire armed forces as well as the leadership and command of the different battlefields and fronts arose, demanding that we make appropriate changes. One of the most representative of these problems was the creation and increasing perfection of the command and leadership organization of the bat-
As well as the command and leadership organization of the important strategic campaigns. Many problems encountered during the resistance war against the Americans mirrored and built upon the valuable lessons we had learned from the resistance war against the French. There were also problems in many different areas that went beyond any of our experiences during the resistance war against the French but that we were ultimately able to successfully resolve. These included issues involving the military arts, the scale of combat, the relationship between the great rear area and the great front lines, and the combat alliance of the three Indochinese nations.

With a steadfast resolve to fight and to win and with remarkable revolutionary fortitude, our cadre and soldiers responded promptly to the Party’s and Chairman Ho Chi Minh’s appeal to conduct a resistance war against the Americans to save the nation with an all-out effort to hone their skills; to master military science, the military arts, and military scientific technology; to constantly increase their capabilities; and to victoriously complete the great, glorious mission entrusted to them by the Party and the people.

Arm in arm with the entire population, our army defeated “special warfare,” “limited war,” and “Vietnamization” strategies that the American imperialists formulated and implemented in the southern half of our nation. We brought American firepower to its knees during our people’s war against the war of destruction conducted by American imperialist air and naval forces in North Vietnam. We crushed the American plots and actions designed to cripple our main force units in the South and to blockade our sea lanes and destroy our land routes to cut off the flow of international aid to Vietnam and to cut our strategic transportation route from North Vietnam to the South.

Fighting alongside the revolutionary armies and patriotic citizens of Laos and Cambodia, our army contributed to the development of the revolutionary organizations and the people’s armed forces of our allies, and our army, together with our allies, systematically escalated the scale of revolutionary warfare. Our army also received tremendous assistance from the peoples of these two friendly countries. Through this mutual assistance and learning from one another, conducted in the pure spirit of international proletarianism, our army was able to develop its own capabilities and gloriously fulfill the international duties that the Party and the people had entrusted to it.

Besides carrying out its combat role, our army devoted time and personnel to participate in the mobilization of the masses to perform basic construction tasks on the borders, the offshore islands, and in strategic areas. The army participated in the restoration and development of our economy and culture and contributed to the construction and consolidation of North Vietnam. Side by side with our guerilla militia and our civilian population, it built and defended base areas, took over administration of newly liberated areas, contributed to the maintenance of law and order, and built up revolutionary armed forces and governmental structures.

After more than 20 years of simultaneously fighting and building during the resistance war against the Americans to save the nation, our army inscribed another glorious feat of arms into the pages of its history. Working with the entire population, the army defeated the large army of the rash and powerful leader of the imperialist clique, liberated South Vietnam, defended North Vietnam, unified the nation, and completely fulfilled its international duties in the fraternal nations of Laos and Cambodia.

Like jade, which shines more brightly the more you polish it, the revolutionary character of our armed forces and the high moral qualities of the “soldiers of Uncle Ho,” which began their development at the time of the birth of the Vietnam Propaganda and Liberation Unit and grew during the time of the August Revolution and the resistance war against the French, shone even more brightly during the resistance war against the Americans to save the nation. This revolutionary character was reflected and disseminated through the thoughts and actions of great masses of cadre and soldiers, eventually becoming the noble traditions of the heroic People’s Army of Vietnam.

The loyalty of our army to the revolutionary cause of our Party and to our people is boundless, because it has brought independence and sovereignty to our nation and freedom and happiness to our people. That cause is the goal of the entire nation and the just aspiration of every citizen of Vietnam. The cadre and soldiers of our armed forces have an ever-deepening understanding that loyalty to this revolutionary cause will also satisfy their own personal aspirations. For this reason, even if they must give their lives in combat, our soldiers and cadre are not afraid if their sacrifice brings independence and freedom for the nation and happiness and prosperity for the people.

With faith in their just cause and in the victory of the revolution, our army strictly followed the lines and policies of the Party, resolutely fighting to defend the Party and the socialist State. This loyalty to the revolutionary cause and this faith in final victory gave great strength to each of our cadre and soldiers, enabling them to overcome every obstacle and adversity and complete every task assigned to them by the Party and the State.

Because of its devotion to the cause of winning the independence and freedom of our nation, our army, fearing neither hardship nor difficulty, not retreating from danger and violence, built the glorious tradition of determined to fight, determined to win. During the resistance struggle against the Americans, overcoming every challenge, our cadre and soldiers steadfastly studied and trained, mastering the intricacies of modern weapons and equipment and constantly improving their fighting strength. With a firm understanding of the people’s war policy of the Party, our armed forces constantly developed effective combat methods and tactics. The enemy tried a hundred schemes, a thousand plots to increase his own strength and suppress our forces, but he failed. Our cadre and soldiers resolutely found ways to defeat him. They sought excellent strategies and tactics, they overcame difficulties and endured hardships to develop ways to
defeat the enemy and implement our offensive concepts. Because they could not endure the continued division of our nation, because they could not stand to see half of our country languishing under the neocolonialist yoke of the American imperialists, no one was able to sit idly by to allow the enemy to run rampant over us. As our people working the land "squeezed water from the soil, making rain in the place of the gods," our army in combat also knew how to "search out the Americans to fight them, search out the puppets to kill them." No matter how bad the situation, in these new conditions our soldiers fought with the courage, intelligence, innovation, and unique tactical skills of the Vietnamese race.

The power of the people's army during both combat and force building operations was magnified many times by its tradition of solidarity, democracy, and discipline, which it constantly displayed. During times of peace and times of war, our cadre and soldiers loved each other like brothers, sharing, from top to bottom, a sincere desire to help one another, to share with each other the best of everything. In every task the army performed, its sense of service to the organization and its strict adherence to every order and directive issued by higher authorities were transformed into the daily actions of every member of the armed forces. Because all were fighting together for one high cause, every person was equal from the political standpoint. Criticism and self-criticism in accordance with the instructions of Uncle Ho were voluntarily carried out by the entire army. Life in the great family of the armed forces, whether on the front lines or in the rear area, was filled with a spirit of comradeship and brotherhood; soldiers but their efforts were in vain. On countless occasions they caused difficulties to maintain close ties to the people. This tradition became an immeasurable source of strength for the army. During the resistance war against the Americans this pernicious enemy devoted tremendous efforts to divide our soldiers from the people but their efforts were in vain. On countless occasions they caused difficulties for many units of our armed forces that no one thought we could overcome. With the support and protection of the people these units defeated the enemy's schemes and completed their assigned tasks. Responding to the people's love of country as expressed by their disregard of sacrifice and adversity to feed, shelter, and shield our soldiers in times of danger, our army fought selflessly, enduring every adversity and sacrifice for the sake of the people.

Our devious enemy wanted to isolate the sacred resistance war of the people of Vietnam and divide the peoples of the three Indochinese nations. Our army, on the other hand, always understood, strengthened, and displayed our Party's and our people's tradition of pure international solidarity. Viewing the revolutionary cause of the people of fraternal nations as being the same as the cause of our own people, our armed forces always supported the national liberation movement and struggles for peace, democracy, and social progress throughout the world. Our cadre and soldiers noted and studied the valuable experiences of the armies of fraternal socialist nations in order to increase our own capabilities. The People's Army of Vietnam maintained close ties to the revolutionary causes of our allies and fought shoulder to shoulder with the revolutionary armed forces and peoples of our two neighboring nations to secure our common victory.

Chairman Ho Chi Minh summarized the traditions of our armed forces in the following words: "Our armed forces, which are loyal to the Party and true to the people, are prepared to fight and die for the independence and freedom of the Fatherland and for socialism. They will fulfill any duty, overcome any difficulty, and defeat any enemy."

The Party's 4th National Congress "heartily commends the cadre and soldiers of the heroic people's armed forces, who fought with extraordinary heroism for decades, won a string of famous victories from Dien Bien Phu to the Ho Chi Minh Campaign, added to the splendor of the glorious traditions of our army, and, together with the entire population, wrote the miraculous epic hymn of Vietnam's war of revolution."

The People's Army of Vietnam was worthy of the trust of the Party, the love of the people, and the fellowship of our friends and allies.

Our army attained a powerful maturity and victoriously completed its duties in the resistance war against the Americans because, first of all, the Party invested great efforts in building up the army and providing it with good leadership. The Party taught the army patriotism, love of socialism, and how to work toward those beautiful ideals. Following correct policy lines, the Party built the armed forces into three kinds of troops. It built a powerful people's army, developed a main force element with a highly effective combat punch, enabled the armed forces to grow stronger and stronger the more they fought, defeated every strategic, campaign, and tactical scheme devised by the enemy, systematically secured victory, and finally attained our complete victory. Under the leadership of the Party, the People's Army of Vietnam became a sharp, reliable tool, which, side by side with the entire population, put into practice the policy of people's war and defeated the American imperialist war of aggression. The army became a force well versed in the Party's people's warfare strategy and carried out its role in a creative fashion, enabling the people's war to develop flexibly and preventing the enemy from coping with our actions. It can be said that without the Party line there would not be a people's army and, on the other hand, without the people's army, built and led by the Party to serve as the backbone of the battle fought by the entire population, the policy of people's war could not have been brought to fruition and the enemy would not have been defeated.

Our army also attained maturity and gained victory because the people wholeheartedly supported it and continuously contributed to it. Moreover—and this is extremely important—it fought shoulder to shoulder with our compatriots of all ethnic nationalities. Because of this the enemy had to contend with an
entire revolutionary nation that maintained a high level of vigilance and that was armed and trained in an extremely unique manner. The army shared the fires of battle against the aggressors everywhere it fought, whether it was on land, at sea, or in the air. The people took onto their own shoulders some of the heavy responsibilities borne by the army, so that, no matter how heavy the responsibility, with the help of the people it could still be successfully completed. Wherever our people lived was a battlefront in the fight against the enemy. Sometimes by political struggle in different forms, sometimes overt and sometimes covert, sometimes by military struggle conducted on an appropriate scale and with appropriate measures, no matter what the form, our compatriots in South Vietnam worked closely with our army to attack the enemy according to the formula, “two legs, three spearheads, three zones.” In the great rear area of North Vietnam, “with one hand on the plow and the other on the rifle,” “with a hammer in one hand and a gun in the other,” our people enthusiastically engaged in economic production and actively fought beside our soldiers, firing at enemy aircraft and enemy warships, capturing air pirates, ensuring the flow of traffic along our transportation networks, etc. With firm reliance on the people and with the help of the people, our army had unrivaled strength and overcame every challenge to fulfill its enormous responsibilities in the resistance war against the United States.

In our just fight for national liberation and to fulfill our international obligations, our army had enormous international support and assistance. The people and the armed forces of the Soviet Union, China, and other fraternal socialist countries helped our army progress rapidly on the road to modernization and made important contributions in logistics and technology to the force building and combat operations of our army. Our brothers and sisters and our friends throughout the world strongly encouraged the struggle of our army and our people to achieve independence and national unification. This sympathy and support provided additional strength to our army and our people, helping us endure our long resistance struggle until final victory. Of special importance, in Laos and Cambodia the people of these two neighboring nations viewed our soldiers as their own flesh and blood—these two peoples shared what they had with our soldiers and gave our men their wholehearted support.

The love and the attention to education, training, and mobilization provided by Chairman Ho Chi Minh had an enormous effect on the maturation and growth of our army, both in the past and during the resistance war against the Americans to save the nation. Chairman Ho Chi Minh affirmed that “our army is a people’s army. It was born from the people and it fights for the people!” Uncle Ho taught our armed forces that “loyalty to the nation and to the people is a sacred duty, a heavy responsibility, but it is also the pride of our warriors.” He taught, “Our army is loyal to the Party and true to the people, it is ready to fight and die for the independence and freedom of the Fatherland and for the cause of socialism.” He proclaimed the truth that “there is nothing so precious as independence and freedom,” teaching our soldiers to be steadfast in the fight for our goals and to maintain the revolutionary character of the working class. When our entire nation rose up to resist the French, Uncle Ho said, “As long as one colonialist soldier remains on Vietnamese soil we must fight, fight on until we achieve total victory.” During the resistance war against the Americans he taught us to be even more resolute. “As long as there is still one aggressor left on the soil of our nation we must continue to fight, we must sweep them all away.” He encouraged our cadre and soldiers to hone themselves in every possible way and especially to carry out training to regularize and modernize our army. He said, “Naturally, political awareness is necessary, but we also must have education and technical skills in order to use machinery in ever more sophisticated ways.” Chairman Ho always reminded us of the need for quality in the army. He said, “We must build a truly excellent force with truly high quality.” He regularly monitored the activities of our units on the battlefields, encouraging cadre and soldiers to study and follow the examples of “good people, good works.” The contribution Uncle Ho made to the army was truly enormous. His love for the army was both boundless and intimate. Uncle Ho always reserved a “boundless affection” for the armed forces, for sick and wounded soldiers, and for the families of our martyred comrades. He set aside time to regularly visit our troops, instruct our cadre, check on the care and feeding of our fighters, and reminded all units to be vigilant and ready for battle. As the head of the Party and the State, as the leader of the revolution and the nation, as the Supreme Commander of the people’s armed forces, Chairman Ho Chi Minh received the highest respect and the absolute trust of the entire Party, the entire population, and the entire armed forces. It is rare to have any Supreme Commander who was as close to his soldiers as Uncle Ho was to the fighters of the People’s Army of Vietnam. It is also rare to have any army that loves its Supreme Commander as much as the People’s Army of Vietnam loved Uncle Ho. This sacred sentiment grew out of Uncle Ho’s life work and the exemplary life he led, by His very revolutionary and affectionate concern for and actions toward the army. This sacred sentiment was a powerful motivating factor that caused our cadre and combatants to carry out the policies of the Party and follow the teachings of Uncle Ho. It was because of this that our people gave our army the affectionate title of “the soldiers of Uncle Ho” to affirm the army’s noble revolutionary character and to praise Uncle Ho for his teachings, which had turned it into an army that truly belonged to the people.

There was another very important factor that brought about the solid maturation of our army and enabled it to fulfill its role in the resistance struggle against the Americans. That was the fact that our cadre and soldiers—the children and grandchildren of a heroic race—had inherited the steadfast and indomitable traditions of our ancestors and were able to develop these traditions into revolutionary heroism during a new era. This legacy was displayed in the daily actions of our cadre and soldiers as they fought, trained, and labored. Resolved to defeat the American aggressors, our army took advantage of every hour, every minute, to increase its capabilities, racing against time, wrestling with adversity, com-
The process of training and honing our skills was just as tiring and as difficult as combat. Finding ways to defeat the enemy through the use of the Party’s policy of people’s war demanded an exceptionally courageous spirit, steadfast revolutionary energy, truly intelligent minds, and great creative talent. Our army was able to fulfill these requirements and for that reason progressed by leaps and bounds, overcoming many difficulties and obstacles to defeat the American aggressors.

The maturation of our army during the resistance war against the Americans came about under very critical circumstances. We had to conduct force building and at the same time stand ready for combat. While we fought, we had to also work ceaselessly to increase our capabilities. The entire Party, the entire population showed great care and concern for the work of building up the army to provide sufficient strength to carry out our primary mission—fighting the aggressors and saving the nation. The entire armed forces made great efforts to be worthy of that care and concern and to successfully carry out every duty assigned to us.

With the lessons we had learned in building our army during the resistance war against the French, our Party placed great emphasis on continuing to build the army politically. Because we were fighting for a just cause, our army enjoyed absolute superiority over the enemy in political and spiritual matters. At the same time, our just cause alone would not provide the strength required for victory. The American imperialists tried to use their material advantages over us to steal from us our moral superiority. For this reason, building the army politically was a matter of extraordinary importance. It was the basic principle in building up our army and was a basic method for turning our moral strength into material strength and helped increase the combat power of the people’s armed forces.

We began our resistance war against the Americans with the experience we had gained during the resistance war against the French. During the course of this new fight the work of building our army politically was carried out in a more orderly and systematic fashion. We taught our cadre and soldiers to clearly understand the situation and the revolutionary responsibilities of both the northern and southern halves of the nation; we taught them the combat goals of the army in the face of the aggressive schemes of the American imperialists and instructed them in the political duties of each individual. These actions built an important foundation, which enabled the entire armed forces to affirm their determination to resist and their resolve to defeat the American aggressors. Our soldiers studied to gain a firm understanding of the political and military policies of the Party regarding the resistance war against the Americans to save the nation and to eliminate incorrect ideas about the situation and inaccurate assessments of the enemy’s and our own forces, and especially incorrect assessments of U.S. strengths. These were the most prominent, important themes in our effort to build the army politically. The army’s strength was also built by the willingness of our cadre and soldiers to strive to hone their skills, by a spirit of solidarity and discipline, and by the close relationship between the army and the population. When building the army politically we did not underestimate the importance of nourishing these sources of strength. This was an outstanding achievement by our Party in our force building effort during the resistance war against the Americans and was the source of an extremely enthusiastic revolutionary movement throughout the armed forces and the entire population, which resolved to “cross the Annamite Mountains to save the nation,” “aim directly at the enemy and fire,” “cling to the Americans’ belts so we can kill them,” etc.

Our apparatus directly involved in building the army politically was constantly strengthened. This apparatus was the Party organization within the army, the system of political cadre and political staff agencies at all levels, all coordinating their activities under the leadership of the Central Military Party Committee and under the guidance of the General Political Department. If that apparatus had not existed, the work of building the army politically would have encountered many difficulties and would not have yielded the desired results. This apparatus was responsible for providing effective guidance over the content and methods used in Party and political activities throughout the armed forces. This guidance was very important; it did not end simply with the dissemination of Party resolutions and it was not limited to activities conducted during conferences and conventions. It demanded that we become deeply involved in providing guidance to cadre and soldiers in correct thinking and in taking vigorous action based on those correct thoughts, which meant correctly following the Party line and Party opinions, strategies, and tactics.

To accomplish this mission, political cadre and staff organizations at all levels needed a deep understanding of their own individual duties. They had to correctly anticipate both positive and negative issues that might arise during the conduct of these duties in order to be proactive in setting forth positive, correct directions and operational methods for the soldiers. In practical terms, since they fought and trained with the unit, political cadre and agencies had more opportunities to improve their ability to perform their duties. They were able to avoid such shortcomings as issuing general, meaningless appeals, making empty statements, or crudely interfering with the work of the other specialized branches. They were able instead to delve deeper into military affairs, including military science, the military arts, and modern military science and technology.

The work of building the army politically was carried out continuously and could not be neglected, no matter what the situation. When the Southern revolution encountered difficulties and when it had great successes, when we were defeated and when we gained great victories, when the enemy carried out new schemes against us and when problems developed in the international situation, all these were times when we had to strengthen our Party and political activities in order to quickly agree on correct thoughts and opinions, determine precise operational directions, and fight on resolutely to secure new victories.

While emphasizing the work of building the army politically, our Party also devoted a great deal of attention to leading our armed forces in developing and perfecting the military art of people’s war in a manner suited to the actual con-
ditions of our country during the historic struggle between the Vietnamese nation and the American imperialists.

Teaching our cadre and soldiers to fully comprehend the revolutionary and military lines and policies of the Party during the resistance war against the Americans was an issue of decisive importance. Only if they were deeply steeped in the military line of the Party and were closely guided by our ideological line would our army have the proper direction and be able to correctly resolve the relationships between men and weapons; between fighting and force building; between strategy, campaign arts, and tactics; between forces, battle posture, and opportunity; between the great front lines and the great rear area; between national factors and epochal factors, etc., in order to create a combined strength able to bring the war to a victorious conclusion.

With a firm grasp of the military policies and thoughts of the Party, our armed forces patiently studied and honed their skills, learning to correctly evaluate both the enemy's and our own positions from the strategic, tactical, campaign, and individual battle standpoint and to draw correct conclusions from a comparison of the positions and strengths of the two sides. Then, through these evaluations, comparisons, and conclusions, they were able to find ways to resolve problems, expand on our strengths, exploit the enemy's weaknesses, and paralyze the enemy's strengths to defeat him. This was the goal of the work of studying the enemy. Constant education to strengthen our resolve to defeat the American aggressors was a very basic method used to raise the fighting spirit, the "determined to fight, determined to win" spirit of our army in the face of any difficulty, adversity, or challenge. This resolve was a powerful factor that motivated our troops to resolutely continue to fight and develop creative ways to defeat the enemy's new plots and schemes. For this reason our military art, above all else, used the spirit of patriotism, the love of socialism, and the resolve to fight and to win of our armed forces and our population to develop a "determined to win" strength that could defeat the modern army of the American imperialist aggressors.

A firm understanding of and a skillful use of the weapons and technical equipment we possessed and the exploitation of the power of these implements of war to the maximum extent possible were practical requirements that enabled us to fight effective battles and further enrich our military arts. The development of this power was very much dependent on the results of our military training and education, on the honing of our self-discipline, and on a spirit of solidarity and close cooperation between comrades in arms who shared a common ideal and a noble political objective: the liberation of South Vietnam, the defense of North Vietnam, and the unification of the Fatherland. Military training activities were usually tied in closely with Party and political activities in order to constantly increase our army's skills in the military arts. These arts closely combined human power with organizational power, the actions of commanders with the actions of staff, political, and rear services agencies, of cadre with soldiers, etc., working together to carry out their responsibilities in accordance with one unified plan aimed at skillfully developing the combined power of each individual person, of each unit, and of the entire armed forces. During the resistance war against the Americans to save the nation, each individual soldier, each individual unit, each individual specialty branch, each individual service branch, and the entire armed forces simultaneously carried out both combat operations and force building activities during combat in accordance with the military policies of the Party and the military art of people's warfare, constantly using whatever time was available to conduct military training. Command cadre and staff agencies at all levels, and especially at the strategic and campaign levels, worked to study and hone their skills, with special emphasis on reviewing and summarizing operations (including strategic, campaign, and individual battles), to constantly improve their abilities to make plans, devise tactics, organize the battlefield, create opportunities for exploitation, and direct our forces in order to use our offensive blows to force the enemy onto the defensive. In this way our military arts were able to skillfully and effectively resolve many complicated contradictions, such as using a small force to attack a large enemy force, using a little force to win a big victory, destroying the enemy while preserving our own forces, conducting combat and force building operations at the same time, growing stronger as we fought, winning more and more victories the more we fought, defeating the enemy on the front lines and at the same time building a strong rear base area, etc.

Our military arts, already steeped deeply in the masses as a result of our armed struggle during the revolution and during our nation's revolutionary war from the time of the August Revolution and the resistance war against the French, developed to a new, higher level during the resistance war against the Americans. Our people's war was fought not only by the army but also by guerrilla militia and self-defense forces; both the armed forces and our entire population fought this war. This war of necessity used guerrilla warfare methods, conventional warfare methods, and a close combination of both those methods. The war against the Americans in South Vietnam developed onto an even higher plane, as it was conducted both through military attacks and mass uprisings, using both armed forces and political forces, a three-pronged military, political, and troop proselytizing attack, mounted in three strategic areas: the mountain jungles, the rural lowlands, and the cities. We taught and trained our army to rely on the people, to have a firm grasp of the roles, responsibilities, and operational methods of the three types of troops and of the two types of forces. Knowing how to skillfully combine all the diverse, rich fighting methods of each individual force was a very important method that helped our army find and implement daring and effective fighting methods that contributed to the growth of the Vietnamese military arts.

After our victory in the resistance war against the French, building a regular, modern force was the correct direction for the development of our army. Our equipment was constantly upgraded, our forces constantly grew, and the scale of our combat operations constantly expanded, so the capabilities of our cadre and
soldiers and of staff agencies and units in all facets of operations also had to be increased to enable us to defeat an enemy who possessed the largest, most modern army in the imperialist camp.

As soon as North Vietnam was liberated, Chairman Ho Chi Minh directed that “we must work to build our army into a powerful people’s army, a revolutionary army progressing toward regularization and modernization so we can preserve the peace and defend the Fatherland.” This was a new mission for our armed forces. Carrying out this mission was a protracted, difficult, and complex struggle from the standpoint of understanding and thought, organization and attitude, between the old and the new, between the positive and the negative.

This was an issue that closely and skillfully combined two factors, revolution and science, to provide high quality and concrete results in our work to increase the power of the army during this new revolutionary period and during combat against a new combat enemy. A correct understanding of the tremendous significance and effect of the implementation of measures to regularize and modernize the army was our first requirement. During the August Revolution and the resistance war against the French our army had matured, growing from a small force to a large one, progressing from a few scattered guerrilla teams. Although the war against the French involved both guerrilla war and conventional war methods, in fact conventional warfare only developed during the final years of the conflict, and then essentially only on the primary battlefield. When our soldiers began force building activities to become a regular, modern force, the habits of dispersion and of acting as one saw fit and a hesitant attitude toward conducting training according to regulations and to a uniform system became major obstacles, slowing and limiting our ability to successfully complete our force building program. To many people at that time, difficulties encountered in educational and technical studies were harder to overcome than the problems they had previously encountered in combat. With patience we gradually overcame these obstacles during our peacetime force building and training and continued to overcome them during our new combat struggle. Only through these efforts was the level of combat skills of our army able to keep pace with the requirements of our duties during the resistance war against the Americans to save the nation.

The regularization and the modernization of the army were aimed at ensuring that our army would always be combat-ready, at concentrating our political, spiritual, material, and technical power, and at making maximum use of our power (the power of our personnel and of our weapons and equipment) in order to properly carry out our duties. The equipment of the armed forces was systematically upgraded based on our own production capabilities and on the assistance provided by fraternal nations. When the war started we were also able to rely on captured enemy equipment. The upgrading of our equipment raised issues of properly organizing our forces, of providing appropriate training to develop a corps of cadre and technical personnel, of building warehouses and roads, and of training soldiers in the maintenance and use of the new weapons and equipment. All types of problems involving technical matters, tactics, and campaign arts, involving coordination arrangements, involving unity and discipline, and involving training, especially training of command and staff cadre, surfaced and had to be resolved. The activities of those branches involved in Party and political activities and in providing rear services and technical support were organized and carried out in ways suited to the changes in the organization of the armed forces.

In view of the great expansion of our forces during the course of the resistance war against the Americans, from 170,000 up to more than one million, it was necessary for the quality of these troops to keep pace with the expansion in numbers and with the growth of the newly established specialty branches and service branches. Training was carried out in a uniform fashion and was aimed at a number of uniform goals during each phase. During the first phase, when the war had not yet widened and North Vietnam was still at peace, we carried out regular training in all areas: military, political, cultural, and physical fitness. We promulgated military regulations, guard regulations, internal regulations, combat discipline regulations, etc., and instituted standard operating procedures for each individual area (staff, political affairs, road services) and for each individual specialty branch and service branch.

During regular peacetime training we devoted special attention to cadre training, including training of command cadre, leadership cadre, staff cadre, and technical cadre. When the entire nation entered the fight against the Americans, regular training continued, but it shifted immediately to issues and methods suited to wartime operations. During regular training, in addition to technical and tactical matters military training was absolutely essential and was of immense importance to the work of regularizing and modernizing our forces. These were not just formalities; they provided practical content and methods to hone understanding and actions in accordance with uniform standards and developed the habits of living in an organized and disciplined manner and of maintaining a sense of urgency in carrying out orders.

The regularization and modernization of the army demanded that we strengthen our scientific studies. We could not hope to build a high-quality army and yet remain indifferent toward scientific activities. We had to establish an apparatus that met the requirements of modern warfare. We had to develop cadre to perform scientific tasks suited to our requirements and situation. We needed to focus on military science, military technological science, and pure science.

The role of cadre and agencies at all levels as examples in the building of a regular force was of great significance. As Chairman Ho Chi Minh taught us: “Cadre, from command level down, must make greater efforts in their activities, in training, in the way they walk, in their manner of greeting others. In all these things they must be regulars. Cadre must lead the way and serve as examples for their soldiers.”

In order to achieve solid results in building a regular, modern army, the most
important requirement was close and constant leadership by Party committees at all levels. Because this was a new subject for an army that had developed out of guerrilla teams, correct understanding and tenacious revolutionary energy were needed. We had to create a high level of uniformity in both thought and action throughout the entire army.

A solid rear area was a factor of decisive strategic importance to the victory of the resistance and was of decisive importance for our army to mature and win victory. Close relationships between the rear area and the front lines, between the rear area and the army, were also relationships between political and economic affairs and military affairs, between the people and the army. The strength of the rear area is created by political, economic, and military factors. All these factors are important, but the most important is the political factor, the sympathy of the people. It is the unanimity of the entire population in political and spiritual matters, united under the leadership of the Party. When the people do not have a profound awareness of the struggle for national independence and socialism and do not have a complete determination to fight and to win against a more numerous and powerful enemy, then it is not possible to launch an all-out resistance war involving the entire population. In that case the work of building a people’s army will encounter endless difficulties, the combat operations of the army will lack a source of support, and it will be difficult to defeat an opponent who has more troops and more modern equipment than we do.

During the resistance war against the French, the rear area of the people’s war, which was established, organized, and led by our Party, consisted of large liberated areas, guerrilla regions, and guerrilla bases behind enemy lines. By the time of the resistance war against the Americans to save the nation, the rear area of the war, the rear area of our army, was totally different and was much more developed. A liberated North Vietnam that was advancing toward socialism became the great rear area of the entire nation in the effort to defeat the American aggressors. Thanks to this tremendously important revolutionary achievement, even though our economic and technological status was still low, the minds of our cadre and soldiers were at ease as they marched off to battle on the front lines. They knew “we will not lack one ounce of rice and our army will not lack one soldier.” The great front lines were supported both materially and spiritually by the great rear area, enabling us to overcome difficulties and to gradually secure victory in South Vietnam and at the same time defend the North.

The role of local rear base areas in South Vietnam was extremely important for the force building and combat operations of our army. The intermingling of our areas within enemy-controlled areas throughout South Vietnam gave our troops solid footholds for their operations. Without operations conducted by local armed forces, without civilians supporting our forces and fighting beside them, there would have been no rear base areas, and without those bases our military units would not have been able to maintain firm footholds, conduct protracted operations, and continually grow in strength. Thanks to those local bases, the vast liberated zones in South Vietnam, and the immediate rear area, our army was able to build and consolidate itself after every battle, after every campaign, and was able to continuously prepare for new battles and new campaigns.

Solidarity between the soldiers and the people was constantly maintained and contributed enormously to mobilization, education, and to combat coordination and mutual assistance between the army and the people. Through our victories the liberated zones and local base areas were expanded and linked together in South Vietnam, and, along with the Annamite Mountain transportation corridor, provided a contiguous position linking North and South and gave our forces an important strategic posture.

The requirements for victory and the practical experiences of combat and of our campaigns (especially the strategic offensives) provided a clearer fight that gave us a more correct and profound understanding of the role of the rear area. The struggle to build and protect the rear area was just as intense and ferocious as the fight to destroy the enemy on the front lines. First of all the American imperialists attached a great deal of importance to the destruction of our rear areas, including North Vietnam and the liberated zones and base areas in South Vietnam and the transportation routes from the great rear area to the great front lines. Second, within our Party, governmental organizations, and armed forces there were also some opinions that were not entirely correct on this subject. Third, the development of the rear area demanded the uniform employment of ideological and organizational activities, military and economic activities, and the proper resolution of contradictions between the demands of the front lines and the capabilities of the rear area, between immediate tasks and long-term tasks.

The rear area of the people’s war and of the army lay primarily in the hearts of the people. That fact expresses the first requirement for the development and consolidation of a rear area: to make the people realize that our regime is a good regime, that our State government belongs to the people, and that our army fights for the people. The more clearly our cadre, Party members, government, and army demonstrate a spirit of service to the people, the more they carry out the teachings of Uncle Ho: “necessity, frugality, integrity, justice,” the closer the people will ally themselves with the regime and the more the people will do everything possible to defend the government, support the army, and be ready to sacrifice for the sake of the victory of our resistance war. During the resistance war against the Americans the soldiers and civilians in North Vietnam vigorously responded to the appeals of the Party and of Chairman Ho Chi Minh with countless sincere, noble acts, such as participating in building Party chapters, governmental agencies, and mass organizations; restoring and developing our economy and culture; strengthening national defense and security; supporting the flow of supplies; and combating the war of destruction waged by the air and naval forces of the American imperialists. Massive numbers of people from all social classes participated in campaigns launched by the Party Central Committee and the Government. These campaigns had a great impact on the consolidation of the great
rear area in support of the great front lines and on the difficult, savage battles waged by our army throughout the Indochinese Peninsula. Law and order were constantly maintained, our determined-to-fight, determined-to-win spirit stayed at a high level, and the rear area emulated the front lines, everyone contributing to advancing the struggle for independence and national unification toward total victory.

On the South Vietnamese battlefield the consolidation and strengthening of the liberated zones and the revolution’s local bases were also constant tasks that we carried out to enable the resistance to conduct a protracted struggle, gaining in strength as we fought and constantly increasing our support to the armed forces fighting on the battlefield. The development and consolidation of Party organizations (Party committees, Party chapters, Party membership), mass organizations (youth, women, farmers associations), etc., were the foundations for building the rear area as well as for the development of the struggle against the enemy and the expansion of guerrilla warfare.

The work of building rear areas and base areas during the resistance war was the duty of the entire Party, the entire population, and the entire armed forces. Wherever the army was stationed or was fighting, in the North and in the South, it always stressed its duty to help carry out this task. This was a question that involved our concept of people’s war, people’s armed forces, and a national defense involving the total population. The rear area devoted its efforts to enabling the front lines to be victorious in battle and at the same time constantly produced new strength. Only by doing this could the rear area completely fulfill its role with respect to the front lines. When the army fighting on the battlefields economized on its expenditure of ammunition, on its consumption of food, medicine, and petroleum products, when it attacked the enemy with the highest possible effectiveness and limited its losses in personnel, material, and technical resources to the maximum extent possible, this too was a practical way of contributing to the building and development of the rear area. While conducting training and force building operations in the great rear area, in the liberated zones, or in local bases, all our troop units helped build the rear areas in many ways, such as building up organizations, training guerrilla militia, maintaining law and order, combating spies, helping the people to protect against natural disasters, participating in production, respecting the law, maintaining mass discipline, maintaining solidarity with the agencies of government and with people’s organizations, etc. In this way they effectively contributed to the building of the matchless source of strength for the people’s army.

During the resistance war against the Americans, which entailed unprecedented difficulties, adversities, hardship, and sacrifice for our army, the issue of whether or not our army’s force building and combat actions were correctly carried out, whether or not the strength of the army was solid, whether or not the army maintained its revolutionary character and completed each of its assigned duties, all these things, from the first to the last, depended primarily on the leadership of the Party. The role and the duties of the army constantly grew, especially in time of war. The enemy, the leader of the imperialist camp, constantly sought every possible method and tested many poisonous schemes in his effort to gain victory. The difficulties and obstacles confronting us grew day by day because the more the enemy suffered defeat, the more he insanely strove to destroy the revolution. However, the capabilities of our cadre and soldiers had also been raised to a high level by their years of trial and challenges in this resistance war. The organization and equipment of the army became ever more powerful. Because of this, leadership and command also grew and became more complex. All these problems were systematically resolved under the leadership of the Central Committee of the Party. These problems also demanded that the Party organizations within the army constantly increase their own leadership qualities. The capabilities of the army’s Party committees at all levels always had to be sufficient to respond to the requirements of providing leadership and guidance during a fierce test of wills, a fierce test of strength against an enemy who was equipped with modern weapons and was stubborn and crafty. During the war’s turning points, and especially as the end of the war neared, the struggle became ever more vicious. This was not the only problem, however. The struggle within our own ranks, against mistaken opinions, negative thinking, actions that violated the traditions of the revolutionary army, also demanded that the Party’s leadership within the army be both firm and sensitive. The Party had to provide the army with precise methods to overcome problems and raise the quality of the armed forces in order to successfully carry out the Party policy of fighting a resistance war against the Americans to save the nation.

To strengthen the Party’s leadership role within the army, both our experience in the two recent resistance wars (especially the resistance war against the Americans) and our ideological theories regarding the creation of a new type of Party that belongs to the working classes demand that we must constantly and correctly carry out the work of building strong, honest Party chapters, and that building Party chapters that function politically, ideologically, and organizationally in accordance with the Party’s regulations, resolutions, and directions is the way we will increase the leadership capabilities of the different levels of Party committees within the armed forces.

Strong, effective leadership is the art of combining the firm maintenance of principles and applying them flexibly, combining ideological activities with organizational and policy activities, developing both spiritual strength and material strength, and combining revolutionary factors with scientific factors. It is also the art of developing the role of collective leadership and individual responsibility apportioned to each person according to his own role and function. The leadership skill of the Party committee is also demonstrated in its ability to unite Party members and the masses, cadre, and soldiers, in carrying out the Party line of resistance war to save the nation and to complete every duty assigned to the
army and to each unit. Solidarity within each Party committee and among command cadre at every level is of decisive importance in achieving the solidarity of the entire Party chapter and the entire unit. To achieve this requirement, which should be considered a matter of principle, it is necessary to properly organize high-quality leadership activities on the part of the Party committee. A basic measure to achieve this level of quality is to properly conduct criticism and self-criticism in a spirit of comradeship in accordance with the teachings of Uncle Ho Chi Minh and with the pure objective of helping each other progress and of completely fulfilling our responsibilities as Party members and as members of the Party committee.

Solidarity within the Party chapter provides the impetus for strengthening wide-ranging solidarity within the unit and for cementing the relationship between the Party and the masses, developing democracy, and honing self-discipline. The Party committee must concentrate its leadership and mobilize the masses to unite around the Party chapter in order to fight, train, work, and correctly organize their lives in strict accordance with the policies and desires of the Party and the laws of the State. The Party committee must focus on building mass organizations within the armed forces, establishing an intimate relationship with local Party organizations, governmental agencies, and the local population, and strengthening the relationship between the soldiers and the people so that they support each other in building up the local area and building up the military unit.

Every Party committee is responsible for developing and nourishing the cadre within the unit for which it is responsible. This task demands an overall leadership capability: understanding people, correctly assessing and utilizing them, and developing the strengths and overcoming the weaknesses of each cadre. All of these tasks demand that the Party committee must discuss and resolve issues according to the principle of collective democracy. During the 21 years of the resistance war against the Americans to save the nation, the Party guided and successfully developed the Party's military cadre ranks; the number of combined-arms branch cadre increased by 500 percent and service branch and technical specialty branch cadre increased by 1000 percent. These cadre became the framework upon which we built a powerful revolutionary army of more than one million soldiers.

The Party's leadership was the decisive factor in every one of the army's victories. Increasing the quality of leadership provided by the Party committees at all levels was a constant requirement for our Party chapters within the armed forces. Members of the Party committees constantly had to hone their skills, increase their own military and political capacities and capabilities, and strictly follow Party principles regarding leadership and action. Solidarity, self-criticism, and criticism to help one another advance were the first responsibilities of every Party committee member. Studying to increase one's capabilities and keep up with the demands of the resistance war against the Americans was a very practical measure that also demonstrated a spirit of responsibility toward the Party and the people in the fight to liberate South Vietnam, defend North Vietnam, and unify the Fatherland.

Looking back over its historic journey from the date of its formation (December 1944) until it brought a victorious end to the resistance war against the Americans to save the nation (April 1975), from the battles of Phai Khat and Na Ngan to the historic Ho Chi Minh Campaign, our army, under the leadership of the Party, fulfilled every one of its duties toward the nation and fully carried out its international duties toward our friends and neighbors. Our cadre and soldiers are profoundly grateful for the leadership of the Party, the work and the teachings of Uncle Ho, the support of our compatriots throughout the nation, and for the assistance of our international brothers and friends.

The revolutionary character and the noble traditions of our army are the result of constant, persistent efforts and training under the Party's guidance and were achieved through the blood, sweat, and tears of many generations of cadre and soldiers. The constant stability and ever-increasing perfection of the leadership and command organization of the army were decisive factors that constantly strengthened the revolutionary character, the noble traditions, and the combat power of our army. Our army was always under the direct, all-encompassing leadership of the Party Central Committee, the Politburo, and the Central Military Party Committee, and was also led by strategic agencies with a wealth of experience, such as the General Staff, the General Political Department, the General Rear Services Department, and the General Technical Department. During the resistance war against the Americans in South Vietnam, the Party committees of the different battlefields (COSVN, the COSVN Military Party Committee, the Regional Party Committees of Regions 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, Saigon, and Tri-Thien, and the provincial Party Committees) all played a major role in leading and guiding the combat and force building operations of our soldiers. The work of building up our army was carried out continuously, each generation continuing the work of its predecessors, from the August Revolution through the resistance war against the French down to the resistance war against the Americans, each further developing the quality and the traditions of the army. The lessons our Party has learned in building a revolutionary army over the past decades are still of enormous practical value. For this reason, no matter where, no matter when, the basic principles for building an army, the requirements for firmly maintaining and developing the revolutionary character and noble traditions of the army, will always be strictly followed and implemented.

Ever since the day our nation was liberated the Fatherland has been united. The entire army, alongside the entire population, has continued down new roads, inscribing new feats of arms into the glorious pages of its history, defeating a war of aggression along the southwestern frontier and the northern border, and once again fulfilling its international duty on the soil of our Cambodian brothers. Many new issues have confronted and continue to confront our entire army, requiring proper study and resolution by Party committees at all levels and by
cadre and soldiers in all areas of operation. The situation develops endlessly, the responsibilities of the army are always heavy, and the enemy is always crafty, seeking ways to sabotage the revolutionary cause of our people. All Party chapters within the armed forces and all the cadre and soldiers of the entire armed forces are united with the entire population in implementing the resolutions of the 6th and 7th National Party Congresses and the resolutions of the Party Central Committee. This is the fundamental requirement needed to overcome every obstacle and challenge in every new situation in order to completely fulfill all our duties in the cause of building and defending our socialist Fatherland of Vietnam.

Notes

CHAPTER I

1. Quotation from the Pentagon Papers on the Vietnam War. From the files of the Military History Institute of Vietnam.

2. Statement by U.S. Secretary of State Dulles. Citation from the Pentagon Papers. Ibid.

3. Ibid.


5. Ibid.


7. Figures cover the period from mid-1954 until August 1959.

8. A project providing irrigation water to the provinces of Bac Ninh, Hung Yen, and Hai Duong.

9. According to the figures for 1959 of the Central Department of Statistics, total production of paddy in 1939 was 2,407,000 tons; in 1957 it was 3,947,000 tons. The quantity of electricity produced in 1939 was 122,580,000 kilowatt hours; in 1957 it was 121,230,000 kilowatt hours.


11. Ibid.

12. Division-sized Units 308, 312, 304, 316, 320, and 325. Regiments 148 (Northwest Zone), 238 and 246 (Viet Bac), 46 and 42 (Interzone 3), and 108, 96, and 803 (Interzone 5).

13. The 351st Engineer-Artillery Division-sized Unit, consisting of two artillery regiments and one engineer regiment. Other specialty branch units included six battalions of 37mm anti-aircraft guns, one rocket battalion, a number of 12.7mm anti-aircraft machine-gun units, three signal battalions, one reconnaissance battalion, and 11 truck transportation companies.
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