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The Return to War: North Vietnamese Decision-Making, 1973-1975

By George J. Veith and Merle Pribbenow,
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The Return to War: North Vietnamese Decision-Making, 1973-1975

Edited and Annotated by George J. Veith

Translations by Merle L. Pribbenow

In support of the Cold War International History Project's efforts to facilitate the release of historical materials from governments on all sides of the Cold War, we have compiled 80 primary source documents dealing with North Vietnam's decision-making from the signing of the Paris Peace Accords in January 1973 until the end of the war, April 1975. The documents are appended to this *Working Paper* and accessible on [DigitalArchive.org](https://digitalarchive.org).¹

Much of this declassified information formed the basis for the book, *Black April: The Fall of South Vietnam, 1973-1975*.² This array of cables, memoranda, and directives provides a fascinating glimpse inside Hanoi's choice in 1973 to return to war—despite having just signed the Paris Peace Accords. The files deliver insights into how the Politburo of the Vietnamese Workers' Party, and its major command in the southern half of South Vietnam known as COSVN, viewed the situation after the accords. These documents clarify, to some extent, Hanoi's decision to resume armed conflict in the south. They further outline Hanoi's preparations in 1974 for launching a new offensive and the goals the Politburo wished to achieve, as well as the detailed military planning aimed at defeating South Vietnam. In the 1975 time-frame, the documents provide unique insights into how Hanoi's military commanders managed the campaign that led to the rapid collapse of South Vietnam.

While this collection is voluminous, the author of and translator for this *Working Paper* did not include every document released by the editors of the volumes cited in the bibliography.

¹ The documents can be found on DigitalArchive.org in the collection "[North Vietnamese Decision-Making, 1973-1975](https://digitalarchive.org)."

² George J. Veith, *Black April: The Fall of South Vietnam, 1973-1975* (New York: Encounter Books, 2012).

We reviewed each document in various Vietnamese Communist publications, but only chose to translate those directly related to the fall of South Vietnam or those which provided information of broader and significant historical interest. Thus, many documents from the volumes of the *Van Kien Dang* series (a massive collection of nearly 40,000 pages of mostly internal Vietnamese Communist Party documents) were not translated and included in this *Working Paper* simply because they dealt with mundane party or economic affairs.³

Although this set of documents cannot be considered definitive, it does provide one of the most detailed views of Vietnamese Communist decision-making ever unveiled for a specific period. However, the materials included in this study are almost exclusively documentary, as we chose not to incorporate information from the numerous memoirs, battle studies, or unit histories. We did, though, feature some secondary materials from the 1973 time-frame solely to help illuminate the thin documentary record on the Politburo's decision to resume armed conflict in the South. While these other sources do generally agree on the Politburo's review and approval process to resume the war, we suspect that the decision was not as smooth or unanimous as the Party portrays, especially after achieving a spectacular military victory in 1975.

Scholars looking to supplement the materials included should also examine five significant translated memoirs by senior Communist military leaders that provide varying levels of insight into Hanoi's decision-making during this period. The two volumes that provide the best overview of the 1973-1975 period are Chief of the PAVN General Staff Hoang Van Thai's *The Decisive Years* (translated by the now defunct Joint Publications Research Service [JPRS]), and later published in English by The Gioi Publishers in Hanoi), and Vo Nguyen Giap's *The*

³ Dang Cong san Viet Nam, *Van Kien Dang Toan tap* [Party Documents Complete Series], 54 vols. (Hanoi: Nha xuất bản Chính trị quốc gia, 1998-2008).

General Headquarters. These two books cover the entire period, and are relatively straightforward in describing the internal developments in Hanoi.⁴

Perhaps the most well-known is Van Tien Dung's *Our Great Spring Victory* (translated by John Spragens, Jr.), but Dung's account begins in the February 1975 time-frame, skipping the crucial lead up to the main offensive.⁵ Also well-known but focused mainly on the B-2 Front is Tran Van Tra's *History of the Bulwark B2 Theatre* (also translated by JPRS).⁶ Lastly, Hoang Minh Thao's *The Victorious Tay Nguyen Campaign* concentrated mainly on the preparations and subsequent attack on Ban Me Thuot in March 1975.⁷ Thao had served for years as Commander of the B-3 Front, the Central Highlands, but was only an advisor to the campaign staff during the attack on Ban Me Thuot.

Several superb memoirs in Vietnamese also offer rich details on the final battles. Le Duc Anh's *Dai Tuong Le Duc Anh* (Senior General Le Duc Anh) provides the clearest picture of the dispute within the leadership over how to implement the Paris agreement during the first several months after the signing of the accords.⁸ Hoang Cam's *Chang Duong Muoi Nghin Ngay* (The Ten-Thousand Day Journey) extensively covers the debates within COSVN over strategy, particularly his discussions with Lieutenant General Tran Van Tra.⁹ Lastly, Nguyen Huu An's *Chien Truong Moi* (New Battlefield) details the extensive planning to attack I Corps, the fierce

⁴ Hoang Van Thai, *The Decisive Years: Memoirs of Vietnamese Senior General Hoang Van Thai* (Washington, DC: Foreign Broadcast Information Service, 1987); Hoang Van Thai, *How South Vietnam was Liberated: Memoirs* (Hanoi: The Gioi, 1992); Vo Nguyen Giap, *The General Headquarters in the Spring of Brilliant Victory* (Hanoi: The Gioi, 2011).

⁵ Van Tien Dung, *Our Great Spring Victory: An Account of the Liberation of South Vietnam*, trans. John Spragens, Jr. (Hanoi: The Gioi, 2005).

⁶ Tran Van Tra, *Vietnam: History of the Bulwark B2 Theatre*, Vol. 5, *Concluding the 30-Years War* (Washington, DC: Foreign Broadcast Information Service, 1983).

⁷ Hoang Minh Thao, *The Victorious Tay Nguyen Campaign* (Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1979).

⁸ Khuat Bien Hoa, *Dai Tuong Le Duc Anh* (Senior General Le Duc Anh) (Hanoi: Nha xuất bản Quân đội nhân dân, 2005).

⁹ Hoang Cam, *Chang Duong Muoi Nghin Ngay: Hoi Uc* (Hanoi: Quân đội nhân dân, 2001).

fighting that took place before the collapse of Danang, and the subsequent movement down the coast.¹⁰ An, probably North Vietnam's best battlefield commander, delivers a remarkably candid assessment.

For scholars wishing to access secondary material, there are numerous volumes on the preparations, achievements, and culminations of the various battles. Two excellent samples of military decision-making (among many) are *Mien Trung Toan Thang: Dai Thang Mua Xuan 1975 (Qua Nhung Trang Hoi Uc)* (Central Vietnam Wins Total Victory: The 1975 Great Spring Victory [Through the Memoirs of Participants]), and *Chien Dich Hue-Danang (Xuan 1975)* (The Hue-Danang Offensive Campaign, Spring 1975).¹¹ Unit histories, such as *Lich Su Quan Doan 2* (History of the 2nd Corps), also provide forthright details of the military action.¹² Moreover, Vo Van Sung's *Chien Dich Ho Chi Minh Giua Long Paris* (The Ho Chi Minh Campaign in the Heart of Paris) offers a unique glimpse into the often overlooked diplomatic front.¹³

A note of caution for scholars using this material. Naturally, the Vietnamese Communists are proud of their victory, but what is included here is what the Party has chosen to release. As such, it is a selection of documents designed to justify the Politburo's decisions while enhancing its reputation as a wise collective body. Moreover, the analysis within many documents provides a view of the world not just as the Politburo saw it, but more importantly, how it wanted the lower levels of the party and government to see it.

Many documents, therefore, especially in 1973, harp on South Vietnamese violations of the ceasefire while concurrently ignoring or rationalizing North Vietnamese violations. Rarely

¹⁰ Nguyen Huu An, *Chien Truong Moi: Hoi Uc* (Hanoi: Nha xuất bản Quân đội nhân dân, 2002).

¹¹ *Mien Trung Toan Thang: Dai Thang Mua Xuan 1975 (Qua Nhung Trang Hoi Uc)* (Hanoi: Nha xuất bản Chính trị quốc gia, 2005); *Chien Dich Hue-Danang (Xuan 1975)* (Hanoi: Viện lịch sử quân sự Việt Nam, 1991).

¹² *Lich Su Quan Doan 2, 1974-1994* (Hanoi: Quân đội nhân dân, 1994).

¹³ Vo Van Sung, *Chien Dich Ho Chi Minh Giua Long Paris* (Hanoi: Nha xuất bản Chính trị quốc gia, 2005).

does one find admissions detailing Communist violations other than as justifications for their actions. For example, shortly before the beginning of the ceasefire, the South Vietnamese military sent a task force along the coast in Quang Tri province and recaptured the small town of Cua Viet. Senior General Vo Nguyen Giap immediately ordered a counterattack after the official ceasefire date to retake Cua Viet. His justification was simple: “Dong Ha was directly threatened. The Truong Son strategic line of transport was in a position to be menaced. The outcome of the 1972 Quang Tri Campaign was seriously compromised.”¹⁴ The PAVN launched a major counterattack and drove the South Vietnamese out of Cua Viet. This assault, while a serious ceasefire violation, was defensible in Giap’s view because Saigon’s seizure of Cua Viet would significantly impede future PAVN resupply efforts to the South. Yet when South Vietnamese forces continued to clear roadblocks on major roads that PAVN forces had cut shortly before the ceasefire (Saigon also could not allow these roadblocks to remain in place, as it would have severely impacted economic activity and freedom of movement), Hanoi protested vehemently. In truth, both sides violated the ceasefire when it suited them, but an individual reading these documents without the underlying historical context might conclude otherwise.

Lastly, the author and translator have made a few slight modifications in formatting to assist the reader, and on occasion, have not translated certain sections of a few documents that were not germane to overall decision-making (excised areas are marked with ellipses). The author has added editorial notes to provide context, chiefly for the 1973 period. Occasional translator’s notes are in brackets. Otherwise, cable numbering, paragraph markings, etc., are precisely as found in the volumes.

¹⁴ Vo Nguyen Giap, *The General Headquarters in the Spring of Brilliant Victory* (Hanoi: The Gioi, 2002), 30.

George J. Veith is the author of three books on the Vietnam War, including [Code Name Bright Light: The Untold Story of U.S. POW Rescue Efforts during the Vietnam War](#) (1998) and [Black April: The Fall of South Vietnam, 1973-1975](#) (2013).

Merle Pribbenow is a former CIA officer who served in Vietnam from April 1970 to April 1975, and is the translator of Volume 2 of the history of the People's Army of Vietnam, which was published by the University of Kansas Press as [Victory in Vietnam: The Official History of the People's Army of Vietnam, 1954-1975](#) (2002).

Document Appendix - 1973

Document No. 1

Cable from the Central Military Party Committee to COSVN on Guidance Principles for Leading the Struggle Movement After a Political Settlement and Ceasefire, 12 January 1973

[Source: *Lich Su Bien Nien Xu Uy Nam Bo va Trung Uong Cuc Mien Nam (1954-1975)* [Historical Chronicle of the Cochin China Party Committee and the Central Office for South Vietnam, 1954-1975], 2nd ed. (Hanoi: Nha xuất bản Chính trị quốc gia, 2008), 1187-1188.]¹⁵

The tremendous victories won by the soldiers and civilians of North and South Vietnam forced the American imperialists to unconditionally halt their bombing and destructive acts against North Vietnam, and to sit down at the conference table in Paris to negotiate the contents of the Agreement. However, based on our analysis and assessment of the situation on the battlefields of South Vietnam, the National leadership concluded that the U.S. and their puppets had not yet given up their plans of aggression against South Vietnam. They were planning to launch attacks into our liberated zones to seize and occupy important locations. The primary focal points of these attacks would be in the Quang Tri sector, where their goal would be to recapture territory along the De-Militarized Zone, in Eastern Cochin China, and in areas of northern Kontum province. In Laos, they would try to capture the Bolovens Plateau, and in Cambodia they were preparing to try to seize Route 1.

Faced with this situation, the Central Military Party Committee sent the following guidance to COSVN: [Summary]

1. Closely monitor enemy operations, ensure that you review our preparations, strengthen our leadership and command, and mobilize our cadre and soldiers to defeat the enemy's land-grabbing operations, to defend our liberated zones, and to intensify our operations behind enemy lines.

2. Review your plans to utilize elite forces [sappers] to launch attacks against enemy airfields, ports, and logistics warehouses and attacks designed to destroy the enemy's logistical support facilities and implements of war. Seize and hold roadblocks on the important lines of communications (Routes 1, 4, 13, 14, and 19) to ensure our supply lines and our freedom of movement.

3. Step up guerrilla operations, armed propaganda, civilian proselyting operations, and political struggle activities and preserve and expand our infrastructure in the weak areas.

4. Maintain a firm grip on our main force units in order to be able to aggressively fight the enemy in all situations. Develop a deception plan to mislead and trick the enemy in order to force him to disperse his forces.

5. Maintain a firm hold on the Loc Ninh liberated zone.

¹⁵ The document can also be found in the first edition of *Lich Su Bien Nien Xu Uy Nam Bo va Trung Uong Cuc Mien Nam (1954-1975)* [Historical Chronicle of the Cochin China Party Committee and the Central Office for South Vietnam, 1954-1975] (Hanoi: Nha xuất bản Chính trị quốc gia, 2002), 947-948.

Editor's Note: Upon receipt of these instructions from Hanoi, COSVN issued guidance to its units.

Document No. 2

COSVN Party Current Affairs Committee Issues Directive on Urgent Tasks After a Political Settlement was Concluded, 19 January 1973

[Source: *Lich Su Bien Nien Xu Uy Nam Bo va Trung Uong Cuc Mien Nam (1954-1975)* [Historical Chronicle of the Cochinchina Party Committee and the Central Office for South Vietnam, 1954-1975], 2nd ed. (Hanoi: Nha xuất bản Chính trị quốc gia, 2008), 1189-1191]¹⁶

Before the Paris Agreement was signed, the Thieu government stubbornly carried out a “flooding the territory” plan, planting flags, seizing land and population, and intensifying his effort to occupy areas under our control. To deal with this situation, on 19 January 1973 the COSVN Party Current Affairs Committee issued a directive on policies and urgent tasks to be implemented after a political settlement was reached and a ceasefire was implemented.

Analyzing the situation, COSVN reached the following conclusion:

“The most fundamental victory that we have won as represented by the signing of this Agreement is that we have forced the Americans to promise to recognize and respect the basic national rights of people of Vietnam and the right to self-determination of the people of South Vietnam ... During this new phase of the revolution, our policy is to mobilize the entire Party, the entire army, and the entire population to exploit this victory to the maximum by conducting a political high tide movement in all three strategic areas [mountain jungles, rural countryside, cities] under the slogan, “Peace, Independence, Democracy, Prosperity, and National Reconciliation” in order to demand the implementation of the Agreement, to cause the disintegration or serious collapse of the puppet army and puppet government, to seize and occupy the rural countryside, and to seize control of the governmental apparatus at the grass roots level. In parallel with building and expanding our military and political forces, we will build a revolutionary governmental structure and liberated zones that are solid in all respects. We will crush all enemy efforts to sabotage the Agreement; we will act quickly to prevent major [armed] clashes in order to maintain the peace; we will conduct general elections in accordance with the Agreement; we will advance the cause of the South Vietnamese revolution to accomplish the basic goals that have been set forward for it; and we will at the same time constantly be vigilant and remain ready to deal with any American imperialist plot aimed at resuming the war...”

The COSVN Party Current Affairs Committee laid out the following strategic principles for the South Vietnamese revolution:

1) -Firmly maintain our goal of completing our national democratic revolution and closely coordinate the two missions, nationalism and democracy, in this new situation.

¹⁶ The document can also be found in the first edition of *Lich Su Bien Nien Xu Uy Nam Bo va Trung Uong Cuc Mien Nam (1954-1975)* [Historical Chronicle of the Cochinchina Party Committee and the Central Office for South Vietnam, 1954-1975] (Hanoi: Nha xuất bản Chính trị quốc gia, 2002), 949-951.

2) -Firmly maintain an offensive strategy by pushing the enemy back, one step at a time, to win victories and to advance toward our goal of securing total victory.

3) -Firmly maintain our concept of [revolutionary] violence and study and fully comprehend what this concept means in these new conditions.

4) -Tightly link our mission of completing the national democratic revolution in South Vietnam with defending and building socialism in North Vietnam with the goal of advancing toward national reunification.

5) -Coordinate our revolutionary movement in South Vietnam with the Lao and Cambodian revolutionary movements.

The COSVN Party Current Affairs Committee also emphasized that the formulas for the revolution in South Vietnam were:

-Maintain close coordination between the political, the armed, and the legal struggles, using the political struggle as our foundation, using armed struggle to provide support, and exploiting the effects of the legal provisions of the Agreement.

-Closely coordinate the use of offensive attacks with the work of building our own forces in all respects in order to create a new posture and new power for our side in this new situation.

-Tightly link the political struggle of the civilian masses in all three strategic areas [mountain jungles, rural countryside, cities] with the struggle movements of overt organizations allowed under the terms of the Agreement.

Editor's Note: Concerned that the imminent signing of the accords might cause its forces to relax, Hanoi sent a cable outlining what military actions COSVN could and could not do. It was critical to maintain control over Loc Ninh, the sole district town still in Communist hands after the 1972 "Nguyen Hue" offensive.

Document No. 3

Cable from General Vo Nguyen Giap and the Central Military Party Committee to COSVN Providing Guidance on the Military Struggle, 19 January 1973

[Source: *Lich Su Bien Nien Xu Uy Nam Bo va Trung Uong Cuc Mien Nam (1954-1975)* [Historical Chronicle of the Cochinchina Party Committee and the Central Office for South Vietnam, 1954-1975], 2nd ed. (Hanoi: Nha xuất bản Chính trị quốc gia, 2008), 1191.]¹⁷

¹⁷ The document can also be found in the first edition of *Lich Su Bien Nien Xu Uy Nam Bo va Trung Uong Cuc Mien Nam (1954-1975)* [Historical Chronicle of the Cochinchina Party Committee and the Central Office for South Vietnam, 1954-1975] (Hanoi: Nha xuất bản Chính trị quốc gia, 2002), 949-951.

Because the enemy was launching military operations in the intermediate perimeter area with the goal of seizing and occupying our liberated zones, and especially the Loc Ninh liberated zone, Comrade Vo Nguyen Giap and the Central Military Party Committee sent a guidance cable to COSVN laying out a number of military struggle measures that were to be carried out:

[Summary]

-Eastern Cochinchina's primary mission is to firmly hold onto the liberated zone, and especially the Loc Ninh liberated zone.

-COSVN must correctly carry out the instructions of the Politburo and of the Current Affairs Committee of the Central Military Party Committee. These instructions are to keep a powerful reserve force on call, not committing too many of our forces or committing them too soon. You may only employ a portion of the 7th Division to fight the enemy in southern Dau Tieng district.

-You must not use the entire division. Instead, you must keep most of the division in the rear and continue to strengthen your reserve forces.

-In order to disrupt the enemy's land-grabbing schemes, you must intensify the operations of your elite forces [sappers], local forces, and guerrilla militia by launching attacks against enemy rear bases, logistics warehouses, and lines of communications in the enemy's interior in order to force the enemy to disperse his forces and place the enemy on the defensive.

Editor's Note: With the signing of the Paris Peace Accords on January 23, 1973, all sides agreed to a ceasefire, the exchange of prisoners, the withdrawal of U.S. forces, among other points. While Washington, and to a certain extent Saigon, hoped the accords would lead to a lasting peace, it was not to be. Hanoi viewed it a pause. While only a few primary sources documents have been published by the Communists on the two-month period—the end of January to the end of March, the point of the withdrawal of the last U.S. troops—one can gain a sense of how they viewed the accords unfolding.

The first guidance on the new situation was issued in a Lao Dong party directive.

Document No. 4

Party Secretariat Directive No. 200-CT/TW, 24 January 1973

[Source: Dang Cong san Viet Nam, *Van Kien Dang Toan tap* [Party Documents Complete Series], vol. 34 (Hanoi: Nha xuất bản Chính trị quốc gia, 2004), 4-9.]

“On the Agreement on Vietnam That Had Been Initialed and Things to be Done Immediately”

The Agreement to end the war and restore peace in Vietnam was initialed in Paris on 23 January. The entire text of the agreement together with the text of the protocols to the agreement will soon be announced and officially signed.

Our people have won a tremendous victory that has brought to an end the biggest and the most savage war of liberation of the modern era. This is a glorious accomplishment for our great resistance cause of fighting the Americans to save the nation, the result of the resolute and skillful struggle that the people of our entire nation have waged on three fronts: the military front, the political front, and the diplomatic front. It is also the direct result of the resounding victory we won when we crushed the extremely brutal American strategic air bombing attack that Nixon launched with the evil intention of striking a decisive blow that would enable the Americans to negotiate from a position of strength while completely forgetting the draft agreement that both sides agreed to in October 1972.

This victory that our nation has won would not have been possible without the active support we received from the socialist countries, the international communist and worker's movement, and the support given to us by all of the countries and all of the people's movements of the entire world.

This victory is a reflection of the revolutionary posture of this era of history and of the current balance of forces throughout the world.

The text of the Agreement to End the War and Restore Peace in Vietnam reflects our people's demands and principles:

- Our basic national rights of independence, sovereignty, and the unity and territorial integrity of the country of Vietnam and the right of self-determination of the people of South Vietnam must be respected:

- An end to American military involvement and intervention and the withdrawal of all American and allied expeditionary military forces from our country.

- Recognition of the actual current situation in South Vietnam in which there are two governments, two armies, and three political forces.

- The U.S. must clear the mines that it has planted in the coastal waters and rivers of North Vietnam and it must also contribute to the work of binding up the wounds of war and rebuilding our country.

The victory that we have just won ends a glorious era of revolution and resistance warfare, and it opens the door on a new period of fighting to maintain the peace and continuing to advance the cause of our revolution.

The revolution in South Vietnam has many new advantages, but it will still be a difficult and arduous struggle that may advance in conditions in which peace is maintained, but we must also be prepared to deal with the possibility that the enemy will stubbornly sabotage the peace. The northern half of our nation will enjoy conditions that will enable us to develop and expand production and build socialist material and technical facilities of steadily increasing size and scale. At the same time, however, the North will still have the important duty of providing support to

South Vietnam, of aiding the revolutions in our two neighboring countries, and of standing ready to deal with situations and win to victory no matter in any and all situations that may arise.

The enormous revolutionary successes that we have scored have always been based on our correct revolutionary policies, international solidarity, and our Party's independence and self-reliance, and on the stalwart, invincible traditions and the solidarity and unanimity of our Party, of our people, and of our nation.

We must highlight pride in our accomplishments while at the same time highlighting our historic duty to continue to advance the cause of our revolution.

We must strongly develop a spirit of enthusiasm and confidence among the people of our entire nation. We must make every class, every family, and every individual feel that he or she has contributed to our common cause, that they all have contributed to our nation's incredibly glorious victory, and that they all understand that it is their duty to work even harder to build our nation.

We must guide the masses in taking practical actions for the good of the Fatherland and must ensure that every person thinks correctly and that every person works well and in the best interests of the nation and of the collective. We must create a constant lively and animated mass movement to achieve clear goals, beginning with the first three months of 1973.

In order to meet these requirements, key [Party] leadership cadres must maintain a firm grip on the reins of leadership and must work closely with all other Party committee members to ensure that everyone is properly informed and to organize and carry out action during this period rather than simply leaving this work to the propaganda and training sections.

We must not be lax in our leadership to avoid allowing the appearance of instances of letting down our guard, of carelessness in carrying out our common tasks, or of simply doing work for form's sake, but we must also avoid as much as possible putting pressure on the masses at a time when the situation has changed.

The Politburo will issue a resolution to provide leadership and guidance for this transition stage in our revolution.

During the next fifteen days, we must immediately carry out the following tasks:

1.-Inform everyone of the victory that we have just won. The contents of what we say should be as follows: read the appeal that will be issued by the Central Committee (which will be announced on 28 January); provide a summary analysis based on this directive; provide an introduction to the text and the various documents of the Agreement that have been made public; clearly lay out the tasks that must be done immediately, how these tasks should be carried out, shortcomings that can be immediately corrected, and how these corrections should be implemented.

After 25 January 1973, when the key leadership cadres are announced by the Party Secretariat, the Party committees and chapters at the national level and at the province and city

level should immediately discuss the implementation of this directive and arrange to inform all subordinate levels.

Each level of the government and of the economic, cultural, internal security, and public welfare sectors needs to gain a firm handle on and to quickly and effectively resolve any and all issues regarding the stabilization of production, ensuring the smooth flow of transportation and traffic, providing assistance to war victims, restoring normal economic, cultural, and social activities, providing housing to residents of urban areas in a rational, just manner that avoids disputes and public disorder and maintains law and order as well as public sanitation. Provide guidance to the people in organizing the upcoming Tet celebrations in a spirit of enthusiasm over our new victory and in a way that is joyful and proper, and maintain solidarity and vigilance so that everyone will happily begin this new era by working with a high level of labor productivity.

The implementation of this directive and of the upcoming Politburo resolution must be a process that takes new steps forward toward improving quality in all fields of activity and in our country's social life. It must be a process of improving our organizational effectiveness, improving the effectiveness of the government, and at the same time of fully developing the democratic rights of our people.

The Executive Committees of our various mass organizations should only provide guidance for activities and primary implementation measures that are consistent with the boundaries of their areas of responsibility, and they should avoid forced measures or deadlines that might cause confusion and disorder for the various sectors and for our Party committees at various levels.

The important thing will be for cadres at all levels to go down to inspect and assist subordinate levels, identify and publicize those who set good examples and from whom good lessons can be learned, and fully and completely resolve practical issues and locations where progress has been slow.

Military agencies and headquarters should draw up plans to review experiences and derive lessons learned, to strengthen and build their forces, to improve the military, political, and educational level of our forces, and to organize appropriately-sized military forces to participate in repairing the ravages of war and rebuilding and developing our economy.

Party organizations must closely monitor the implementation of this Party Secretariat directive and of the upcoming Politburo resolution in order to maintain a firm grasp of the ideological thinking and actions of Party members, to improve the leadership operations at the Party committee and Party chapter levels, and to continue the various efforts to improve the quality of our Party members.

2. Prepare to implement the Politburo Resolution

During the implementation of this directive, you should assign a number of cadres to make preparations in the following areas:

-Economic and planning issues and work programs need to be readjusted to adapt them to the new situation.

-Plan political activities to enable our personnel to fully understand and implement the Politburo resolution, with the first priority being given to doing this work well at the Party committee level and among our leadership cadres.

-Assign leadership cadres to inspect, monitor, and provide guidance to subordinate levels in carrying out a wave of political activities and meetings to implement the Politburo resolution.

The diplomatic struggle in general and the struggle to implement the Agreement in particular have become important and urgent matters for the Party and the State. Agencies responsible for this work must immediately make meticulous preparations in terms of programs, plans, organizations, and personnel. The State Planning Commission must immediately prepare to deal with economic issues, especially foreign economic activities.

3. On the Public Opinion and Ideological Front, we must provide close, tight leadership that strongly develops a spirit of enthusiasm to correctly support our policy guidelines and stratagems in line with our mission, and at the same time we must prevent any instances of eccentricity, carelessness, the exposure of state secrets, and the wasteful expenditure of funds, material resources, time, and labor.

Propaganda activities on the radio and in the press must be very sensitive in order to correctly handle issues regarding the implementation of the Agreement and of freedom, democracy, and national reconciliation in South Vietnam, and careful attention must be paid to making sure that they correctly reflect our stratagem in this new situation.

In internal ideological activities and oral propaganda, we must stress the victory we have won and the reasons behind this victory. We must continue to educate our people to build a stalwart and patient revolutionary spirit, an awareness of our responsibility to continue to support South Vietnam and to help the revolutions of our two neighboring countries. We must increase our spirit of vigilance against the American imperialists and their lackeys, because they still are plotting to sabotage the revolution, to implement neocolonialism in South Vietnam, and to keep our country divided.

This directive should be copied, distributed down to the district committee level, and stored in accordance with the regulations on storing secret documents.

Province and City Committees and Party Central Committee Sections must maintain a first grasp of the situation and submit weekly reports to the Party Secretariat on the implementation of these tasks and the results achieved.

For the Party Secretariat
Le Van Luong

Editor's Note: Despite Luong's description of an upcoming Politburo Resolution, after the Party Secretariat's directive of 24 January 1973, the Politburo sent only a draft resolution (as opposed to a formal directive) to high-level party committees and to the military regions. If formalized, the resolution has not been publicized, but one significant post-war history quoted part of it; "A draft Politburo resolution dated January 1973 states, 'Resolutely maintain the peace, do not take the initiative in inciting military clashes or causing civil war, strive to firmly secure and exploit the victory we have won, consolidate and strengthen our forces and our posture in every respect, strive to win new advantages and new possibilities to advance the cause of the revolution through a powerful political movement backed up by our armed forces.' The resolution stated clearly that, 'It is essential that our armed forces must remain strong and be constantly prepared for battle. No matter what the situation, if the enemy causes trouble we must take appropriate retaliatory action and we will be able to secure a total victory.'"¹ However, on the battlefield, the specific initial guidance that was issued did not fully reflect the spirit of the above resolution but instead emphasized peace, reconciliation, and what was called a 'stabilized position' and 'separating the two zones' ..."²

A separate regional command history quotes another cable signed by To Huu that also provides the Politburo's guidance: "On 9 February 1973, the Politburo sent Cable No. 50 to COSVN, the Region Party Committees, and the Province Party Committees to pass along 'a number of the Politburo's ideas and conclusions regarding the enemy situation and our situation in South Vietnam,' the content of which was as follows:

1.-Within the puppet army, except for the bureaucrats and militarists who have many personal interests involved and who are still stubborn warmongers, the majority of the soldiers and lower-ranking officers in the puppet army do not want to fight anymore. They want peace and national reconciliation... This is an excellent opportunity for us. If we handle this situation correctly by quickly building up our armed forces and by organizing mass forces to conduct political and military proselyting attacks at the local level, we may be able to create a true high tide revolutionary movement and thereby paralyze and cause the disintegration of the puppet army, one piece at a time.

2.-As for the higher-ranking puppet army officers, stubborn thugs, psychological warfare officers... we must be constantly vigilant and we must strengthen, reinforce, and firmly protect our armed forces and our political forces. However, we must recognize that the tendency toward peace and national reconciliation is very widespread within the puppet army."

Based on that assessment, the Politburo cable provided the following guidance:

'The weapon we will use in our legal struggle is the Agreement... Our formula... is to seize opportunities to move quickly by conducting resolute, continuous political and military proselyting attacks, but strive to do this quietly, not in a noisy, public, visible manner...'

The most important content of the guidance documents sent out by the Center [Hanoi] was the assessment that there were two possible scenarios for how the situation would develop: one possibility was peaceful struggle, and the other was that the war would start up again. The guidance documents stressed the possibility that we would be able to compel our opponents to implement the Paris Agreement, saying that the prospects for this were increasing based on the belief that the strength of the trend toward peace and peaceful reconciliation might lead to 'a true revolutionary high tide movement that could paralyze and cause the disintegration of the puppet army, piece by piece.'"³

Editor's Note (continued): ...However, after the war, Politburo member Le Duc Tho dismissed the significance of this draft directive, which at the time apparently reflected a split within the Politburo on next steps. He wrote: "According to a number of comrades who were in COSVN at that time, COSVN Party Secretary Pham Hung received the ideas expressed by To Huu simply as 'concepts for study.' In a chapter titled 'After the Paris Agreement' written by Le Duc Tho . . . there is the following section: '...at that time a number of high-ranking cadres visited South Vietnam to explain the situation, and they emphasized too heavily the "possibility of peaceful reconciliation" for construction [economic development] ... I must also state clearly that the Politburo never issued a resolution that said that 'we must peacefully reconcile with the enemy.' The explanations provided by the above-mentioned cadres received a negative reaction from our people in South Vietnam...' Le Duc Tho also said that 'these high-ranking cadres were not emissaries of the Politburo.'"⁴ Despite Le Duc Tho's post-war whitewash, COSVN Resolution 2, noted in the next document, encapsulated initial guidance to its cadres based upon the draft Politburo resolution. It was captured, translated, and printed in *Vietnam: Documents and Research Notes*, Document #113, June 1973. It has not been reproduced here. However, even in late February, COSVN was informing its cadre to continue to follow Resolution 2.

¹ *Mien Dong Nam Bo Khang Chien (1945-1975), Tap II* [The Resistance War in Eastern Cochinchina (1945-1975), Volume II] (Hanoi: People's Army Publishing House, 1993), 498. Draft Politburo Resolution held in the files of the Party Research Section of the Ho Chi Minh City Party Committee. The Central Military Party Committee also issued a directive with the same general content as the draft Politburo resolution.

² *Mien Dong Nam Bo Khang Chien (1945-1975), Tap II* [The Resistance War in Eastern Cochinchina (1945-1975), Volume II] (Hanoi: People's Army Publishing House, 1993), 498.

³ *Lich su Nam bo Khang chien, tap II, 1954-1975* [History of the Resistance in Cochinchina, Volume II: 1954-1975] (Hanoi: Nha xuất bản Chính trị quốc gia, 2010), 831-832.

⁴ "20 Years After Tet," *Tap Chi Lich Su Quan Su* [Military History Magazine], Issue 3 (27) (1988): 3-4.

Document No. 5

COSVN Party Current Affairs Committee Guidance on the Struggle to Demand that our Opponents Implement the Paris Agreement, 25 February 1973

[Source: *Lich Su Bien Nien Xu Uy Nam Bo va Trung Uong Cuc Mien Nam (1954-1975)* [Historical Chronicle of the Cochinchina Party Committee and the Central Office for South Vietnam, 1954-1975], 2nd ed. (Hanoi: Nha xuất bản Chính trị quốc gia, 2008), 1192-1193.]¹⁸

On 27 January 1973 the American imperialists were forced to sign the Paris Agreement to End the War and Restore Peace in Vietnam. This was a great victory for our nation that opened up

¹⁸ The document can also be found in the first edition of *Lich Su Bien Nien Xu Uy Nam Bo va Trung Uong Cuc Mien Nam (1954-1975)* [Historical Chronicle of the Cochinchina Party Committee and the Central Office for South Vietnam, 1954-1975] (Hanoi: Nha xuất bản Chính trị quốc gia, 2002), 952.

a new phase, leading to the complete liberation of South Vietnam and the unification of our country.

In order to seize the initiative in the struggle to demand that the enemy strictly implement the agreement, even before the agreement was signed COSVN issued Directive No. 02/CT73 directing the local areas to actively prepare for a broad-ranging high tide of struggle throughout South Vietnam.

As soon as the agreement was signed, the enemy massed their troops to attack and occupy our liberated zones, blatantly violating the agreement and making the developing situation extremely complicated. Faced with this reality, on 25 February 1973 the COSVN Party Current Affairs Committee sent a cable to the local areas, committees, and sectors confirming that in this new situation they were to continue to implement the instructions given in Directive 02/CT73.

Assessing the situation, the cable said that COSVN had concluded that even though the agreement had been signed and the U.S. was being forced to withdraw all its troops and stop its bombing and shelling attacks, the U.S. was continuing to assist and defend the actions of the puppets, who were not only not implementing the cease-fire, but were seriously and systematically violating the agreement. The situation in South Vietnam was unsettled and unstable, the cable said.

Faced with this situation, the cable said that COSVN had decided to launch a broad-ranging campaign throughout our entire Party, our entire army, and our entire population in all three areas [mountain jungles, rural lowlands, the cities] to continuously attack the enemy, using political struggle as our foundation and employing military forces to provide outstanding support to the struggle to exploit the legal effects of the agreement to the maximum in order to force the enemy to strictly implement the agreement, first of all by stopping its attacks and granting the people their free and democratic rights.

The goal was to defeat the enemy's plans to sabotage the agreement so that we could preserve peace while at the same time we worked to expand and develop our political and military forces, to continue to secure new victories, and to build up to gaining total victory.

COSVN laid out a number of urgent missions that were to be carried out:

1. Organize a wave of powerful denunciations of the U.S. and the puppets.
2. Incite the people to rise up in response to the proclamations of the Provisional Revolutionary Government of South Vietnam.
3. Quickly complete study sessions to understand and absorb the instructions in Directive 02/CT73 and the document, "When the cease-fire takes effect, What We Must Do at the Village and Hamlet Level." In their study sessions, our regional and provincial Party committees should rely on our strategic principles and relate these principles to the actual situation as it was developing on the ground in order to provide guidance to our agents and organizations for use in our villages and hamlets.

4. Hold training classes for all cadre, Party members, soldiers, and civilians on the essential provisions of the agreement for use in struggles against the enemy.

5. Ensure that all Party chapters and Party members at the village and hamlet level have a firm understanding of our current vital, pressing tasks, which are to intensify the political struggle movement and the military proselyting attacks being conducted by the civilian masses.

6. Utilize and exploit the outstanding supporting role that armed struggle will play during the new phase.

7. Constantly strengthen and expand revolutionary power, and build a balanced force of the three types of troops [main force, local force, guerrilla militia].

8. Leadership and guidance at all levels must be reoriented in a powerful and timely manner suited to the demands of the new situation.

Editor's Note: In Paris, the two Vietnamese sides were meeting to discuss arrangements for the follow-on conferences to implement the accords.

Document No. 6

Cable from Nguyen Thi Binh [Foreign Minister of the PRG] to the Politburo, 23 February 1973

[Source: *Dai Su Ky Chuyen De: Dau Tranh Ngoai Giao va Van Dong Quoc Te Trong Khang Chien Chong My Cuu Nuoc, 1954-1975* [Major Events: The Diplomatic Struggle and International Activities During the Resistance War Against the Americans to Save the Nation, 1954-1975] (Hanoi: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1987), 384.]

1973-02-23

Ms. [Nguyen Thi] Binh to the Politburo:

On the afternoon of 23 February Mrs. Nguyen Thi Binh met with Tran Van Lam [Foreign Minister of the Republic of Vietnam (RVN)] at Klebur Palace in the procedural meeting room. In reality, the puppets wanted this to be viewed as a procedural meeting, while we viewed it as a meeting conducted in accordance with an agreement reached between the two parties and within the framework of the effort to implement the Agreement.

Results of the meeting: The two sides agreed that the official negotiations conference would be held in Paris, 10-20 kilometers from the center of the city (this was at the request of the puppets). The conference would begin sometime during the week of 5-11 March [1973].

Assessment: During both the official meeting and our private meeting, Tran Van Lam strove to display a peaceful, conciliatory attitude. Tran Van Lam took the initiative in raising the issue of holding a high-level meeting in the event the negotiations resulted in a stalemate. He anticipated

that in that case the RVN side would send the Prime Minister or the President. As for our side, it would be either Mr. ... or Huynh Tan Phat [President of the Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Republic of South Vietnam].

With regards to the composition of the Third Force [in the National Council of Reconciliation and Concord], each side would name one half of the members. If we let them make their own selections, he said, that would cause a lot of trouble, because they were very “disorderly.”

[...]

Editor’s Note: Per the agreement, an International Conference on Vietnam was held in February. The conference, which was designed to get twelve other countries to help enforce and assist the Paris Peace Accords, unfortunately did not produce the desired effects.

Document No. 7

Cable from Nguyen Duy Trinh [Foreign Minister of the DRV] to the Politburo, 1 March 1973

[Source: *Dai Su Ky Chuyen De: Dau Tranh Ngoai Giao va Van Dong Quoc Te Trong Khang Chien Chong My Cuu Nuoc, 1954-1975* [Major Events: The Diplomatic Struggle and International Activities During the Resistance War Against the Americans to Save the Nation, 1954-1975] (Hanoi: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1987), 386.]

1973-03-01

Mr. [Nguyen Duy] Trinh [Foreign Minister of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam] to the Politburo:

On 28 February I held a private meeting with U.S. Secretary of State William Rogers after the meeting of the four foreign ministers. Our meeting lasted from the night of the 28th into the morning of 1 March (until 2:00 in the morning).

The U.S. side had to agree to the following:

- The twelve governments will sign one document that lists the names of all twelve governments in the introduction.
- They agreed to drop Article 10 of the U.S. draft on the issue of the countries contributing to binding up the wounds of war and post-war economic development.
- The U.S. accepted our formula on Laos and Cambodia.
- Article 2 of the draft treaty will be in accordance with our Plan #3.

II/ This means that we have achieved a good document that meets our requirements and that fulfills the Politburo’s guidance concepts. The Democratic Republic of Vietnam played a major role

during the conference, and the role of the Provisional Revolutionary Government was played up. We are in a strong position, and the U.S. and their puppets are in a weak position. They wanted to accommodate us in order to avoid criticism. A number of countries that have taken a negative attitude toward us made speeches that demonstrated a conciliatory attitude.

[...]

Document No. 8

Cable from Nguyen Duy Trinh to the Politburo, 6 March 1973

[Source: *Dai Su Ky Chuyen De: Dau Tranh Ngoai Giao va Van Dong Quoc Te Trong Khang Chien Chong My Cuu Nuoc, 1954-1975* [Major Events: The Diplomatic Struggle and International Activities During the Resistance War Against the Americans to Save the Nation, 1954-1975] (Hanoi: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1987), 386-387.]

1973-03-06

Mr. [Nguyen Duy] Trinh [Foreign Minister of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam] to the Politburo:

Report of Noteworthy Concrete Events on 1 and 2 March:

1/- During the meeting of all sides to approve and sign the treaty on 1 March, we protested and forced the U.S. to guarantee that they would not allow the puppets or any of the U.S.'s other allies to do anything to cause complications during the signing ceremony.

- We reached an agreement with the U.S. that aside from the speech given by the head of the Polish delegation, who was presiding over the meeting, the other delegations would not give speeches. However, right after the heads of all the delegations finished signing, China requested permission from the chairman to speak. The Polish delegate was forced to allow the Chinese to speak. The content of the Chinese speech played up the role of the Provisional Revolutionary Government (PRG) and accused Saigon of violating the Peace Agreement. This was done because during the 1 March session China had not spoken out to criticize the puppets and support the PRG. Tran Van Lam did not approve of this but did not want to start an argument during the signing ceremony.

2/- Members of the American delegation attending Mrs. Nguyen Thi Binh's reception included Porter, Sullivan, Aldrich, and Isham. The puppets sent only a few advisors and experts to attend.

On the night of 2 March U.S. Secretary of State Rogers held a reception for the chiefs and deputy chiefs of all the delegations. The invitation stated clearly that Mrs. Binh, the Foreign Minister of the PRG was invited. When Tran Van Lam arrived and saw Mrs. Binh there, both Lam and Nguyen Xuan Phong [Deputy Chief of the Republic of Vietnam delegation] were visibly displeased, and both of them left the reception early.

[...]

Editor's Note: Despite the terms of the agreement, the ongoing negotiations in Paris, and the International Conference, in the Communist view, the “peace” was going badly.

Document No. 9

Meeting of the COSVN Party Current Affairs Committee to discuss policy guidelines and struggle goals of the South Vietnamese Revolution following the implementation of the Paris Agreement, 9-10 March 1973

[Source: *Lich Su Bien Nien Xu Uy Nam Bo va Trung Uong Cuc Mien Nam (1954-1975)* [Historical Chronicle of the Cochinchina Party Committee and the Central Office for South Vietnam, 1954-1975], 2nd ed. (Hanoi: Nha xuất bản Chính trị quốc gia, 2008), 1193-1195.]¹⁹

In a meeting held on 9 and 10 March 1973, the Current Affairs Committee agreed on the following assessment: The situation in South Vietnam is still unstable and is worsening. The fighting between us and the enemy is currently not as ferocious as it was before, but we still do not have peace, even though the Agreement has been signed. The enemy is conducting serious and systematic violations of the agreement. As for our side, we are struggling for our demand that the enemy must implement the agreement, with the first step being our demand that the enemy cease firing and that we gradually push the enemy back until the situation can be stabilized. We must actively build and strengthen the liberated zone and our revolutionary base areas so that they become truly strong; we must step up our struggle movements in the urban areas and in the rural countryside that is temporarily under enemy control; and we must quickly build up our revolutionary strength, especially with regard to our military forces.

The meeting stressed the following points: The concrete, specific missions of the South Vietnamese revolution in the immediate future are, in addition to armed and political violence, that we must exploit the legal impact of the Agreement and closely coordinate the political struggle with the military struggle and the legal struggle. Based on the actual situation in each individual area and location, we must select and apply the political or military struggle formulas and methods that are best suited to the individual situation. We must counter the tendency to use only military forces, and especially the tendency to send military forces into areas where the enemy is currently repressing the people [i.e., into enemy-controlled areas], but we also must not conduct a strictly political struggle; we must have the appropriate number of armed forces and secret guerrillas to eliminate [kill] enemy thugs and to raise the struggle movement to a higher and more powerful level. In the liberated zone we must mass our forces, consolidate and strengthen them in the areas of defense, the economy, culture [education], social matters, etc. in order to create a powerful posture and solid strength that will be strong enough to, working in coordination with our movement in the cities and in areas where our forces are weak, cause the total collapse of the enemy's infrastructure, all the way down to his last lair.

¹⁹ The document can also be found in the first edition of *Lich Su Bien Nien Xu Uy Nam Bo va Trung Uong Cuc Mien Nam (1954-1975)* [Historical Chronicle of the Cochinchina Party Committee and the Central Office for South Vietnam, 1954-1975] (Hanoi: Nha xuất bản Chính trị quốc gia, 2002), 954-955.

The meeting agreed that there were three possibilities for how the situation might develop following the implementation of the Paris Agreement.

-If we employed the appropriate struggle formulas and methods, the enemy would not be able to encroach on our territory and our mass political and military proselyting movements would expand and become more solid. The enemy would maintain approximately the same situation as exists at present, and the situation would gradually stabilize. In this way we would have been able to deal an initial defeat to the enemy's plan to sabotage the Agreement, and then we could move forward from there.

-If we fell into a confused, defensive status and do not have a grasp of our struggle formulas and struggle methods in the new situation, the enemy would continue to encroach into and seize our territory and this would create a difficult and tense situation.

-War would soon break out again because the enemy feared a protracted stalemate, because the enemy refused to implement the Paris Agreement on Vietnam, or because the enemy hoped to be able to win a military victory through war.

Document No. 10

COSVN Party Current Affairs Committee Lays Out Immediate Missions and A Number of Urgent Tasks After Two Months of Implementing the Paris Agreement, 27 March 1973

[Source: *Lich Su Bien Nien Xu Uy Nam Bo va Trung Uong Cuc Mien Nam (1954-1975)* [Historical Chronicle of the Cochinchina Party Committee and the Central Office for South Vietnam, 1954-1975], 2nd ed. (Hanoi: Nha xuất bản Chính trị quốc gia, 2008), 1196-1197.]²⁰

The COSVN directive stated that the struggle between our side and the enemy was now extremely ferocious, difficult, and complex, both from the national and the class standpoint, and that this struggle was not just military but also political, economic, cultural-social, diplomatic, and legal, and that the struggle was now changing in a direction that would create a situation extremely favorable to us and extremely unfavorable to the enemy.

The directive clearly spelled out our shortcomings and errors after two months of implementing the ceasefire:

-We had not correctly assessed the situation, we had not exploited in a timely manner the great victories we had achieved, and we had not fully anticipated the stubbornness of the U.S. and the puppets;

-Our efforts to shift our guidance formulas and measures had not been rapid enough and were still confused and awkward;

²⁰ The document can also be found in the first edition of *Lich Su Bien Nien Xu Uy Nam Bo va Trung Uong Cuc Mien Nam (1954-1975)* [Historical Chronicle of the Cochinchina Party Committee and the Central Office for South Vietnam, 1954-1975] (Hanoi: Nha xuất bản Chính trị quốc gia, 2002), 955-956.

-Our organization and implementation efforts had not reached the village level and had not reached down to the level of the masses;

-In addition, pacifist thinking, the desire to rest, to drink and celebrate, and our loss of vigilance had dulled our zeal for struggle, so that we had not responded to enemy actions in a timely manner.

The cable laid out the following immediate missions and responsibilities for all local areas: launch a large struggle campaign to demand the strict implementation of the Agreement that had been signed, while at the same time working hard to build up, develop, and expand forces in a way favorable to our side. Push the enemy back one step at a time in order to preserve peace. Ceaselessly advance our revolutionary movement and be ready to defeat rash, risky actions by the enemy should the enemy start a civil war.

With regards to the urgent immediate tasks to be carried out, the directive laid out the following:

1. Properly carry out the work of creating the correct understanding and thinking about the Paris Agreement. We must clearly recognize that this was a glorious great victory of historic significance that opened up a new era both for our nation and for the national liberation movement throughout the world. The agreement has been signed, but the enemy continues to violate it in crafty, sophisticated ways as well as in blatant, overt ways. For that reason, we must have absolutely no illusions, but we must also not simply allow the enemy to do whatever he wished. The agreement is a new factor, a new weapon for us to use to attack the enemy and to build up our own strength and power. We need to make calm, rational assessments and to avoid hot-headedness, over-eagerness, subjectivism, and passivity. We need to make active, aggressive preparations in order to change the balance of forces in every respect.

2. Initiate a struggle movement using the following formula: Closely coordinate the political, the armed, and the legal struggles, using political struggle as the foundation and armed struggle to provide support and backing, and exploit to the maximum extent possible the effectiveness of the legal struggle.

-In the conduct of the armed struggle, we must disperse our forces, employ them in a flexible manner, at just the right level, at just the right time, against just the right target, using them in a focused, rational, productive manner to create additional strength for the struggle movement being conducted by the civilian masses. When the enemy uses military force to attack us, we must resolutely destroy him. In the struggle we must continue to implement our slogans: peace, independence, democracy, prosperity, and national reconciliation.

-With regard to military proselyting operations, we must combine them with the legal aspects of the agreement in order to intensify our struggle.

-Actively and aggressively build revolutionary forces and consolidate and expand our liberated zones and our resistance base areas.

Editor's Note: Despite an apparent willingness by some Politburo members to maintain the peace, both Senior General Vo Nguyen Giap and Party Secretary Le Duan wanted to resume the fighting. Pushed by the pair, at the end of March 1973, the Politburo met to analyze the first two months of the Paris Peace Accords. Little has been released about this meeting, but immediately afterwards, Giap formed a secret "Central Cell," comprised of four officers led by Deputy Chief of Staff Major General Le Trong Tan to develop a plan to conquer South Vietnam within two years.

Some insight into the Politburo's thinking was released in a post-war volume, although it undoubtedly is heavily colored by post-war justifications. After the war's end, the Politburo created a committee to "review the Party's leadership and guidance during the resistance war against the Americans."¹ In 1992, they tasked three senior generals—Doan Khue, Van Tien Dung, and Tran Van Quang—to finish the project. They completed it in early 1994, and it was published in 1995.

The generals wrote: "After early 1973, after the Paris Agreement on Vietnam was signed and all U.S. troops and troops from countries subordinate to the U.S. were forced to leave South Vietnam on 29 March, the U.S. continued to use the Saigon puppet government and puppet army as its tool to implement its neo-colonial policy in South Vietnam. Its goal was to turn South Vietnam into a country with a pro-American "nationalist" regime but which in fact would be a new kind of American colony.

The immediate goals of the Americans and their puppets were to seize and occupy our liberated zones, to pacify the areas they had occupied, to destroy a portion of our forces, to push our remaining forces back to the borders, and to exclude the National Liberation Front for South Vietnam and the Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Republic of South Vietnam from political life in South Vietnam. In order to achieve these goals, the U.S. massively increased the flow of money, supplies, weapons, and other implements of war to the puppets. They feverishly drafted new troops, upgraded soldiers from local forces to regular army units, and strengthened their armed forces at the grass-roots level to directly control and repress the people. They launched a continuous series of sweep operations and 'flooding the territory' campaigns. The Americans continued to maintain 'containment' forces in the areas around Vietnam. At the same time, the Americans also continued to intensify their crafty, evil diplomatic activities that were aimed at blocking the development of the South Vietnamese Revolution.

They viewed their land-grabbing operations as 'the final round of the match in which victory or defeat would be determined.' They believed the primary battlefields in this war for land were the villages and hamlets and that by securing the villages and hamlets they would basically end the war. They mobilized approximately 60-70 regular army battalions along with all of their other forces to carry out their land-grabbing and pacification operations.

On our side, our Party foresaw two possible outcomes once the Paris Agreement took effect. Either peace would be maintained, the agreement would be implemented in a gradual, step-by-step manner, and the revolutionary movement in South Vietnam would be able to expand and develop to new levels, or the war would continue. Once they had withdrawn their forces back home, it would be difficult for the U.S. to send forces back in, and if they did, they could only use air power and naval power to try to save the puppet. We decided that we would strive to achieve the first possibility while still making preparations to be ready to deal with the second possibility."²

Editor's Note (continued): ...In May 1973, the Politburo held another conference to review "the new situation after several months of trying to implement the Paris Agreement. The Politburo recognized that the trend was that the enemy was increasingly violating the agreement, and it analyzed our own shortcomings and mistakes in trying to respond to the enemy's actions. It was becoming increasingly clear that the situation was developing along the lines of the second possibility, because the U.S. was constantly helping the puppets to seize land and pacify territory and to insanely attack the revolution in an effort to totally eliminate our liberated zones and push back the forces of the revolution. And because of our own policy mistakes and shortcomings in dealing with the enemy's actions designed to sabotage the Paris Agreement, they were able to seize and pacify many areas and to inflict a certain, limited amount of losses on our forces."³

Although Le Duc Tho and Dr. Henry Kissinger were meeting again in Paris to salvage the accords, and eventually signed what became known as the June 1973 Communique, the Politburo had determined to resume the conflict. Guidance quickly flowed to COSVN: "From 19 June to 6 July 1973 the Party Central Committee held its 21st Party Plenum in Hanoi. During this important conference a whole range of major and urgent issues were addressed and systematically resolved by the Party. These issues included: Will the Nguyen Van Thieu Government strictly and seriously implement the Paris Agreement? Can we achieve the unification of our nation through peaceful means? Will the United States re-intervene? And if it does intervene, what would be the level of American intervention if we decide to totally liberate South Vietnam through the path of revolutionary violence? What will be the thoughts and attitudes of our two strategic allies, the Soviet Union and China, in this event? To what extent will they support us when we carry out our decision to liberate South Vietnam?"

After reviewing the great victories of transformational importance that the Vietnamese revolution had won and the reasons for these victories, and after assessing the situation on the battlefields of South Vietnam, the conference concluded that ever since the Paris Agreement on Vietnam was signed, even though the American imperialists had been forced to end their war of aggression, to withdraw all of their military units (and the military units of their allies) from South Vietnam, and to end the bombing and blockade of North Vietnam, 'there is still no ceasefire in South Vietnam and peace has not yet truly been restored. The Saigon puppet government, with American assistance, is continuing to launch attacks aimed at seizing and occupying the liberated zones and the contested zones, especially in the rich, heavily populated lowland areas in order to eliminate the current posture in which the forces of the two sides are intermingled.

In some places the fighting is ferocious, although the fighting is not as intense or on the same scale as it was before. At the same time, the enemy is constantly launching police operations to suppress and repress the people in the areas that they control. The Paris Agreement on Vietnam has been seriously violated by the enemy and the enemy's violations are continuing.

As for the American imperialists, the Central Committee concluded that 'the basic American imperialist policy in Vietnam is to continue to implement the 'Nixon Doctrine' in order to impose an American-style neocolonialist regime in South Vietnam and to keep our country divided.' In order to achieve this strategic goal, the American imperialists would continue to support the Saigon government and to strengthen it in every respect so that it could use counter-revolutionary violence to maintain and strengthen the yoke of their rule, and it would use every means possible to weaken our revolutionary forces in order to eventually completely destroy our revolutionary forces in South Vietnam....

Editor's Note (continued): ... At the same time, the U.S. would take maximum advantage of the tendency toward détente in the international community by using diplomatic and economic tricks and the policy of equalizing the forces of the big powers to block the development of the Vietnamese revolution.

Given these conditions, our Party's Central Committee anticipated that there were two possibilities for the future course of the South Vietnamese revolution:

1.-Through our active and aggressive struggle efforts on the political, military, and diplomatic fronts, we might be able to gradually force the enemy to implement the Paris Agreement on Vietnam and peace would be truly restored.

Although the struggle of the South Vietnamese people to achieve complete independence and democracy might still take a long time and be difficult and complicated, it will steadily grow and will be in a position from which it will be able to advance strongly.

2.-On the other hand, if because of the strategic plots of the American imperialists to hold onto Indochina and Southeast Asia and because of the extremely stubborn and reactionary nature of the U.S. and their traitorous, bureaucratic, militaristic puppet ruling clique in Saigon, the enemy continues to sabotage the Paris Agreement, military clashes could continue to increase and the scale and intensity of the fighting could continue to grow, then we will have to carry out a ferocious and difficult revolutionary war to defeat the enemy and win complete victory.

The Politburo Plenum affirmed that 'The course of revolution is the course of revolutionary violence. No matter what happens, we must firmly seize opportunities, maintain our policy of the strategic offensive, and provide flexible guidance and leadership to advance the cause of the South Vietnamese Revolution.'

The Plenum laid out the following short-term mission for the South Vietnamese revolution to carry out: to intensify the struggle on all three fronts (political, military, and diplomatic). The Plenum laid out the following missions for North Vietnam: to strive to support the front-line battlefields and to resurrect and expand the economy so that North Vietnam could always be the solid basis of support for the South Vietnamese revolution, with the ultimate goal of accomplishing our goals of liberating South Vietnam and unifying our nation. ..."⁴

Other Vietnamese publications confirm this sequence: "In May 1973 the Politburo issued a resolution on the struggle to implement the agreement, and in June 1973 the Party Central Committee met and decided on the following major policies:

The constant, the unchanging goal of the South Vietnamese revolution is to complete the national democratic revolution and move forward to the peaceful unification of our country.

The struggle to implement the Paris Agreement is not a struggle for each individual article and section of the agreement; instead, we have to view the struggle to implement the agreement as one element of the revolutionary struggle of our entire population aimed at helping to change the balance of forces and 'constantly maintaining and developing [expanding] our revolutionary forces on all fronts.'

The mission of the South Vietnamese revolution in this new era is to stimulate and closely coordinate our three fronts—the military struggle, the political struggle, and the diplomatic struggle—in order to force the enemy to implement the agreement, to constantly maintain and develop our forces, and to defeat the enemy one step at a time. At the same time, we must remain extremely prepared and be ready for the possibility of using armed struggle to strike back against our enemy and to advance forward to the complete and total liberation of South Vietnam....

Editor's Note (continued): ... As for North Vietnam, we must strive to rebuild and develop its economy, to improve the people's standard of living, and to provide even better support and assistance to South Vietnam."⁵

Sometime in June 1973 the COSVN Military Party Committee issued a resolution to adjust and reconfirm the specific missions of its armed forces: "Resolutely and aggressively carry out counterattacks and attacks, fight very powerful battles of annihilation that inflict real pain on the enemy, coordinate with the political and legal struggles being conducted by the masses, maintain close coordination between our three spearheads [military, political, military proselyting], intensify guerrilla warfare, and kill or disperse many enemy troops in order to maintain a firm hold on and expand and consolidate our liberated zones, base areas, and liberated pockets; expand the contested areas and gradually turn the contested areas into liberated zones; loosen the grip of the enemy's apparatus of repression and turn areas under enemy control into contested areas in order to reduce the size of the enemy's territory, gain control of the population, and place power back into the hands of the people."⁶

¹ *Tong Ket Cuoc Khang Chien Chong My Cuu Nuoc: Thang Loi va Bai Hoc* [Review of the Resistance War Against the Americans to Save the Nation: Victory and Lessons], (*Ban Chi Dao Tong Ket Chien Tranh Truc Thuoc Bo Chinh Tri*) [The Guidance Committee for Reviewing the War, Directly Subordinate to the Politburo] (Hanoi: Nha xuất bản Chính trị quốc gia, 1995), 17.

² *Tong Ket Cuoc Khang Chien Chong My Cuu Nuoc*, 87-88.

³ *Tong Ket Cuoc Khang Chien Chong My Cuu Nuoc*, 88.

⁴ *Lich Su Khang Chien Chong My, Cuu Nuoc 1954-1975, Tap VIII: Toan Thang* [History of the Resistance War Against the Americans to Save the Nation, 1954-1975, Volume VIII: Total Victory] (Hanoi: Nha xuất bản Chính trị quốc gia, 2008), 50-52.

⁵ *Ngoai Giao Viet Nam: 1945-2000* [Vietnamese Diplomacy: 1945-2000] (Hanoi: Nha xuất bản Chính trị quốc gia, 2002), 268-269.

⁶ *Mien Dong Nam Bo Khang Chien (1945-1975), Tap II* [The Resistance War in Eastern Cochinchina (1945-1975), Volume II] (Hanoi: People's Army Publishing House, 1993), 503.

Document No. 11

COSVN Party Current Affairs Committee Guidance on Stepping up Struggle Activities Demanding that the U.S. and the Puppets Implement our Post-Paris Agreement Proposals, 30 June 1973

[Source: *Lich Su Bien Nien Xu Uy Nam Bo va Trung Uong Cuc Mien Nam (1954-1975)* [Historical Chronicle of the Cochinchina Party Committee and the Central Office for South Vietnam, 1954-1975], 2nd ed. (Hanoi: Nha xuất bản Chính trị quốc gia, 2008), 1211-1212.]²¹

The Paris Agreement on ending the war and restoring peace in Vietnam was signed in January 1973, but the Americans and the puppets blatantly violated the agreement. They repeatedly sent troops in to attack and occupy our liberated zones. In the light of this reality, we resolutely fought for our demand that the Americans and the puppets must strictly implement the terms of the Agreement. During the meetings held to discuss the implementation of the Paris Agreement, our side constantly put forward logical and appropriate ideas but the Americans and their puppets always sought ways to avoid these ideas and instead sought to prolong these discussions.

As a result of our resolute struggle and of the warm support of international public opinion, on 13 June 1973 our side, the Americans, and the puppets signed a joint statement that was based on our fundamental proposals. Then, on 28 June 1973, our delegation in Paris submitted a six-point proposal. The six points were: ceasefire; exchange of detained civilian personnel; guaranteeing the people's right to freedom and democracy; the formation of the National Council of National Reconciliation; General elections; and the problem of armed forces.

Immediately after we achieved these results at the negotiating table, on 30 June 1973 the COSVN Party Current Affairs Committee issued an announcement that requested all levels of command and all branches to launch another powerful struggle phase that was to focus on three urgent issues: ceasefire; exchange of detained civilian personnel; and guaranteeing the people's right to freedom and democracy.

According to the announcement, the goals of this struggle phase were as follows:

-To make sure that our entire Party and that the entire civilian population fully understand the significance of the joint statement so that we can use it to push our movement forward, and at the same time to ensure that everyone realizes that our six point proposal was not just an attack against the enemy at the conference table but that it is also a political attack by our entire army and our entire population throughout South Vietnam aimed at making the enemy increasingly weaker, more isolated, and more passive and on the defensive.

-In parallel with a broad-ranging propaganda campaign about our attacks at the conference table and the successes that we had achieved at the conference table, we also need to launch a powerful struggle movement among the popular masses.

²¹ The document can also be found in the first edition of *Lich Su Bien Nien Xu Uy Nam Bo va Trung Uong Cuc Mien Nam (1954-1975)* [Historical Chronicle of the Cochinchina Party Committee and the Central Office for South Vietnam, 1954-1975] (Hanoi: Nha xuất bản Chính trị quốc gia, 2002), 966-967.

-To continue to develop and exploit the combined strength of our three-pronged attack [military, political, and military proselyting] in close coordination with our legal struggle; we have to incite mass movements in all three zones [mountain jungles, rural lowlands, urban areas] and resolutely conduct struggles of all types, because only then can we force the enemy to implement the terms of the agreement that he had signed.

-To strengthen our military proselyting operations and our proselyting operations targeted on puppet government personnel so that the enemy troops and government officials who are already frightened and confused in order to cause even greater disintegration of the puppet army, to render the puppet government's apparatus of repression to lose its effectiveness, and to incite the revolutionary zeal of the masses to rise to even higher levels.

Editor's Note: COSVN Resolution #3, which updated the guidance found in Resolution #2, was captured, translated, and printed in *Vietnam: Documents and Research Notes*, Document #115, September 1973. It has not been reproduced here.

In response to the Politburo's decision to resume the war, the Central Committee held the 21st Plenum in the fall of 1973. According to the Politburo's post-war analysis: "When faced with major changes in the situation, some places were hesitant and reluctant in responding to the enemy, and as a result the enemy was able to capture and occupy additional territory and gain control of and repress more people. The Central Committee Plenum made timely decisions on a number of extremely important questions regarding policy guidelines for the revolution, for revolutionary warfare, and strategic guidance. These were:

-The Plenum affirmed that the path of the South Vietnamese revolution was still the path of revolutionary violence. No matter what the situation, we must always seize opportunities, firmly maintain our strategic offensive policy, and provide flexible guidance to advance the cause of the revolution in South Vietnam.

-The fundamental mission of the South Vietnamese revolution during this new phase was to continue to implement our popular national democratic revolution strategy.

-The Plenum affirmed that the American imperialists and the American lackey ruling clique were still the primary enemies of the South Vietnamese revolution. The American imperialists were the directors and leaders of the enemy's schemes and were also the source of support upon which the lackeys relied. The lackeys were the tools of the Americans who the Americans used to continue their neo-colonial war. The Plenum said that the American lackey ruling clique must be viewed as the direct enemy target that had to be toppled.

-The immediate mission of the South Vietnamese revolution was to fight on all three fronts – political, military, and diplomatic – to defeat the enemy one step at a time and to be aggressive and on the offensive in all situations in order to advance the cause of the Southern revolution. The Plenum said that the enemy was employing acts of war against us in a systematic fashion, so we had to resolutely counterattack and attack the enemy and must maintain and exploit the initiative on all fronts. At the same time, we also should step up the political struggle movement and intensify our struggle on the diplomatic front.

-North Vietnam's duty to the Southern revolution was to use every advantage it possessed to strive to send aid to South Vietnam...

Editor's Note (continued): ... It had to resurrect and develop the State economy so that the Socialist North would always be the solid source of strength and support for the revolutionary struggle aimed at achieving independence and democracy in South Vietnam and moving forward toward the peaceful reunification of the Fatherland.

The Central Committee also laid out a series of major, urgent tasks that had to be carried out in order to be able to implement the above policy guidelines. These included: 1.-In any and all situations, we must firmly maintain our military forces; 2.-We must strive to gain additional population and to gain the mastery on behalf of the people; 3.-We must step up our military proselyting efforts; 4.-We must step up our attacks inside the cities; 5.-We must work to build and consolidate the liberated zones; 6.-We must strengthen our front operations; 7.-We must intensify our diplomatic efforts; 8.-We must strengthen our Party operations.

Central Committee Resolution 21 was one of the historic documents of our resistance war against the Americans. It was an important document that provided direct guidance and direction that enabled our revolution and our revolutionary war to win victory during the final phase of the war.”¹

¹ *Tong Ket Cuoc Khang Chien Chong My Cuu Nuoc: Thang Loi va Bai Hoc* [Review of the Resistance War Against the Americans to Save the Nation: Victory and Lessons], (*Ban Chi Dao Tong Ket Chien Tranh Truc Thuoc Bo Chinh Tri*) [The Guidance Committee for Reviewing the War, Directly Subordinate to the Politburo] (Hanoi: Nha xuất bản Chính trị quốc gia, 1995), 89-90

Document No. 12

Resolution of the 21st Plenum of the Party Central Committee, No. 227-NQ/TW (Excerpts), 13 October 1973

[Source: *Dang Cong san Viet Nam, Van Kien Dang Toan tap* [Party Documents Complete Series], vol. 34 (Hanoi: Nha xuất bản Chính trị quốc gia, 2004), 210-261.]

[...]

The Glorious Victory of the Resistance War against the Americans to Save the Nation and the Mission of the South Vietnamese Revolution during the Coming Phase

[...]

4. North Vietnam's Responsibility toward the South Vietnamese Revolution

Completing the liberation of our nation is the common revolutionary mission of our entire nation. Liberating South Vietnam, completing the national democratic revolution in South Vietnam, and defending and building socialism in North Vietnam are intimately linked with one another. That is the current law of development of the revolutionary cause of our entire nation. More than ever before, we must maintain a firm understanding of that law in order to carry out our revolutionary mission aimed at the common goal of defeating the U.S. neocolonialism in South Vietnam, of liberating South Vietnam in order to consolidate and strengthen North Vietnam, and

of consolidating and building North Vietnam in order to liberate South Vietnam, advancing toward the peaceful unification of the Fatherland.

We must exploit the current favorable conditions in order to restore and develop a national people's economy suited toward our political responsibilities during the new phase, cause the Socialist North to make rapid progress on all fronts so that it constantly serves as the solid foundation and source of support for our revolutionary struggle aimed at achieving independence and democracy in South Vietnam and advancing toward the peaceful unification of the Fatherland.

While stepping up its building of socialism and its strengthening of national defense, North Vietnam must continue to fully carry out its duty as the great rear area for the South Vietnam revolution and must actively struggle to ensure that the Paris Agreement on Vietnam is strictly enforced.

We must increase support to the South Vietnamese revolution on all fronts: support for the political struggle, economic support, military support, and diplomatic support. We must contribute to the building and development of the [South Vietnamese] liberated zone in all respects: economic, cultural, transportation and supply, and national defense. North Vietnam must develop a comprehensive plan to support the South Vietnamese revolution in any and all eventualities.

[...]

Document No. 13

Cable from Comrade Sau Manh [Le Duc Tho] acting as the representative of the Politburo, to Comrade Pham Hung and COSVN Headquarters Providing Guidance for Military Struggle Operations in the Cochín China Lowlands, and for Launching a Political and Military Proselyting Struggle Movement in South Vietnam, 13 November 1973

[Source: *Lich Su Bien Nien Xu Uy Nam Bo va Trung Uong Cuc Mien Nam (1954-1975)* [Historical Chronicle of the Cochín China Party Committee and the Central Office for South Vietnam, 1954-1975], 2nd ed. (Hanoi: Nha xuất bản Chính trị quốc gia, 2008), 1224-1226.]²²

In order to defeat the enemy's pacification and land-grabbing operations in the lowlands and to secure control of population and gain control over the territory, the Politburo sent a cable to Comrade Pham Hung providing guidance on military activities in the Cochín China lowlands.

The cable said that our policy on military activities in the lowlands was that we had to strengthen and reinforce our local force and guerrilla militia forces in Regions 8 and 9 [the Mekong Delta] in order to compel the enemy to stretch his forces thin throughout his territory, to disperse his troops and to destroy them.

Because our local force units and our guerrilla militia were still weak and were not yet able to obtain local-acquired replacements, the Center [Hanoi] had decided that a portion of our main

²² The document can also be found in the first edition of *Lich Su Bien Nien Xu Uy Nam Bo va Trung Uong Cuc Mien Nam (1954-1975)* [Historical Chronicle of the Cochín China Party Committee and the Central Office for South Vietnam, 1954-1975] (Hanoi: Nha xuất bản Chính trị quốc gia, 2002), 981-982.

force army must be sent down into the lowlands to deal with the enemy's actions and to create a posture of strength for our side. The Center instructed COSVN that before main force troops were sent down into the lowlands they must first receive careful training in our operational formulas and methods, and they must also receive training in political, civilian proselyting, and military proselyting operations so that the troops could both fight the enemy and at the same time participate in the building up of our political forces within the civilian masses and coordinate the three spearhead attack [military, political, military proselyting] to achieve good results.

The Center also directed COSVN to deploy and utilize main force troops in a manner suited to the actual situation on the ground, and that COSVN must concentrate or disperse these troops in a flexible manner so that they were mobile.

With regards to troop levels, the Central Military Party Committee planned to send between 27,000 and 28,000 troops to reinforce the B2 Theater of Operations [the southern half of South Vietnam]. Of this number, 5,000 were to be sent to Region 3 [Military Region 9]; 3,000 to Region 2 [Military Region 8]; 2,000 to Regions 4 and 6 [Saigon Military Region and Military Region 6]; and the rest would be assigned COSVN's main force units. For that reason, Le Duc Tho's cable instructed COSVN to organize cadre framework units so that these new troops could be formed into powerful main force units. He also said that when main force troops were sent down into the lowlands they should be immediately turned over to the local areas to ensure unity of command.

The cable said that the Center would send COSVN additional equipment and technical along with technical and engineer cadre as reinforcements. The Center would provide ample 105mm howitzer ammunition, various types of slow-burning fuses, explosive detonators, and explosive charges. COSVN would be responsible for directing its cadre and enlisted men to properly preserve and maintain all of our weapons and to economize on its expenditure of ammunition.

In order to resolve the most pressing, urgent requirements for the people's daily lives, the Center asked COSVN to launch a political struggle movement in combination with military proselyting efforts, employing struggle methods suited to each specific local area and each specific period of time. The cable directed that in the cities attention must be paid to building up the third force. Political and military proselyting struggles should be launched once every three months. After each such struggle, reviews should be held to derive lessons learned before launching a new struggle.

In order to direct and guide the movement, Party Committees at all levels needed to have one individual, a deputy secretary or member of the current affairs committee, and a specialized section to be responsible for directing the political and military proselyting struggle operations. At the same time, all levels and all branches at COSVN had to step up their work of building up base areas and liberated zones.

Document Appendix – 1974

Editor's Note: In 1974, Hanoi continued its process of rebuilding its military to launch major attacks on South Vietnamese forces. In March and April 1974, conferences were held in Hanoi to discuss supply levels, force concentrations, and other military preparations. Consequently, major attacks involving multiple regiments commenced in South Vietnam, but they were launched sequentially, not consecutively, across the country. Despite losing some remote territory and suffering heavy casualties, the Republic of Vietnam's Armed Forces (RVNAF) held and in some places, repulsed the PAVN assaults. Combined with U.S. Congressional aid cuts, the net effect was a badly weakened South Vietnamese military, its supplies and manpower drained, and its morale reaching dangerously low levels.

In a letter by Le Duan to the leadership of MR-6, the sparsely populated area that lay between the Central Highlands and the northern section of the more hotly contested Cochin China, one can see the beginning of the strategic concept to attack South Vietnam at a weakly defended area from which PAVN forces could turn in any direction to unhinge Saigon's defensive lines. Eventually, this idea would evolve into the plan to assault Ban Me Thuot, whose capture would set in motion the defeat of South Vietnam.

Document No. 14

Letter from Le Duan to Military Region 6, 4 May 1974

[Source: Le Duan, *Tho Vao Nam* [Letters to the South] (Hanoi: So That, 1985), 356-367.]

Dear Comrades,

During my recent discussions with Nam Hoa [Secretary of the Region 6 Party Committee] I expressed a number of ideas about Region 6's mission and the urgent tasks the region faces during the next two years, 1974-1975. The Party Central Committee Office took notes on my comments and I have reviewed these notes. I am sending them to you now for your study and execution.

Ba [Le Duan]

REGION 6'S URGENT MISSION DURING THE TWO-YEAR PERIOD 1974-1975

I. The Strategic Location and Mission of Region 6

Region 6 is not heavily populated, but it occupies a very strategic location. It is located east and northeast of Saigon and contains strategic roads linking Dalat with the city of Saigon and with the port of Cam Ranh. For several years the enemy has been striving to keep this area secure.

After the Paris Agreement was signed, the enemy developed a plan that he is now implementing, step by step, to move residents of the Tri-Thien and Nam-Ngai areas into Region 6. The enemy's primary goal is to secure control of the unpopulated mountain jungles in this area in order to create a number of defensive lines to block the advance of our forces and to help protect

Saigon. The immediate objective of this enemy's effort is to support his military needs, and not to immediately exploit the area's economic potential.

For us, at this time Region 6 also occupies an important position primarily for military reasons. The strategic mission of Region 6 is to form a common strategic link with all of the battlefields in Cochin China. We must not consider Region 6 a battlefield unit that is separate and cut off from Cochin China, but at the same time we should also not integrate it into Region 7, because Region 7 has just been reformed as a regional command and is currently engaged in consolidating its organizational structure. The area of operations would be too large, travel would be too difficult, and command and guidance would not be effective if the two regions were merged. In addition, Region 6 has been a regional command for a long time and the region's party structure and Party Committee are familiar with the battlefield, so we should not cause any organizational disruptions that would delay our preparations for combat operations, and combat preparations will be an extremely urgent task for the region during the next two years.

The strategic mission of Region 6 at present is to strive to gain control of the entire mountain jungle portion of the region and to build the mountain jungle area where Region 6 joins Region 7 into a solid integral strategic base area for the entire Cochin China battlefield, an area from which we can deploy our main force corps-sized units to surround, pressure, and attack Saigon from any different directions.

I would like to say a little more about this matter. In South Vietnam (not counting the Tri-Thien battlefield, which has a solid connection with the southern provinces of the old Region 4) we have two important strategic base areas.

The first is the northern Central Highlands, where the vast liberated areas of the provinces of Kontum and Gia Lai are linked with the liberated zones of [Quang] Nam, [Quang] Ngai, Binh [Dinh], and Phu [Yen] so that our forces can advance down to liberate the coastal lowlands of Region 5 and besiege the city of Danang. The second is the liberated zone of eastern Cochin China, which is connected with the mountain jungles of Region 6 to form a strategic base that represents a constant threat to Saigon. From this base our main force units will advance against and attack Saigon to defeat the enemy there and throughout the rest of the Cochin China battlefield. For that reason, with respect to Saigon and the Mekong Delta, the mountain jungles of eastern Cochin China and Region 6 have a position similar to that our old Viet Bac base area had toward Hanoi and the Red River Delta during the war against the French.

Several years ago, we up here [in North Vietnam] gave you the mission of building a strategic base area for the Cochin China battlefield in this sector, and we emphasized that we must occupy the unpopulated or lightly populated mountain jungle regions by "transplanting" people from other areas and creating populated locations that can be turned into combat villages so that we can use these villages to build guerrilla and local force units to truly control the mountain jungle area. However, it seems that down there you all did not fully understand the importance of this issue. In addition, Region 6's strength is limited, so you did not have the strength to be able to gain control of your entire mountain jungle area, and COSVN did not have sufficient strength to give you any additional help. Right not, our combat operations require that we accomplish this mission quickly, and now conditions are favorable to do this more quickly and with more force than was

possible before. Region 6 needs to correctly understand the importance of this issue in order to strive to accomplish this mission.

Currently, in Region 6 our forces have control of a significant portion of the mountain jungle region, not only in the border areas between Binh Thuan, Ninh Thuan, and Binh Tuy provinces, but also along both sides of Route 20 linking your area with Region 7's liberated zone and linking into our strategic corridor down from North Vietnam. This is an important change in comparison with the situation that existed during the resistance war against France, and it is also the happy result of the hard work and continuous efforts of our Party chapter, our people, and our armed forces in the provinces of Region 6. Building on what you have already achieved, with assistance from COSVN and the COSVN Military Headquarters as well as from the Party Central Committee and the Central Military Party Committee, Region 6 must strive to move forward, expand and perfect your control of the mountain jungle region, and work with Region 7 to would a common strategic base for the entire Cochin China battlefield.

On the enemy side, after a year of sabotaging the Paris Agreement, the enemy has not only not been able to improve his situation; the situation has become more difficult and he has become weaker militarily, politically, and economically. During the coming period, the enemy certainly will be dealt painful blows and even greater military defeats, and our political struggle in areas under enemy control, and especially in Saigon, will expand and grow stronger. This may lead to a profound political crisis within the puppet regime that will hasten the enemy's collapse even more.

We now had an opportunity to coordinate our three strategic blows [military, political, military proselyting] to defeat the enemy. For that reason, from this very moment, in addition to attacking the areas temporarily under enemy control, we must very quickly step up the work of developing a solid strategic base in Region 6 and eastern Cochin China in accordance with a common plan so that within a few years this base will be capable of supporting a large main force army.

Region 6 alone may receive several divisions. If we can accomplish this, we will completely change the balance of forces throughout Cochin China and place powerful pressure on Saigon from many different directions, not just from the north, northeast, and northwest, but also from the east and southeast, and we will be able to advance toward defeating the enemy in Saigon, the enemy's final stronghold.

II. A Number of Specific Tasks

Central Committee Resolution 21 stated that we must always maintain a firm grip on our armed forces, strive to build up the revolution's strength, coordinate and combine our military, political, and diplomatic efforts, utilize offensive operations in an appropriate manner in the three strategic areas [mountain jungles, rural countryside, cities], intensify our efforts to gain control of the people, take control at the local level, and gradually expand our area while shrinking the enemy's area of control. We must coordinate front-line tasks with the work in the rear, coordinate attacks with force-building, create new strength and a new battlefield posture in order to change the balance of forces even more in our favor, and make preparations of all types to secure victory no matter how the situation should develop in the future. This is the essential spirit of the

resolution. Now we can see the enemy's plots more clearly, we can now more accurately assess our strength and the enemy's strength, and we can affirm that there is now an opportunity for the South Vietnamese revolution to achieve total victory. For that reason, Region 6 must clearly understand the strategic mission discussed above and must make an all-out effort to accomplish this mission, quickly prepare your forces, and support the entire South Vietnamese battle in order to win victory.

First of all, the following concrete tasks must be carried out.

1. Gain control of the population and disrupt the enemy's "pacification" program.

The lowlands of Region 6 are very narrow, and the population has been resettled and repressed by the enemy for a long time. Meanwhile, although few people live in the mountains, we have been able to secure control over a number of rather large areas. Because of the rugged terrain in those areas we control, when the people break out of the enemy's grip, they have places to live, places we can hold and defend. For that reason, the goals for our struggle for control of the population in the mountains may be higher than our goals in the lowlands. This subject is intimately linked to the task of perfecting our control in the mountains and building a base area.

In Region 6, during the earlier resistance war the French established armed "nests" (Goum) to dominate the mountain regions. The same is true today – whoever controls the population will control the mountain region. We must place strong emphasis on the need to gain control of the mountain areas, which means we must devote particular attention to the work of mobilizing and propagandizing the ethnic minority groups and strive to win most of them over to our side rather than simply giving them moral support. At present, there are more than 190,000 ethnic minority tribal people, but we have only liberated and control about 55,000 of them, or only about a third.

We must gain control over the vast bulk of this population. Our cadre and enlisted men in the mountains must be able to conduct propaganda operations to win over the ethnic minority population. We must review all of our political, military proselyting, and combat operations in order to constantly supplement the training and improve the abilities of our cadre, soldiers, and hard-core supporters. Using these experiences and the lessons learned, we should set out goals for gaining control of the population and gaining mastery of the area at different levels for each specific area and each specific tribe, and then move toward launching individual waves of attacks to destroy enemy strategic hamlets and resettlement centers to free the people and have them build new villages that are completely in the area we control.

In order to do that, in addition to building up our strength and coordinating our "three-pronged" attack [military, political, military proselyting], we must prepare areas, land, and equipment beforehand so that we can help the people when they break out of the enemy zone and enable them to produce and make their living over the long term. At the same time, with assistance from the National level, you must provide the people with salt and cloth and you must work to establish medical facilities and schools in order to enable the people to stabilize their livelihoods and create strong bonds with the revolution and with the liberated zone. You must carry out our ethnic minority policy strictly and properly, win over the support of tribal chieftains and respected village leaders in order to win the masses of each tribe over to our side. To strengthen your

proselyting efforts toward the ethnic minorities, you must vigorously train and promote cadre from the local ethnic minority tribes.

As for the lowlands, we do not underestimate the need to disrupt the enemy's "pacification" program and gain control of the population, but you must set goals appropriate to the local balance of forces at a time when our strength has its limits. Do not be overeager or set immediate goals that are too high – the main thing is to gain power systematically, gradually, step by step. The first thing is to loosen the enemy's grip, limit his control, domination, and exploitation of the people in order to give the people an opportunity to break free and give us an opportunity to contact them, propagandize them on our policies, win over puppet government officials at the hamlet and village level, and gradually build political, military, and military proselyting forces. Attacks against enemy forces in the strategic hamlets and expansion of guerrilla warfare in areas under enemy repression must first be approved of and supported by the local masses of the population.

2. Perfect our control throughout the mountain jungle area and quickly build a base.

This task includes attacks as well as force-building, a combination of front-line and rear area tasks within the mountain region. With regard military attacks, you must resolutely defeat the enemy's land-grabbing operations and his commando operations and sudden surprise raids. You must coordinate with units from higher level authorities to expand our control along the Vietnamese-Cambodian border and open up a strategic corridor from the northern Central Highlands down into Region 6's base area. Regarding the attack against enemy forces to liberate Duc Lap that you all recommended, the General Staff is now studying that recommendation. You must focus on attacking enemy roads and lines of communications, on securing control of the population living on the plantations and in the strategic hamlets along Routes 11 and 20. When conditions permit, you should cut selected sections of these roads. You must combine combat operations with civilian proselyting operations in order to disrupt the enemy's resettlement plan and his program for building strategic hamlets. You must attract the people that the enemy has moved down from Central Vietnam and induce them to flee into the areas under our control to make their livings.

On building a base, we must have a comprehensive plan, covering military, political, and economic matters. Special attention should be paid to agricultural production, gradually resolving the food problem for the people and help our headquarters staffs and units to become self-sufficient in food. At the same time we must strive to open up a number of new production areas in order to be able to resolve our logistics problem locally while at the same time building up a stockpile for use by COSVN units when they arrive in the area to conduct operations and by additional reinforcements arriving from North Vietnam. I agree that you should open up production areas in northern Thanh Linh and Hoai Duc districts and along the La Nga and Dong Nai Rivers.

At the same time you might be able to open up additional new production zones in northern Lam Dong.

The direction of production should be to plant staples and food crops, but you must make a concrete study of the area and the soil to select the proper crops to plant. Rice should only be planted in abandoned rice fields where there are good sources of water. You should plant corn,

beans, potatoes, and manioc on dry, sloping ground. You must pay a great deal of attention to making and repairing hand tools to ensure that our headquarters staffs, units, and the local population have sufficient equipment to till the soil.

You need to talk to the General Department of Rear Services about requesting that they send people down to conduct a local survey to make sure the base has a good production plan. The General Department of Rear Services will send economic production troops down to work on this project to create solid strong-points from which we can expand the base outward. Regional and province units will be responsible for making production arrangements for troops and civilians in the liberated zone and at the same time of creating conditions that will enable us to support the civilian residents who escape out to us from the enemy-controlled areas.

3. Intensify Urban Operations.

The enemy is strengthening the defenses of the cities and carrying out very stringent control measures. However, when compared with the Ngo Dinh Diem era and the time that U.S. forces were directly involved in the fighting, the enemy's current posture in the cities is weaker than it was before. This is a time when the contradictions between the fascist Nguyen Van Thieu clique and the majority of the population, and between Thieu and the third force and opposition factions, are becoming rather bitter. At the same time, the enemy is also experiencing many economic and financial problems. The different classes of the population and a rather large portion of the enemy's soldiers are now facing burning needs for their daily livelihoods.

Because of their current and long-standing links, Dalat and Phan Thiet must continue to maintain close links with Saigon. They should use our overt movement posture and the possibility of operating legally inside the cities to bring together the masses, and especially workers, students, and women, of these two cities. At the same time, they should use slogans involving the people's living conditions, democracy, peace, and other pressing issues in the people's daily lives to incite and expand the political struggle movement. While you intensify your overt, legal activities, you must be sure to also pay attention to consolidating and expanding the Party's covert organizations and its hard-core supporters.

4. Building Armed Forces and Combat Operations.

The issue of sending additional forces to Region 6 is part of the plan for aid to South Vietnam on which we are currently working up here. However, the issue of how many troops to send and what types of specialty branch units are suitable to the battlefields of Region 6 must first be discussed in detail with the General Staff. In your combat operations, you must use the forces you currently possess with the greatest possible effectiveness, avoid unnecessary losses and casualties, strive to find ways to draw on local resources to strengthen your forces, and be extremely economical in your expenditure of weapons and ammunition, because Region 6, as well as Cochin China, are far from the Center [North Vietnam] and we still have some problems with supplying support to the front lines. In addition, with regards to main force units, the Center [the National leadership] wishes to use them in an extremely concentrated and mobile manner, and only use them when an opportunity arises in order to create the maximum strategic surprise.

You must study the tactics being used by your local force troops to ensure that they are suited to the specific conditions on the battlefield and that they achieve our military and political goals at specific locations and specific times.

For the immediate future, combat operations must support our objectives of securing control of the population, disrupting “pacification,” and consolidating and expanding our control. You should review your operations and draw lessons learned from them in the proper methods for combating enemy land-grabbing operations, for eliminating [killing] enemy thugs, officials, and traitors, for besieging enemy outposts, for attacking enemy rear bases, for attacking and disrupting enemy road traffic and lines of communications, etc. You should focus on combat operations that utilize small, elite forces to achieve a high level of effectiveness with low casualties.

With respect to Dalat, you should aggressively develop springboard positions, create a siege posture around the city, and, when the opportunity presents itself, quickly attack using local armed forces in coordination with mass [civilian] violence in order to liberate the city in order to disrupt the enemy’s scheme of pulling back and regrouping his forces to turn Dalat into a large military strong-point on the enemy’s defense line along Route 11.

5. The Region Committee’s Command and Guidance Operations.

In addition to general matters, I suggest that you should move the Region Party Committee headquarters to another area where mobility is better so that the Region Party Committee can cover the entire battlefield and facilitate contact with Region 7 and our strategic corridor down from North Vietnam. The region’s current base could be turned over to the province Party committee for their use. Additional support for Region 6 is a component of our overall plan to provide support to the entire South Vietnamese battlefield. However, to facilitate transportation and the receipt of such support, I agree that you should arrange for transportation of supplies directly from the strategic corridor to the region’s base in order to avoid circuitous routes that waste time and energy.

You should analyze the deployment and assignment of individual duties to the members of the Region Party Committee in order to be able to provide guidance to all three areas [mountain jungles, rural countryside, cities]. As for gaining control of the population in the lowlands, the coastal provinces are directly responsible for that but the Region Party Committee should establish an element to monitor, supervise, and assist the provinces in expanding and improving the movement in those areas. With respect to the cities, you should assign additional cadre to Tuyen Duc in order to intensify our movement in Dalat and the rural countryside around the city. Besides those two areas, the Regiment Party Committee should provide appropriate guidance on perfecting our control over the mountainous areas and on expanding and building bases. This should be considered one of your most important, leading responsibilities, and you must carry it out very quickly and vigorously so that next year you will be able to receive main force troops from up here in order to be able to seize the opportunity in time to score major victories.

Document No. 15

COSVN Plenum Number 13 (Expanded) to Review the Situation and to Establish the Revolution's Guidelines, Directions, Missions, and Requirements for Late 1974 and 1975, 28 July-4 August 1974

[Source: *Lich Su Bien Nien Xu Uy Nam Bo va Trung Uong Cuc Mien Nam (1954-1975)* [Historical Chronicle of the Cochinchina Party Committee and the Central Office for South Vietnam, 1954-1975], 2nd ed. (Hanoi: Nha xuất bản Chính trị quốc gia, 2008), 1266-1268.]²³

After the Paris Agreement was signed, the situation in South Vietnam changed substantially. The U.S. withdrew its troops and there was a change in the revolutionary situation, shifting it in our favor. Because of this situation, COSVN held a full Party conference from 28 July to 4 August 1974 to agree on its assessment of the situation and to set out guidelines, directions, and missions for last part of 1974 and for 1975.

After listening to briefings and holding discussions on the battlefield situation in Cochinchina during the first six months of 1974 and on our missions for the last half of the year, the COSVN conference unanimously concluded as follows:

-The most outstanding feature of the current situation was that we are now capable of winning a large victory during the rainy season and dry season of 1974-1975, and at the same time there are many favorable factors that can create a major turning point for the South Vietnamese revolution. As for the other side, the enemy's situation was deteriorating in every respect: military, economic, and political.

With regard to our mission and goals for the 1974-1975 rainy and dry season, the Conference concluded:

-We had to create the possibility for winning a great victory during the 1974-1975 dry season and create a decisive turning point that would advance our movement in order to achieve and perhaps even exceed our assigned goals for 1974. If we wanted to accomplish this, the conference said, we would have to make good preparations for the rainy season and the dry season. We would have to make great efforts, and there was a possibility that the situation might develop even faster than anticipated.

In order to properly accomplish this mission, the Conference requested that all Region Party Committees and Province Party Committees review their activities, derive lessons learned from their experience, update their plans for the dry season, concentrate their efforts on the 1974-1975 dry season, and study and absorb our offensive concept for the coming phase of the war.

The Conference unanimously decided on the following missions:

-Continue to attack and defeat the enemy's pacification program;

²³ The document can also be found in the first edition of *Lich Su Bien Nien Xu Uy Nam Bo va Trung Uong Cuc Mien Nam (1954-1975)* [Historical Chronicle of the Cochinchina Party Committee and the Central Office for South Vietnam, 1954-1975] (Hanoi: Nha xuất bản Chính trị quốc gia, 2002), 1023-1025.

- Maintain a firm grasp of our formulas and missions for conducting armed operations and building up our armed forces;

- Strengthen our operations in urban areas and the areas where we were still weak.

- Develop our liberated zones, base areas, and supply corridors, expand production, and gradually and systematically build new production relationships.

- Intensify our ideological and mass mobilization activities to ensure that the masses correctly understood the new situation in order to increase their enthusiasm for our cause. We must employ an offensive, resolute ideology and a correct mass concept. We would have to guard against thoughts of self-satisfaction, complacency, hesitation, and rightist deviationism.

The Conference affirmed that we must constantly maintain close contact with the Party Central Committee and submit concrete status reports on all aspects of the situation to the Central Committee in order to strengthen guidance and direction regarding the missions and objectives of the soldiers and civilians of South Vietnam during the coming phase.

After the conference, in early April 1974 COSVN issued a directive that clearly stated the following:

Our most urgent guidelines, directions, missions, requirements [goals], and activities during the last six months of 1974 were:

- To continue to fundamentally defeat the enemy's "pacification and land encroachment" plan, especially in the area of the Mekong Delta and the areas around the cities, and strive to liberate and gain control over approximately 4 million people during the last half of 1975.

During the 1974-1975 rainy season and dry season, we should strive to achieve most of the goals that have been set:

- To annihilate truly large numbers of enemy troops, including regular troops, RF soldiers, PF soldiers, and PSDF personnel;

- To take an important step forward in transforming the situation in the areas where we are weak, advancing toward the goal of eliminating one half of the current number of "white" [abandoned, deserted] hamlets and of moving our mass organizations, and eventually Party chapters, into these hamlets;

- Move our urban movement in the cities another step forward, build up our Party organization and our mass organizations in the cities, develop and expand our three types of troops [main force, local force, guerrilla militia] in the cities, win the support of opposition forces and of the followers of the different religions and religious factions, and properly exploit the internal contradictions within the enemy's own camp, coordinating these efforts with our other attack

spearheads in the rural countryside to build the strength needed to overthrow the Nguyen Van Thieu puppet government.

Document No. 16

Politburo Resolution No. 236-NQ/TW, 13 August 1974

[Source: Dang Cong san Viet Nam, *Van Kien Dang Toan tap* [Party Documents Complete Series], vol. 35 (Hanoi: Nha xuất bản Chính trị quốc gia, 2004), 116-123.]

On Nixon's Resignation of the Presidency of the United States and a Number of Urgent Party Tasks

I-Reason for and Significance of Nixon's Forced Resignation of the Presidency of the United States

Nixon's resignation as President of the United States is an important political event that signals the weakness and defeat of the American imperialists. The American imperialists have sought to spread distortions and lies about the true reasons for this event in order to deceive public opinion and to limit the negative consequences of this event for the United States. Around the world, many different nations have explained the reasons for Nixon's fall in ways that reflect their own private interests.

We must analyze both the underlying reasons and the direct reasons for Nixon's resignation of the office of President, and from that draw the necessary conclusions.

For many years, the three world revolutionary tides have been constantly on the offensive in attacking the imperialists, and these tides have pushed the American imperialists into an increasingly difficult position. Although they always employ devious plots and constantly counterattack and try to destroy the world revolutionary movement, every time the American imperialists shift the direction of or alter their world-wide strategy, it is because the U.S. has suffered defeats and has run into difficulties.

All such changes and shifts of direction display imperialist weakness and demonstrate that the world balance of forces is shifting increasingly in favor of socialism, national independence, democracy, and peace.

This time, the state monopoly capitalist clique in the U.S. has been forced to replace the individual who leads the U.S. in order to deceive the American people and the people of the world so that the U.S. can, after making some slight adjustments, continue to implement the American world counter-revolutionary strategy that bears the name, "The Nixon Doctrine."

Nixon was not forced to resign from the office of President of the United States solely because of the crimes committed in the Watergate affair. The Judiciary Committee of the U.S. House of Representatives accused Nixon of the crimes of violating the Constitution, obstructing justice, abusing his power, contempt of Congress, and contempt for the courts. However, the Watergate affair was just a chance opportunity that set off an explosion of the U.S.'s social

contradictions and of the internal contradictions within the American monopoly capitalist class. In fact, the primary cause of these contradictions is the U.S. war of aggression in Vietnam. This war has been so costly, in lives, property, and dollars, that it has caused the crisis of the American imperialists on the economic, political, and military fronts to develop rapidly and to grow more serious with each passing day.

a) The war of aggression in Vietnam has killed and wounded hundreds of thousands of American troops and has wasted hundreds of billions of dollars. The morale of the American armed forces has deteriorated and has virtually disintegrated. This is the first major defeat the U.S. has suffered in its entire history.

b) The war of aggression in Vietnam has not only failed to rescue the American economy from recession; it has sent the United States into a deep crisis which is revealed in the U.S.'s high rate of inflation, in its rising cost of living, and in its steadily rising unemployment rate. At the same time, the war has awakened the American people and has increasingly destabilized the political situation inside the United States. Contradictions within American society and social vices in the United States are growing.

c) The historic victory won by the Vietnamese people has made an important contribution to a change in the world balance of forces between the revolution and the counter-revolution in favor of the revolution. The posture and the prestige of the United States has declined around the world, the American imperialists are becoming weaker, the socialist nations are becoming stronger, the forces of socialism are growing quickly, the national liberation movement has grown stronger than ever before, and the peace and democracy movement is developing quickly in the capitalist nations. The balance of forces between the American imperialists and the other imperialist countries is also changing in a direction unfavorable to the U.S. The countries of the third world are increasingly taking an attitude of opposition to imperialism and colonialism, and especially to U.S. neocolonialism. One very significant point is that the Vietnamese people's resistance war against the Americans to save the nation has had a powerful effect in awakening the nations and peoples of the world, and it has stimulated the formation of a broad front of the world's people opposed to American imperialist aggression.

d) During the final days of the Johnson Administration, the American public in general wanted the U.S. to quickly end its war of aggression in Vietnam. Instead, however, under the Nixon Administration the war was prolonged, expanded, and waged even more savagely.

The serious crisis involving all aspects of American domestic affairs and the weakening position of the United States in the international community were urgent problems that needed to be addressed and solved as far back as the last days of the Johnson Administration. However, throughout his five long years in power, Nixon demonstrated that he was incapable of resolving these problems. After the Paris Agreement on Vietnam was signed, the U.S.'s problems grew even greater.

As a result of this situation, under the Nixon Administration the contradictions between the American people and the American ruling clique grew steadily more serious.

The American military, economic, and political failures are failures of the policies of the American ruling class and represent an across-the-board crisis for American imperialism. In this situation, American monopoly capitalist cliques struggled for power against one another and attacked one another. In the Watergate affair, their disputes and struggles for power grew extremely bitter. However, in light of the desperate situation facing the United States, for their own interests the American ruling class made Nixon its sacrificial lamb in order to trick the U.S. public and the people of the world. That is the real reason that, in the end, both the Democratic Party and the Republican Party agreed to force Nixon to resign.

For that reason, we can see that the most basic reason for Nixon's forced resignation was the heavy defeat the U.S. suffered in Vietnam, while the direct, the ulterior reason was the Watergate affair.

Nixon's fall demonstrates the failure of America's world strategy, the crisis and weakness of the American imperialists, and the corruption of the U.S. capitalist regime. This event is a stern warning to all pro-American dictatorial, reactionary, and war-mongering forces that have become accustomed to clinging to life through American military involvement and economic assistance. This was a powerful political and spiritual blow to the Nguyen Van Thieu puppet government, the lackeys of the Americans, who are now shocked, frightened, and wavering because of Nixon's collapse.

G. Ford replaced Nixon as President in the midst of a deep crisis in America, a crisis of unprecedented proportions. First of all, G. Ford will have to solve that crisis in American society. At the same time, he will also have to deal with a world revolutionary situation that is now growing rapidly because of the U.S.'s weakened position. G. Ford announced that he would continue Nixon's foreign policies and that he would retain Kissinger as Secretary of state. We have no illusions about the replacement of the U.S. President. This is just a trick by the American monopoly capitalist clique, changing horses in mid-stream to try to redeem its desperate situation. G. Ford is still stubbornly carrying out the American imperialist world counter-revolutionary strategy, even though the state of the world is changing rapidly to America's detriment. G. Ford will continue the Nixon Doctrine without Nixon, he will continue the evil "Vietnamization" policy, and he will continue to sabotage the Paris Agreement on Vietnam. He may use a few more demagogic tricks than Nixon did, but America's basic policies, both domestic and foreign, remain unchanged. For that reason, it is certain that G. Ford will not be able to reverse the direction of America's difficult situation, neither domestically nor abroad. By stubbornly following in Nixon's tire tracks, G. Ford will lead the United States down to even greater defeats.

II-A Number of Urgent Party Tasks

In order to further exacerbate the contradictions, to add to the difficulties of the American imperialists, and to win victory for our people in both North and South Vietnam, we must properly implement the following measures:

1. In both North and South Vietnam, we must launch a continuous and wide-ranging propaganda campaign aimed at both domestic public opinion and world opinion.

-Clearly understand that the deep, true reason for Nixon's fall was that the U.S.'s heavy defeat in Vietnam caused the across-the-board crisis in the U.S. to become extremely serious.

-Correctly and fully assess the significance of Nixon's resignation in order to see the new advantages for our side so that we step up our work on all fronts and so that we do not hesitate or miss an opportunity to further confuse and shake the already shaken and confused U.S. and puppet clique.

-Avoid any illusion that Nixon's fall means that the Nixon Doctrine has totally failed or that G. Ford will inevitably have to change American policy. We must clearly understand that, although the American imperialists have been weakened and are in a serious crisis, they still have many resources and great potential, and they will continue to stubbornly implement America's world-wide counter-revolutionary strategy.

-Reject America's deceptive claims about America's broad-based democratic system and clearly expose the true reason for Nixon's fall and the corruption and rottenness of the political system in the United States.

2. In South Vietnam, we need to exploit Nixon's fall to step up our struggle against the U.S. and the Saigon Government on all fronts - political, military, and diplomatic.

We must link the corruption, the rottenness, the failures, and the stagnation of the Nixon Administration to the corruption, the rottenness, the failures, and the stagnation of the Nguyen Van Thieu Government.

We must stress the fact that Nguyen Van Thieu was Nixon's lackey and that only by overthrowing Nguyen Van Thieu will our nation be able to have peace and national reconciliation.

We need to form a broad-based front against Thieu, a front that demands that Thieu be thrown out, that a government be formed that truly supports the implementation of the Paris Agreement, that this new government implements the exercise of freedom and democracy in the areas controlled by the Saigon government, that it frees political prisoners, and that it implements peace and national reconciliation.

We need to exacerbate the internal contradictions within the puppet ranks and to increase the confusion and fear that is already sweeping the ranks of the puppet army and puppet government.

Militarily, we must step up combat operations, shatter the enemy's pacification and land-grabbing military sweep operations, kill enemy troops and erode the enemy's manpower strength, recover those areas that the enemy has seized from us, protect our liberated zones, protect our base areas, and work to implement our policy of mounting a three-pronged attack [military, political, military proselyting] in order to win even greater victories.

In the diplomatic struggle, when the time is right the Provisional Revolutionary Government of South Vietnam may launch a diplomatic offensive to push the Americans and their

puppets back up against the wall and to win widespread sympathy and support, both at home and abroad.

3. In North Vietnam, step up the labor and production emulation movement, work industriously to build socialism, restore and expand our economy, develop our culture, consolidate and strengthen national defense, and fully carry out our responsibilities to our brothers and sisters in South Vietnam. Step up the “Determined-to-Win Emulation Movement” in the people’s armed forces by using slogans calling for increased vigilance, combat readiness, and determination to win victory in battle. Do everything possible to support and assist South Vietnam to defeat the puppet army, which is controlled and fed by the Americans.

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The Party Secretariat and the Central Office for South Vietnam will prepare a plan to disseminate, direct, and push the implementation of this resolution.

For the Politburo
[signed] Truong Chinh

Editor’s Note: COSVN Directive 8/74, which provided similar instructions to the cable below, was captured, translated, and printed in *Vietnam: Documents and Research Notes*, Document #118, February 1975. It has not been reproduced here.

Document No. 17

Cable from the COSVN Party Current Affairs Committee to the Politburo Reporting on the Results of COSVN’s 13th Party Plenum, 18 August 1974

[Source: *Lich Su Bien Nien Xu Uy Nam Bo va Trung Uong Cuc Mien Nam (1954-1975)* [Historical Chronicle of the Cochinchina Party Committee and the Central Office for South Vietnam, 1954-1975], 2nd ed. (Hanoi: Nha xuất bản Chính trị quốc gia, 2008), 1271-1273.]²⁴

In its report, the COSVN Current Affairs Committee reviewed all aspects of the situation since the dissemination of COSVN Resolution 12 [the Resolution of the 12th Plenum of the COSVN Party Committee] and on the implementation of the Central Committee’s Resolution 21. The COSVN Party Current Affairs Committee reported its assessment that enormous changes in the situation were occurring, including changes in the views of our cadre and people and in our combat activities. These changes were demonstrated most clearly as follows:

- COSVN Resolution 12, which was studied in political retraining seminars all the way down to the grass-roots level, has created a spirit of great enthusiasm and unanimity throughout

²⁴ The document can also be found in the first edition of *Lich Su Bien Nien Xu Uy Nam Bo va Trung Uong Cuc Mien Nam (1954-1975)* [Historical Chronicle of the Cochinchina Party Committee and the Central Office for South Vietnam, 1954-1975] (Hanoi: Nha xuất bản Chính trị quốc gia, 2002), 1026-1028.

our entire Party membership and has been turned into revolutionary actions attacking the enemy that have moved our movement forward in all fields and on all fronts and that have won great victories.”

- The Current Affairs Committee reported that our movement in all three areas [mountain jungles, rural lowlands, and the cities] had been transformed and had scored many successes, particularly in the Mekong Delta, and Eastern Cochin China [Region 7], Region 6, and the area around the cities had also developed and expanded their organizational structures. As for the results achieved in terms of enemy troops annihilated and enemy outposts eliminated, great progress had been made in comparison with the results during 1973. We had liberated and exercised control over 2,300,000 people. In just the first six months of 1974, throughout the entire COSVN area we had now recovered and had rebuilt back to the posture and the strength that we had possessed prior to 28 January 1973.

The COSVN Party Current Affairs Committee reported that it had concluded that from August 1974 to the end of the 1974 rainy season our forces would achieve the same level of success in annihilating enemy troops, eliminating enemy outposts, liberating territory, and expanding our liberated zones as we had achieved during the first six months of 1974. COSVN concluded that we were on the road to victory and the enemy was weakening and was encountering difficulties on many different fronts. COSVN reported that our Party chapters at all levels had high resolve and possessed experience in leading the struggle, so the masses would participate even more enthusiastically and actively in the struggle in the future. The pace of our attacks on all fronts would not simply progress at normal levels but could even accelerate and undergo rapid transformation.

- The liberated zones and base area, and particularly our Eastern Cochin China base area, had been secured and expanded. Production was growing, security and order had been established, and the lives of our civilian population had been stabilized. The Current Affairs Committee reported that, with the excellent assistance being provided the Center [North Vietnam], we had begun to build production facilities and produce consumer products that we had never had before.

- As for the enemy, because of a host of problems the enemy was now on the defensive on the military front and was more politically isolated than ever before.

The COSVN Party Current Affairs Committee reported that it was in complete agreement with the Politburo’s own conclusions and projections, which were that from this point until the end of 1974 the situation would continue to develop favorably for our side, and that it was certain that we would be able to win even greater victories if we immediately began to make good preparations for the 1974-1975 dry season. For that reason, the report said, if our Party chapter properly exploited our recent successes and strove to overcome our shortcomings and weaknesses, we would certainly win a great, comprehensive victory of decisive importance that would fundamentally change the balance of forces between our side and the enemy. It was possible that during 1975 we might even, with strong efforts, be able to reach the goal of liberating and exercising strong control over approximately 4 million people, or even more.

Analyzing our new advantages, the COSVN Party Current Affairs Committee advocated that we should make the greatest possible effort to seize opportunities, reach agreement on the new factors in the situation, carry out important steps to transform the situation, and create the necessary conditions so that we could move forward to achieve total and complete victory. With regards to target goals, the Current Affairs Committee stated that we must annihilate many enemy battalions and a number of enemy regimental-sized task forces; we must attack and cripple the enemy's RF and PF forces, and we must eliminate three times more enemy outposts than we eliminated in the first six months of 1974. We had to form a widespread overt struggle front in all of the cities in South Vietnam. As for direction and guidance of the South Vietnamese revolutionary movement, and particularly with respect to aid [from North Vietnam] during the coming period, the COSVN Party Current Affairs Committee submitted the following concrete recommendations to the Politburo for consideration:

- + Forward to COSVN the Politburo's thoughts on the COSVN Party Current Affairs Committee's conclusions and assessment of the situation and on the guidelines, directions, and target goals that COSVN had set forward in its resolution.

- + If the Politburo agreed, the Current Affairs Committee recommended that general conclusions and guidance be issued immediately to all our different battlefields so that they could coordinate their actions and begin preparations.

- + The Current Affairs Committee recommended that the Politburo and the Central Military Party Committee immediately prepare one division for dispatch so that it would arrive at the B2 Front by the beginning of the 1974-1975 dry season.

Document No. 18

Comrade Le Duan's Comments After Listening to Comrade Vo Quang Ho's Briefing on the Draft Plan (Notes Taken by Comrade Ho), 10 September 1974

[Source: *Mot So Van Kien Chi Dao: Tong Tien Cong Va Noi Day Mua Xuan Nam 1975, Chien Dich Ho Chi Minh* [A Number of Guidance Documents for the Spring 1975 General Offensive and Uprising and the Ho Chi Minh Campaign] (Hanoi: Nha xuất bản Quan doi nhan dan, 2005), 101-108.]

[Translator's note: italics from the original text.]

Liberate South Vietnam in two years, 1975-1976.

In Region 9, we need a number of battalions to make attacks behind enemy lines, because that will cause the situation to open up for us.

In 1975 we will attack on the scale of 1972 – what does that mean? We will stretch enemy forces and make big attacks against separate, individual locations. 1975 will be a very tough year for the U.S.: Elections in the United States; If Ford wants to win the election, he must resolve [settle] the problem of South Vietnam in 1975; We will liberate South Vietnam in 1975, before the U.S. elections. There are two key dates, 1975 and 1976: we must be able to do this militarily.

If Ford wants to move forward [to be reelected], in 1975 he must make the situations in South Vietnam and in Cambodia resemble the situation in Laos. We will create Scenario 1 in order to advance and take power immediately; we will not stop but instead will totally eliminate it [the old regime]. In 1975, if we choose Scenario 1 then we must eliminate the enemy's apparatus of repression in the rural areas. In 1975 Ford must set up a tripartite coalition government in South Vietnam and a coalition government in Cambodia. Because his political position is shaky, our military position is very strong. If in Scenario 1 a tripartite coalition government is formed, we will immediately implement reunification [of North and South Vietnam].

1975 is very important. North Vietnam must focus on providing excellent training for a number of battalions and for replacement troops. We will send 10,000 troops to Region 8, 10,000 troops to Region 9, and make attacks that will open up the entire Mekong Delta.

In 1975 we will stretch the enemy thin throughout the entire [South Vietnamese] battlefield and make massed, large attacks in individual areas. Opening up the Central Highlands will be the primary effort. We will maintain the status quo in Eastern Cochinchina, put pressure on Saigon again, and if an opportunity arises we will send in three or four more divisions to strike another blow. In our propaganda we should not make any public announcements about the population gains we have achieved or how many hamlets and how many people the enemy has lost so that we can maintain the present situation in which they [the enemy] conceal these things from one another.

Current Opportunities to Liberate South Vietnam.

-There will be two opportunities:

+In 1975 they will pull back, retreat for the elections in the United States. *We will open up the rural lowlands, build roads linking North and South, stretch the enemy thin, and mass our forces to attack locations where enemy forces are weak.* We must correctly decide how to stretch enemy forces thin. It is possible that Ford is preparing to push Thieu aside and form a tripartite coalition government. We will attack to open up the lowlands for our forces and eliminate all of the enemy's outposts and bases there. If it is Scenario 1, we will combine mass uprisings and armed [military] attacks to demand true democracy. Prepare to launch a big offensive in 1976, just before Ford's reelection campaign.

+In 1976 we will mount attacks on the scale of the 1972 offensive, attack individual cities, and strike right into the heart of Saigon. We will not miss our opportunity in 1976. In 1975 our main force units must grow stronger as they fight, and we cannot allow them to become weaker as we prepare for the big attack in 1976. Mass 3-4 divisions to annihilate one enemy division. Threaten all areas, then mass our forces to strike deep, right into the heart of Saigon. Le Loi and Quang Trung both attacked straight into Thang Long [Translator's Comment: Le Loi and Quang Trung were Vietnamese emperors who drove Chinese armies out of Vietnam in the 15th and 18th centuries. Thang Long is the ancient name of Vietnam's capital city, Hanoi. Le Duan is using these historical examples to support the argument for an attack into the South Vietnamese capital, Saigon]. Stretch the enemy thin everywhere and prepare to make a powerful, surprise attack directly into Saigon. Our preparations must be very active, very aggressive. We must attack the

biggest, the most vital location. Make a surprise attack using heavy artillery and 7-8 divisions to attack into the city of Saigon. *Isolate Tri-Thien* and implement a good deception [diversionary] plan. Saigon is weak, not strong, and the masses all support us. In Cuba, Fidel Castro used 10,000 troops to strike directly into the capital and he successfully dispersed 200,000 enemy troops. We will take this daring action when the enemy starts to buckle, when he is unsteady. If we want to be able to seize this opportunity, we must create strength and power. We must employ the right measures, we must organize things properly, we must fight and make preparations at the same time, and we must attack in order to create additional strength. If our revolutionary movement advances in the rural countryside, it will also advance in the cities. We did not believe we would be able to defeat 500,000 American troops, but we dared to fight them, and that is why we won. If one knows what one is doing, then even small numbers can be successful, but if one does not know what one is doing, then even superior numbers can be defeated, like in Indonesia. The Chinese Revolution only won victory when it attacked – when instead of defending Yan'an [Yan'an was the headquarters of Mao Zedong's forces in China during the 1930s, after the Long March], it attacked into the cities. We must build roads so that we can hold the initiative. Saigon is the primary target, it is the enemy's big, main nerve center and headquarters. *Region 5's main objective will be to open up the lowlands to our forces.*

The primary condition required for the liberation of South Vietnam is whether or not our main force units are strong enough to accomplish this. The Chinese Revolution used only military attacks, and there were no uprisings by the masses. Lenin, on the other hand, talked only about General Insurrection. In Vietnam, we say, "*General Offensive-General Insurrection, in which the military has the decisive role.*" In Vietnam the masses have a history of insurrection, most of them are on the side of the revolution, and they will never switch over to the enemy's side. If we are strong, the enemy will not be able to rule the masses, to govern and control them. If we are not strong, then the enemy will be able to govern them. The masses are ready, so that requirement is fulfilled. In Saigon, as well as in Region 8 and Region 9, the masses are being repressed. If we break their shackles they will immediately rise up. We do not need to worry about international conditions or international requirements. *If there are problems, the U.S. will withdraw; it will not jump in again as it did in 1965.* The enemy's government is weak and shaky. If we sent one or two divisions down into Region 8 and Region 9, the enemy will not be able to govern that area. The enemy has failed and his internal situation is in chaos. The primary condition is whether or not we are strong. *The decisive blow will be a general [military] offensive; simultaneous general attacks and simultaneous uprisings, not a general insurrection.* If the enemy is strong and we are weak, we will still attack. We will attack and seize control, not just attack to annihilate [destroy] enemy forces, because the masses have participated in the revolution for the past 20 years, the masses are ready to join us, and Saigon has risen up many times before. Now, if we crush the enemy's forces, the masses will rise up immediately. During the 1968 Tet Offensive too few of our main force troops entered Saigon, so the masses were unable to rise up. We were still weak and we had not yet addressed the issue of sending our main force army into Saigon. In Hue large numbers of our main force troops entered the city, so the masses there were able to rise up. Our main force troops, who defeated the Americans and forced 500,000 American troops to withdraw, are now better trained, more powerfully equipped, and are massed in larger numbers. In the area around Saigon our local forces are solid, and our sapper and spearhead forces are very powerful and have been organized into a single organizational structure. We will stretch the enemy thin throughout South Vietnam and we will defeat the enemy in the lowlands, which will make the enemy's hold on the

cities shaky. *The U.S. will not intervene again.* Our side [our allies] will maintain the present level of assistance. The masses are used to mounting uprisings, they know what to do, and 60-70% of the masses are on our side. *The time we spend on preparations is the most important thing.* When we enter the city, the enemy will not be able to surround us. We will completely annihilate individual enemy divisions and attack into Saigon, and the other areas will be left like a snake that has lost its head. *We will not wait for the masses to rise up; instead, we will attack into Saigon, and then the masses will rise up.* We have 300,000 troops and the enemy has 600,000 troops. The enemy outnumbers us 2 to 1, but the enemy's forces are dispersed. We have a "fist" of 100,000 massed troops to strike our blows. When the Chinese Revolution advanced to the south, the Nationalist Chinese Army outnumbered the Chinese Communist Army 5 to 1. The International Revolution has never had conditions as favorable as those that we have. The revolution is the greatest advantage that we possess.

We must prepare. *If the masses in Saigon rise up in 1975, we will send our forces in quickly. We must be prepared for 1975, we must be prepared for 1976,* and we must have reserve forces. Cadre from the battalion level up must be prepared. When the U.S. entered the war, we dared to open up the Tri Thien front. Now we are in a powerful position. The U.S. has left, and our main force divisions remain in South Vietnam.

We give the highest priority to the question of the general offensive-general insurrection and the issue of our main force troops, because the general offensive is the main thing, because the military side will be the primary factor. *A general offensive conducted in one phase and made up of three or four campaigns. The general offensive is not a single blow, but it will be a phase, a period of time. 1975 will be the initial phase of the general offensive. The general offensive may take two years.* In 1968 our primary purposes in attacking the cities were to liberate the countryside and to defeat America's will. But the American troops remained there, and the puppet army was still there. This time, the American army has withdrawn and gone home, so if we crush the puppet army the puppet government will disintegrate. *Clear the countryside, annihilate the enemy's regular units,* destroy individual enemy divisions, attack the cities, three fists intimately linked together, supporting one another, ... This time our general offensive-general insurrection will be longer and more complex. We will annihilate a few enemy divisions and attack the city. *Even if there is an insurrection in Saigon, we will still have to annihilate the enemy's divisions in Eastern Cochin China.* Can three or four of our divisions annihilate one puppet division? If we cannot accomplish this militarily in Eastern Cochin China, then *we may first launch a big attack in the Central Highlands. After being hit with two blows, in the Central Highlands and in Eastern Cochin China, the enemy will disintegrate.* We will dare to attack en masse and with reserves. Our preparations for the general offensive-general insurrection must be good: build roads, make preparations in the Central Highlands, make preparations in Saigon and Eastern Cochin China.

When we go into the Politburo meeting, we will only discuss the mission for 1975.

Preparing forces is the most important issue:

-Our in-place forces must be strong enough.

-Preparation of main force units in South Vietnam: 13 massed divisions, with the primary sector (Saigon and Eastern Cochinchina) having a total of 7-8 divisions and 120,000-130,000 troops. 3-4 divisions in the other sector[s]. *Carry out strategic annihilation* [annihilation at a strategically significant level].

-North Vietnamese main force units will conduct massed attacks with three corps, they will mount several such attacks.

-Reserve troops to serve as replacements.

-Prepare logistics supplies and roads.

-Utilize ammunition properly: artillery will fire at close range to economize on ammunition expenditure, and because it is more accurate that way.

The following troop recruitment levels are approved: 1975 – 130,000; 1976 – 180,000. Ensure sufficient troops to provide 13 divisions in South Vietnam, 14 divisions in North Vietnam.

Our attack in South Vietnam will not adversely affect our continued advance [toward socialism] in North Vietnam. Once we win in South Vietnam, the capitalists will be willing to take the risk of investing in North Vietnam.

Our troops in North Vietnam will participate in economic construction and they will build irrigation projects, roads, and houses. Each year they will train for six months and carry out labor duties for six months.

North Vietnam must pay attention to our northern border, and especially the Lang Son-Cao Bang area. Pay attention to the roads leading down from the north. Build two defense lines, one along the border and one in the piedmont area. Also pay attention to our coastline.

Direction for 1975: There are two directions: The enemy will be forced into Scenario 1, establish a *tripartite coalition government*, or there will be *uprisings in the cities*. No matter what scenario takes place, no matter what happens we must gain more complete control in Regions 8 and 9 and increase our pressure around Saigon, and then there will be a possibility that that a [revolutionary] movement may arise in 1975. If a movement arises in the cities, we must work as hard as possible to open up and expand areas under our control in the lowlands, and we must send 5th Division to penetrate down deep into the lowlands of the Delta. Region 8 should organize 2-3 regiments to attack and shatter the enemy, but they do not need to then hold and defend those areas. They should leave local force battalions behind to hold those areas while the regiments are massed to form a division to send up to put pressure on Saigon. Immediately send a division down to B2. If an opportunity arises, send several divisions down into Eastern Cochinchina after the attack in the Central Highlands. In 1975 we may be able to use 5-6 divisions to pressure Saigon. Depending on the conditions at that time, we will then decide whether attacking the enemy's regular units will be our primary effort or whether attacking Saigon will be our main effort.

-Tri Thien: Additional, secondary attacks.

-The main effort will be in the Central Highlands and Region 5 to cut South Vietnam in two and threaten Saigon. After the Central Highlands finishes its attacks it will be stronger, and it will be ready to move down into Region 7.

-Attack and gain control of Region 8 and Region 9.

The situation will then change in a fundamental way.

1976 will be another great leap forward. We will crush them before the elections in the United States. We have the conditions necessary to be able to accomplish this, but we must concentrate more, try harder, *make things more certain for 1975-1976*, and our road networks must be improved. *In late 1974 we must advance, we must not allow ourselves to fall back*, because the enemy is in political chaos and disorder.

Assessment of the United States: Even if there is a 10% chance that the U.S. will attack North Vietnam, we will still attack in South Vietnam. If the situation continues to be protracted in South Vietnam, we will grow weaker. Only if South Vietnam is liberated will North Vietnam be able to build itself up. The best thing for us is to liberate South Vietnam in 1975-1976, if things become stretched out longer, it will not be good for us.

We call it General Offensive-General Insurrection because in war:

The military blow is still the decisive blow. The army will strike the fundamental, the most important blow. In 1975-1976 we will strive to get our allies to provide us an additional 200,000 – 300,000 rounds of artillery ammunition. In 1959-1960 we started with insurrections and then followed them up with military attacks, but after the fighting has already begun, after the situation has turned into revolutionary warfare, then we can easily launch a general offensive-general insurrection. The masses belong to us, but military pressure is necessary in order for the masses to be able to rise up. In Hue the masses rose up in 1968, and in Danang the masses once rose up for 72 days [Translator's Note: Referring to the 1966 uprisings led by the Buddhists and South Vietnamese General Nguyen Chanh Thi]. In Region 9 there were uprisings in 1973-1974. Saigon has had several uprisings already. If they set up a tripartite coalition government, that will be an opportunity for us to rise up, with our military forces and political forces acting in parallel, to seize the countryside and not miss the opportunity to launch uprisings in the cities.

Editor's Note: Given Le Duan's goal of militarily conquering South Vietnam, the People's Army needed the tools of war; weapons, ammunition, and fuel. The PAVN High Command assigned its logistics department the mission of searching the old battlefields to both recover and repair any damaged or abandoned equipment, and to begin production of weapons and ammunition. One publication outlines the PAVN groundwork: "Pursuant to the Resolution of the 21st Plenum of the Party Central Committee and Central Military Party Committee resolutions issued in October 1973 and March 1974, in addition to intensifying combat operations on the battlefield the Politburo and the Central Military Party Committee assigned the Ministry of Defense the responsibility for making all preparations for a 'Plan to Liberate South Vietnam.' ...

Editor's Note (continued): ...Because at that time military assistance to our country had been greatly reduced, priority attention was given to preparing weapons, and especially heavy weapons capable of supporting large combat campaigns. To implement the Ministry of Defense's plans, the General Rear Service Department's Commander and Party Committee directed the Weapons Department to develop a special plan designed to concentrate every capability we possessed to design, test, and produce a number of weapons in the shortest possible time.

These weapons included 120mm and 160mm mortars, 120mm and 160mm mortar ammunition, 130mm and D-74 [122mm] artillery ammunition, and Soviet-style 82mm recoilless rifles.

On 9 October 1974 the Weapons Department submitted a weapons production plan called 'Plan 75B' to the Director of the General Rear Services Department. The plan clearly spelled out the quantity of weapons to be produced as follows:

160mm mortars: 100 mortars (if it was impossible to recover the barrels of artillery pieces then 200 mortars would be produced).

120mm mortars: 100 mortars

160mm mortar ammunition: 100,000 rounds

120mm mortar ammunition: 50,000 rounds

130mm and D-74 ammunition: 20,000 rounds

Soviet-style 82mm recoilless rifles: 100 guns

The plan laid out in considerable detail the measures that would be necessary in order to resolve problems of supplies, raw materials, equipment, laborers, and finances while at the same time laying out a very clear delineation of responsibilities for each individual production factory. As for timing, the plan stated that by the end of 1974 test production of the mortars, mortar ammunition, and 130mm ammunition would be completed; half of the designated guns and ammunition would be delivered by June 1975, and the entire assigned product total of these weapons and ammunition would be delivered by December 1975. With regards to the 82mm recoilless rifles, test production would be completed by the end of the second quarter of 1975.

In a spirit of working against time and with a resolve to make a contribution to the liberation of South Vietnam, the cadre and workers of the Weapons Department set to work to implement 'Plan 75B' with all their capabilities and with all the resources they could muster."¹

¹ *Bien Nien Su Kien: Lich Su Quan Gioi Viet Nam (1954-1975)* [History of Vietnam's Ordnance: Calendar of Events (1954-1975)] (Hanoi: Nha xuất bản Quan doi nhan dan, 1997), 431-432.

Document No. 19

Continue Supplying Weapons and Ammunition in Accordance with the 1973 Plan and Preparing for the 1974-1975 Plan and for the Supplemental Plan (KH-75B), 1-2 October 1974

[Source: *Tong Cuc Ky Thuat; Bien Nien Su Kien: 1974-1987* [General Technical Department; Calendar of Events: 1974-1987] (Hanoi: Nha xuất bản Quân đội nhân dân, 1994), 23-24.]

To implement the resolution of the first session of the General Technical Department's Party Committee and to carry out the mission of supplying the South Vietnamese battlefield that was approved during the General Department's first Political-Military Conference, the Ordnance Department shipped the remaining 4,150 tons of weapons and ammunition from the 1973 Plan. It would be necessary to have 41,674 tons of weapons and ammunition prepared to support the 1974-75 plan. The plan was to take 8,611 tons from Group 559 stockpiles, 3,970 tons from the transportation line stockpiles, and 29,093 tons from warehouses in our rear area [North Vietnam]. The Ordnance Department's stockpile held a total of 27,031 tons (22,549 tons of which were ready for shipment and 4,482 tons of required packing for shipment). The shortfall would have to be made up for by [foreign] aid sources and from manufacturing production by the Ordnance Department.

In order to carry out the plan to manufacture additional weapons and ammunition (KH-75B), the Ordnance Department took steps to implement the plan to manufacture 100 160mm mortars, 10,000 160mm mortar rounds, 100 120mm mortars, 50,000 120mm mortar rounds, and 100 82mm recoilless rifles. To begin to implement this plan the department sent cadre out to recover ammunition and shell casings. The department assigned the Ammunition Officer responsibility for finding explosives; assigned the Anti-Aircraft Weapons Office responsibility for collecting 90mm and 88mm gun barrels; and assigned the Ground Weapons Officer responsibility for collecting field artillery barrels.

Document No. 20

Guidance (No. 288) on Implementing the Resolution of the Central Military Party Committee in Combat and Force-Building Missions in 1975, 13 November 1974

[Source: *Cong tac Dang, cong tac chinh tri chien dich trong khang chien chong My, cuu nuoc, tap III: Cong tac, cong tac chinh tri trong tong tien cong va noi day mua xuan 1975* [Campaign Party and Political Operations During the Resistance War Against the Americans to Save the Nation, Volume III: Campaign Party and Political Operations Documents During the Spring 1975 General Offensive and Uprisings] (Hanoi: Nha xuất bản Quân đội nhân dân, 2000), 8-22.]

From the General Staff to The B3 Front Headquarters and Party Committee on Combat and Force-Building Missions for 1975:

Based on the strategic resolve [plan] of the Politburo and the Central Military Party Committee on gaining victory in the next few years, the Central Military Party Committee met to make a detailed, concrete assessment of the situation in 1974 and laid out guidelines, missions,

and a concrete plan to be carried out by the different battlefields in 1975 in order to provide you with the basis on which to draw up your own plans. Based on the above-mentioned Central Party Committee resolutions the General Staff is forwarding the following guidance on a number of issues regarding the Central Highlands' combat and force-building activities for 1975:

I.-Summary Assessment of the Recent Situation and Projection of the Situation in 1975

1.-From late 1973-early 1974 until the present, after the passage of Central Committee Resolution 21 and of the Central Military Party Committee resolution that the Politburo approved in March 1973, the different battlefields and units studied and fully digested the situation assessment and the missions and then stepped up their attacks, making progress on all fronts. Meanwhile the U.S. and the puppet suffered defeats and continued to encounter many military, political, and economic problems.

More recently, a struggle movement has arisen in the cities. As a result a new transformation of the situation is developing rapidly and the situation is become increasingly favorable for us and unfavorable for the enemy.

During 1973 the enemy's pacification plan reached its high-point, but since late 1974 [sic – should read “since late 1973”] the enemy has suffered an important setback in its pacification and land-grabbing program. The puppet government is rapidly losing strength in the face of a host of military, economic, and social problems that it faces. This has driven that government into a passive, reactive situation in which it is more confused and uncertain than ever before.

We have gained the initiative on the battlefield and in a short time, from early 1974 to the present, we have won a number of major and solid victories in counter-pacification and counter-land-grabbing front. Our posture has been transformed. We have expanded our zone; liberated half a million civilians along with 2,000 enemy outposts and more than a thousand hamlets, more than one hundred villages, and five district capitals; killed, wounded, or caused the disintegration of an important portion of the puppet army's personnel; destroyed many enemy battalions and crippled a number of regiments; destroyed many supplies, warehouses, and implements of war; and captured more than 10,000 prisoners and 25,000 weapons of all types (figures up through September 1974). Our liberated zone has been consolidated, expanded, and it has grown in all respects. Our strategic traffic and transportation network has been extended far into the interior, and we have shipped more supplies to the different battlefields than we have ever shipped in the past. Alongside the big successes that we have achieved, we also still have many weaknesses and shortcomings that we must overcome during the coming period. Our local efforts to build political infrastructure, local force units, and guerrilla militia forces has fallen far short of our goals and there are still many weaknesses in our efforts to mobilize the masses and recruit personnel, so results so far have been very limited.

While progress has been made in the quality of our attacks against enemy forces occupying fortified defensive positions has improved, the improvement has not been uniform. The different battlefields are using different tactics, so when enemy troops have retreated we have not totally annihilated them. In many battles we have continued to suffer significant casualties; we have not been economical in our use of weapons and our expenditure of ammunition. We have not properly

maintained our supply caches, which has resulted in damage to our explosives. These are extremely serious shortcomings at this time.

Our movement is still weak and has not yet seized the offensive initiative, and our military proselyting operations have not kept pace with the current pace of deterioration of the enemy's situation. In addition we have experienced a number of practical problems with obtaining manpower and supplies, and it will take a rather significant effort on the part of both the front lines and the rear area to properly resolve these problems.

The above realities of the situation allow us to see more clearly that:

a)-A new, across-the-board and irreversible deterioration of the situation is rapidly weakening the enemy. However, up to this point in time, the enemy still has a large number of troops and is still receiving a large amount of support from the U.S., even though this support has been considerably reduced. In addition, the enemy is still repressing and controlling a large portion of the civilian population.

The U.S. has suffered losses and been forced to withdraw its troops. Even though the U.S. remains stubborn, it is encountering great problems in both its foreign and domestic policies. It is experiencing inflation and is in danger of an economic crisis. The Ford Administration is not strong and is encountering fierce opposition in the Congress and many other areas. Many countries opposed to fascist dictatorship and lackeys are opposing the U.S., so the U.S.'s ability to react is limited and the problems that the U.S. faces are steadily increasing.

b)-The solid victories we have gained are extremely important. They have allowed us to further illuminate the possibilities, the measures, and the pace we need for us to make a great leap forward along the lines of Scenario One. At the same time, these victories also make it clearer that there is a new balance of forces in which our posture and power is greater than ever before and that we now have an extremely favorable opportunity after more than 30 years of continuous warfare against foreign, or imperialist, aggression.

The most direct evidence of this is that after twenty years of fighting, the U.S. has been forced to admit defeat and to withdraw its troops following the signing of the Paris Agreement. All of this gives us confidence that we can overcome our current weaknesses, shortcomings, and problems in order to move forward to complete our mission and achieve our goal.

2.-Projection of the Enemy's Plans and of the Situation in 1975

Overall Enemy Plan:

-The U.S. will continue to employ many crafty and devious plans, with their primary efforts being to supply military and economic aid, to provide advisors, to use diplomatic relations between the major powers in order to restrict and cut back aid to the revolution, to keep threatening forces ready, and to consolidate and strengthen the puppet army, which is the U.S.'s primary tool for continuing to carry out its neocolonialist policies in South Vietnam.

-If the puppets continue to suffer defeats and weaken even further, the enemy may try to return to the Paris Agreement and will want to sit down to negotiate a step by step retreat to prevent us from advancing quickly in order to be able to use the time they gain to strengthen their lackeys, after which they will seek to attack and sabotage us. They may consider taking a number of such backward steps, but they are not yet ready to withdraw completely from Vietnam at a time when the puppet army and puppet government has not yet completely collapsed.

-In the event that we launch powerful attacks in which the puppet army is in danger of disintegrating and completely collapsing, even though the U.S. faces many more difficulties and restrictions than it did before, they still may react, first by using air and naval forces to attack and blockade us, and we cannot completely exclude the possibility that they might send in their “fire brigade” [rapid reaction ground forces] to rescue the puppets.

We need to continue to obtain more information about this so that we can further clarify this assessment.

In 1975, if we continue to make powerful attacks that significantly change the balance of forces in our favor, the U.S. may be forced to sit down to negotiate with us. The Americans may replace Thieu with a new group of lackeys and they may agree to a few points in order to restrict our ability to make further attacks that could gain major victories for our side in the hopes of temporarily resolving a number of their immediate difficulties so that they can consolidate and strengthen their lackeys. It is possible that sometime between now and the puppet presidential elections they may replace Thieu. If that happens, that will provide us with a concrete opportunity for us to intensify our military, political, and diplomatic attacks without any hesitation in order to gain additional victories. In addition, we must also anticipate that this could turn into a major opportunity for us because the puppets will collapse internally and because the urban [protest] movement will turn into a rising tide. If that happens, we have a plan ready to secure an even greater victory.

As for the military situation in 1975, we need to anticipate that because of repeated defeats on the battlefield the enemy may be forced to make strategic realignments of their forces by making deep pullbacks into a defensive posture, implementing a defensive pullback to consolidate their forces and to push their pacification efforts in the areas over which they have stronger control they control. They may make withdrawals in key areas in order to increase the size of their mobile forces in order to be able to hold onto sectors key sectors and areas, such as by:

-Withdrawing the Airborne Division from Tri-Thien and pulling it back to the Saigon area to serve as a reserve force;

-Withdrawing the 2nd Corps Headquarters along with supply stockpiles and aircraft from Pleiku and redeploying them to bases along the coast (Quy Nhon, Cam Ranh, etc.);

-Increasing forces by assigning regimental-sized RF groups to defend individual provinces, etc.

We must anticipate such possibilities in order to come up with aggressive plans to stretch the enemy thin and to pin their forces down so that it will not be easy for them to make such redeployments. At the same time, we must also be aware of the possibility that when the puppet army's forces become cut off and isolated and experience many problems, the U.S. might use its airpower to fly in supplies as they have done in Cambodia.

Laos and Cambodia:

-In Laos, there are considerable possibilities for making good progress, although we must overcome many political and economic difficulties, and we must also be alert to the possibility that the enemy will conduct a coup to overthrow the government, that they might try to have southern Laos secede from the rest of the country, or that the enemy will push the Lao puppets into carrying out operations to attack our transportation corridor in Southern Laos.

-In Cambodia, the situation could remain the same, but we must also anticipate the possibility that our [Cambodian] friends may enter into negotiations that could affect the portion of our transportation corridor that runs through Cambodian territory.

II.-Missions and Formulas

1.-Based on the general mission for 1975, which is to "mobilize the greatest possible efforts on the part of the entire Party, the entire population, and the entire army in both North and South Vietnam to continue to step up our military, political, and diplomatic attacks," we will:

-Fundamentally defeat the enemy's pacification and land-grabbing program, liberate and gain control of the bulk of the rich, heavily-populated rural lowland countryside and continue to expand our offensive effort in the mountain jungle and foothill regions.

-Destroy and cause the disintegration of an important portion of the enemy's army, expand our transportation corridor, expand our base areas, and make attacks aimed at reducing the troop strength of the puppet army, and especially of the enemy's RF forces, in order to cause a major deterioration of the morale of the enemy's troops.

-Nourish and support the political struggles in the cities in order to turn it into an increasingly powerful movement.

-Destroy very large quantities of the enemy's implements of war [military equipment] and his economic resources.

-Strive to build and expand our revolutionary strength, build up our three types of troops [main force, local force, guerrillas] by gaining strength the more we fight, and continue to create an even greater transformation in the balance of forces in our favor.

-Remain constantly ready and stand prepared to seize opportunities to exploit and develop successes, and basically complete all preparations necessary for carrying out our mission in the next phase.

2.-Concrete Mission Requirements [Goals] for the Central Highlands Battlefield:

a)-Kill or wound forty to fifty thousand enemy troops, including the destruction of three to four infantry or armored regiments (or regimental-sized groups); the destruction of numerous regular army and RF battalions and PF platoons; cripple one to two enemy regiments; reduce the puppet army's troop strength in the Central Highlands by ten to fifteen thousand troops; expand our strategic transportation corridor down through southern Central Vietnam along Route 14 down to Route 20; and expand the transportation corridors from the Central Highlands down to the three provinces of southern Military Region 5.

b)-Through the annihilation of the enemy's manpower strength, liberate the people and most of the flatlands in southern Pleiku and Cheo Reo around A [sic]. Basically defeat the enemy's pacification and land-grabbing program and his efforts to relieve our pressure, gain the offensive initiative on the battlefield, divide and isolate the enemy's forces, force the enemy to pull back to defend the large cities, constantly stretch the enemy thin and pin his forces down, and actively coordinate with our effort to disrupt the enemy's pacification program in the lowlands.

Specifically, overrun and take three-four district military headquarters and one or two province capitals (Gia Nghia – Cheo Reo), overrun and destroy many enemy outposts, liberate and secure control of many villages, hamlets, plantations, and large numbers of people. The B3 Headquarters should send a plan listing your specific, concrete goals in this area back to the High Command for review.

c)-Attack the enemy's lines of communications and his rear bases, destroy large quantities of enemy supplies and military equipment, and destroy a significant portion of the enemy's economic resources. Our specific goals are the destruction of fifty to seventy thousands tons of bombs and ammunition and thirty to fifty thousand tons of fuel; the destruction/shooting down of 150-200 enemy aircraft; to temporarily cut strategic roads (Routes 14, 19, and 21) for certain periods of time; to destroy or damage a number of important economic targets such as electric power facilities, repair and maintenance facilities, factories producing goods for export, etc. in order to seriously reduce the enemy's economic resources and force the expenditure of U.S. military and economic aid so quickly that U.S. aid will not be able to keep up with the expenditures.

d)-Expand the political struggles in the cities in order to turn them into a continuous and growing struggle movement that the enemy will not be able to easily suppress, and use this movement to recruit additional revolutionary forces and armed organizations, which will create conditions that will enable us to actively control and direct a powerful opposition movement in the cities.

Strive to recruit and develop secret self-defense guerrilla organizations and urban commando cells to conduct guerrilla warfare, to carry out acts of sabotage, to kill enemy leaders and thugs, and work closely with the mass struggle movement to counter enemy terrorism and repression in order to expand the struggle movement and create conditions that will enable us to gain control of areas at the grass-roots level.

-Develop spring-board positions and leopard-spot base areas on the outskirts of the urban areas and create corridors to connect our forces with the cities.

-While continuing to conduct combat operations, we must also complete as quickly and completely as possible the deployment of elite sapper, artillery, and mortar forces to attack the enemy both to achieve our immediate goals and to be prepared to carry out the plan to meet the requirements of the mission.

e)-Build up our three types of troops [main force, local force, guerrillas], carefully combining combat operations with force-building [training]; conduct attacks to expand our areas; mobilize the masses to form local forces; and develop concrete plans from the top all the way down to the village level for specific time periods and for specific campaigns in order to achieve our goal of “growing stronger the more we fight.”

The High Command will reinforce the Central Highlands by sending to it the 968th Division (minus) along with additional reinforcement troops and will provide additional weapons and ammunition to enable the Central Highlands to accomplish its combat mission for 1975 and to make preparations for the next year.

The primary goal of Central Highlands main force units will be to strengthen combat units to improve their command and combat abilities in order to achieve high levels of combat efficiency and accomplish the short-term missions for 1975 while at the same time improving capabilities and skills in order to be able to accomplish future missions.

As for provincial local force units, bring the units up to strength using replacement troops, provide these units with additional heavy weapons and other weapons for use in attacking enemy outposts and enemy road traffic, with the priority being given to units in the areas near cities, province capitals, and strategic roads and lines of communications.

With regard to guerrillas, self-defense forces, and urban commando forces, the goal is to quickly increase the number of such forces and to improve their combat skills and their ability to conduct mass proselyting activities, with priority to be given to expanding and developing these forces in areas near cities and province capitals and in areas under the enemy’s control. During the year 1975 the Central Highlands should increase their guerrilla and militia forces by 4,000-5,000 personnel through powerful local combat operations and recruitment and training efforts in order to be able to take over most of the responsibility for operations at the local level in order to give the two divisions assigned to the Central Highlands enough time to conduct training to improve their skills so that they will be able to meet the increased requirements of the next mission [for 1976].

g)-Build and develop the liberated zones and transportation corridors and build strategic and campaign-level roads.

-In the old liberated zone, continue to build up and strengthen the zone’s political, military, and economic capabilities so that it becomes self-sufficient. In the newly liberated zones, develop plans to quickly consolidate these areas, recruit and train additional forces locally, expand guerrilla

and militia forces, establish combat hamlets, be ready to defeat enemy efforts to push back into the liberated zone, and mobilize additional resources and manpower strength in order to obtain new strength to be able to continuously attack the enemy.

- In 1975 the Central Highlands should strive to mobilize [recruit] 500 to 1,000 personnel to serve as replacements and reinforcements for local force units (this is not counting the number mobilized [recruited] for civilian, government, and Party positions).

- Open up a strategic corridor from C3 to Dak Song and on through Gia Nghia to Route 20; open up other corridors from the Central Highlands down to the three [coastal] provinces of Military Region 5, from the north side of Route 19 across to the south side of Route 19, and from west to east across Route 14 in southern Pleiku Province. In particular, opening up the strategic corridor from C3 through Gia Nghia and down to Route 20 is vital and of the utmost importance.

- Open up basic [rudimentary] corridors into the cities and province capitals, especially into Pleiku.

- Maintain firm control of the network of routes through areas under enemy control in order to be able to use these routes to carry out our battle plans.

- h)-Complete all preparatory activities for 1975 in order to meet the requirements for the next mission.

- Formulate a battle plan consisting of two separate possibilities – attacks and uprisings or uprisings and attacks.

- Complete the work of preparing the battlefield for specific targets in accordance with the projected plan.

- Prepare officers and enlisted men by improving their combat skills to meet the requirements of the mission.

- Make logistics and technical support preparations.

- Establish command arrangements and a communications network so that while carrying out the overall mission set for 1975 you will be ready to seize concrete political opportunities (such as if the enemy is forced to resume negotiations to replace Thieu, or if the urban political struggle movement becomes very strong, or if major conflicts break out within the ranks of the puppet army) and military opportunities in order to exploit them and turn them into major opportunities to win even bigger victories.

3.-Formulas for carrying out the mission must:

- Correctly assess the enemy's and our own situation, including new across-the-board deteriorations that put the enemy on a downward slope toward the rapid collapse of the puppet army; the problems faced by and the limited reactions of the United States; new changes in the

balance of forces advantageous to our side which we have created during the course of protracted combat operations; and new advances by the revolution that could enable us to move forward by leaps and bounds.

-Maintain a firm understanding of the basic laws of attacks and uprisings, uprisings and attacks and closely coordinate the three fronts (political, military, and diplomatic struggle), the three spearheads [military, political, and military proselyting], and the three types of troops [main force, local force, and guerrillas], and attack the enemy in all three regions [mountain jungle, rural lowlands, and the cities].

-Using this as your foundation, make the best possible use of the formulas put forward for this new situation, which are: aggressive [pro-active], solid, resolute, initiative, mobility, and flexibility, constantly maintaining a firm grasp of the principles of revolutionary violence, strategic offensive thinking, remain resolute and do not hesitate or waver even if negotiations are taking place, achieve our goal of growing stronger the more we fight, annihilate and gain mastery, kill, disperse, and cause the disintegration of the puppet army, which is the U.S.'s primary tool for carry out its neocolonialist policies.

-As the enemy's morale and combat strength continues to deteriorate and the enemy slips deeper and deeper into a passive defensive posture, we must quickly derive lessons learned from battle, creatively come up with many types of flexible tactics, closely coordinate military attacks with military proselyting operations in order to totally annihilate and cause large-scale disintegration of enemy forces, capture prisoners, capture large quantities of weapons and ammunition, use enemy weapons and equipment to fight the enemy, make rational use of and do not rely too heavily on heavy weapons fire support, economize, and properly maintain weapons and ammunition storage facilities in order to ensure that we are able to accomplish our immediate intentions and still have sufficient stockpiles for the next mission.

III.-Battle Plan

In 1975 we will conduct three waves of attacks, with the second wave being the most important wave, but at the same time we will have battle plans ready for use if an opportunity presents itself. In the plan for 1975 the Central Highlands will be the overall primary attack sector for all of South Vietnam, where you will annihilate truly large numbers of enemy personnel and conduct powerful attacks that will cripple the enemy's 2nd Corps.

Open up the strategic corridor, stretch the enemy thin and pin his forces down, and actively coordinate your operations with the activities of the other battlefields.

First wave, from December 1974 to mid-February 1975: Utilize individual regiments, elite forces, and local force units to fight individual battles and maintain a continuous level of combat operations on the battlefield; make attacks and conduct simultaneous deception operations to divert the enemy's attention to the C sector and Route 19, force the enemy into a passive, reactive posture, and create conditions to enable the bulk of your forces to consolidate their strength and make preparations for the second wave of attacks. Conduct individual attacks that are well-prepared beforehand to ensure victory and totally annihilate individual enemy defensive complexes in C

and B. Attack road traffic along Route 19, attack enemy rear bases, supply warehouses, and airfields, totally annihilate enemy commandos, reconnaissance teams, or enemy troops that try to push outward to disrupt our preparations and feel out our positions.

Second wave, from 15 May to June 1975: This will be the primary attack wave during 1975: The focus will be on carrying out the C3 Campaign while at the same time we step up our activities in other sectors to stretch the enemy thin and pin his forces down in a coordinated manner. During this wave, the goal will be to destroy three to four infantry or armored regiments (or regimental-sized groups), along with many battalions and companies of enemy regular army and RF troops both in the field and in fortified defensive positions, cripple one or two additional regiments, liberate the C3-C4 area, and if conditions permit develop the attack to liberate Ban Me Thuot. In the primary sector, mass forces to liberate the Serepoc area and Ban Don and support local forces in the Duc Xuyen and Lac Thien areas. The supporting sectors will be Cam Ga – south of Route 19 – northern Ban Me Thuot, C-B, Route 19, Route 21.

Utilization of forces:

1.-In the 104, 323, 377, and 107 sectors, mass the 198th Sapper Regiment and three divisions (minus one regiment). In addition to the B3 Front's organic two divisions, we will send the 316th Division and the 27th Sapper Battalion to reinforce you. Use one regiment from one of the divisions and the 25th Regiment along Routes 21 and 14 to destroy enemy relief forces and to cut the roads.

2.-Forces from the B2 Front will be responsible for destroying enemy forces in the Kien Duc Center and these forces will also coordinate with you in attacking toward C4.

3.-During the course of the attack to overrun and liberate C3 and Dac Song, you will not use tanks but will instead use them primarily during the expansion of the attack when you attack C4 and Ban Me Thuot.

4.-After your mission in the primary attack sector, C3 and C4, is successfully completed, the 316th Division will continue to operate in that area for a period of time, after which it will be sent on to the B2 Front. You will primarily rely on the Central Highlands Front's own two divisions to shift the attack up to the Cam Ga-Barieng-Cheo Reo sector where you will overrun enemy military district headquarters, continue to annihilate enemy reinforcements and relief forces sent in to attempt to clear the area, and if conditions permit you will liberate the province capital or at least the bulk of the rural areas of Phu Bon Province.

5.-The other sectors will continue to have the same forces that they used during the first wave of attacks. They will step up their attacks to annihilate enemy units, to erode the enemy's strength, to block enemy forces, to stretch the enemy thin and pin the enemy down, and they will attack enemy rear bases, roads, and other lines of communications to support the primary sector.

6.-Comrade Thuoc will brief you on the concrete details of the campaign.

The third wave, up to October 1975: During this wave you will make maximum use of local forces - of local force provincial units, which will have been reinforced and strengthened, and which together with district troops, local guerrillas, and a portion of our elite forces will be used to constantly attack the enemy, hitting enemy rear bases and economic targets and besieging and overrunning isolated enemy position, etc. In the meantime your main force units will make use of the time to regroup, consolidate, and train to be ready to carry out the opportunity plan and to prepare for 1976.

Opportunity Plan: The opportunity may arrive at the time that we launch our most powerful wave of attacks, that is, the second wave of attacks. If it does occur, we must strive to carry out the plan that has been laid out for use in the event of a major opportunity.

In the event that the opportunity arises during the rainy season in the Central Highlands, during the third wave of attacks, or during the last months of 1975, or during the puppet government's presidential election, we must have a battle plan ready for use to exploit the opportunity.

-Making and maintaining a strategic cut [blockage] of Route 19 will be our main goal (could also use Routes 14 and 21), and because we will have annihilated the defenders stationed along the section of the road that has been cut, the enemy will continuously send troops out to try to clear the road. We will isolate A, B, and C. You will support this effort by mounting powerful military proselyting attacks against the enemy troops that are cut off and isolated to persuade them to break away from their army or to mutiny.

-You should use elite sapper and artillery forces to attack and destroy headquarters facilities, communications centers, airfields, ammunition and bomb storage facilities, and fuel storage facilities in the cities and province capitals disrupt and delay the efforts by the enemy forces to reinforce and rescue one another. The primary target will be B. Be ready to use your main force troops to surround, besiege, attack, annihilate and shatter the enemy forces there. In the event a major opportunity presents itself, you must be ready to send a portion of your Central Highlands forces down to fight in other battlefields.

IV.-Force Building

1.-During 1975 we must build up the strength of our combat infantry regiments to 2,000 men or more and of our main force battalions to 450 men each. Provincial battalions must be built up to a strength of 350 men and there must be sufficient replacement troops ready to be sent to replace losses as they occur. The High Command will send 12,000 troops to reinforce the Central Highlands (including those for use in the C3 Campaign), and these should be used primarily to bring infantry combat units from the province level upward up to their authorized strengths.

2.-You must devote particular attention to the work of training in order to improve the command and combat skills of infantry and combat support branch units and of the headquarters staffs of our three types of troops [main force, local force, guerrillas].

First, you must come up with a supplementary training plan to meet the requirements of your mission in early 1975. During the year main force units must conduct at least four months of training, while local force troops and guerrilla militia troops should take turns fighting and training at the local level, following a solid training plan worked out by your headquarters. The training programs must meet the immediate, short-term combat requirements as well as improving combat skills to meet the requirements of the next mission.

During training you must maintain a firm grasp of the need to provide basic and supplemental training to front and division command-level officers and headquarters staffs, and you must have a parallel plan to provide quick basic and supplemental training for the low-level cadres (squad, platoon, and company-level) that will be required for the upcoming attacks. With regard to mid-level and high-level officers, you should have these officers take turns attending short-term training sessions to study practical subjects, such as the situation and the mission, campaign-level and tactical-level command organization to meet the requirements of tactical-level and campaign-level attacks against cities and province capitals.

3.-With regards to logistics supplies, we are currently experiencing difficulties, especially with regards to towing vehicles and large-caliber artillery ammunition. You must work out appropriate tactics to make the most economical use of these items and maintain them properly, and you must use equipment, weapons, and ammunition that you capture from the enemy to attack the enemy.

The total amounts, the amounts that you are authorized to use, and the amounts that you must use are the same as the figures contained in the previous instructions.

V.-Command Organization

The B3 Front Command Headquarters and Party Committee will be directly responsible to the High Command for commanding all aspects of the Southern Central Highlands Campaign, but at the same time you must constantly keep the Military Region 5 Headquarters and Region Party Committee briefed on the situation.

Maintaining Secrecy

You must pay special attention to educating your personnel on the need for secrecy and you must have a detailed plan for maintaining secrecy. You must actively work to deceive and divert the enemy's attention, not just with regard to our immediate plan for 1975, but also with regard to our preparations to carry out our intentions for the next phase.

This directive only covers a number of the most important tasks for combat and force-building. As for the specific details, Comrade Thuoc will personally brief the Front Headquarters on political education for the military proselyting attacks, and a separate directive will be sent to you on logistics and technical support.

Signed by Van Tien Dung

Document No. 21

COSVN and the COSVN Military Headquarters Decide to Launch a Wave of Operations during the 1974-1975 Dry Season, Late November 1974

[Source: *Lich Su Bien Nien Xu Uy Nam Bo va Trung Uong Cuc Mien Nam (1954-1975)* [Historical Chronicle of the Cochinchina Party Committee and the Central Office for South Vietnam, 1954-1975], 2nd ed. (Hanoi: Nha xuất bản Chính trị quốc gia, 2008), 1296.]²⁵

The Party Politburo met from 30 September to 8 October 1974 to assess the situation and it approved a plan to liberate South Vietnam within two years, 1975-1976.

In late November 1974 COSVN and the COSVN Military Headquarters approved a decision to launch our dry season 1974-1975 wave of operations. The primary mission of this wave of operations was as follows: “To adjust and improve our revolutionary liberated zone in order to link up our entire strategic [transportation] corridor from the border all the way down to the seacoast in the east; to build this liberated zone into an integrated, inter-connected, solid base area, to surround Saigon; to liberate Route 14; and to liberate Phuoc Long province when and if conditions were right.

The 1974-1975 Dry Season Campaign was divided into two waves of operations:

-1st Wave, lasting from December 1974 to February 1975, would be primarily focused on the lowlands of the Mekong Delta.

-2nd Wave, from March 1975 on, would focus on the Route 14-Phuoc Long sector, along with coordinating supporting operations conducted throughout the COSVN area of operations.

Document No. 22

General Staff Cable on the C3+C4 Campaign Desires of the High Command, sent to the B3 Front, 22 December 1974

[Source: *Cong tac Dang, cong tac chinh tri chien dich trong khang chien chong My, cuu nuoc, tap III: Cong tac, cong tac chinh tri trong tong tien cong va noi day mua xuan 1975* [Campaign Party and Political Operations During the Resistance War Against the Americans to Save the Nation, Volume III: Campaign Party and Political Operations Documents During the Spring 1975 General Offensive and Uprisings] (Hanoi: Nha xuất bản Quân đội nhân dân, 2000), 22-29.]

Memo for the Record on Intentions for the Duc Lap-Gia Nghia Campaign

Passing along the campaign battle intentions [plan] of the Senior Leadership of the High Command (including the ideas expressed by Brother Van [Vo Nguyen Giap], Brother Dung [Van Tien Dung], and senior officers of the General Staff during discussion of the Duc Lap-Cheo Reo Campaign to be conducted in early 1975)

²⁵ The document can also be found in the first edition of *Lich Su Bien Nien Xu Uy Nam Bo va Trung Uong Cuc Mien Nam (1954-1975)* [Historical Chronicle of the Cochinchina Party Committee and the Central Office for South Vietnam, 1954-1975] (Hanoi: Nha xuất bản Chính trị quốc gia, 2002), 1051-1052.

Memo prepared at the General Staff Headquarters on 13 December 1974:

This campaign will be one of our largest campaigns of 1975, so all of the senior officers have been very interested in it. Van [Vo Nguyen Giap], Dung [Van Tien Dung], and senior leaders of the Joint General Staff – Thanh, Tan [Le Trong Tan], and Hien [Le Ngoc Hien] met with Hai Manh [Chu Huy Man] and Hoang [Hoang Minh Thao] to affirm concrete details of the plan.

All participants in the meeting agreed on the following battle intentions:

1.-Goals and Significance:

As was stated in the guidance on implementing the resolution of Central Military Party Committee (message No. 288 of 12 November sent to the B3 Front Headquarters and Party Committee) on achieving the strategic goals set for 1975, this campaign is aimed at continuing to exploit our offensive posture by destroying the enemy and opening up the strategic corridor in order to create a dramatic transformation of the balance of forces and a new posture on the battlefield in preparation for the next strategic plan.

Specific goals of the campaign:

a)-Destroy an important portion of the forces of the puppet 2nd Corps and destroy many enemy regiments, with the focus being on crippling the 2nd Corps.

-Destroy many RF groups, battalions, and companies and many PF platoons, capture large numbers of prisoners, and capture large quantities of enemy heavy weapons and technical equipment which we can use to attack the enemy and to provide us with a reserve stockpile.

-Defeat the enemy's relief and clearing operations in order to prevent the enemy from retaking areas that we have just liberated.

b)-Liberate the corridor: expand our corridor along Route 14, meaning Route 14 down to Route 22 through Gia Nghia and Route 14 down to the three southern provinces of Military Region 5; liberate and hold the areas that we clear in order to create a new battle posture for the B3 battlefield, dividing and isolating the enemy while we open up and utilize the corridor.

c)-Train and hone our forces to improve their skills in organizing and commanding combat operations.

-Improve our ability to quickly and completely annihilate enemy forces operating in the field as well as enemy forces holding solid fortified defensive positions.

-Train and hone our forces to improve our ability to organize and command campaigns and battles; to move and mass troops quickly and secretly to achieve surprise; to surround, outflank, and penetrate deep to destroy the enemy; to carry out siege operations, to avoid missing any

opportunities, and to capture enemy weapons, ammunition, and equipment that we can use to fight the enemy or to store as a reserve stockpile for our forces.

-Improving our abilities in this manner will both have an immediate effect; it will help to meet our requirements for the next mission. Out of all of the above goals, we must firmly understand that the goals of annihilating truly large numbers of enemy personnel and of liberating and opening up the corridor are the two primary goals and that these two goals are intimately linked together.

d)-Consolidate, strengthen, and build up the liberated zone and expand our local forces, both guerrillas and local force troops, in order to firmly hold and defend the new areas we take and defeat all enemy efforts to retake the areas that we have just captured.

2.-Formulas:

a)-Carry out aggressive actions to annihilate truly large numbers of enemy personnel, either killing them or causing them to disintegrate, and at the same time place great focus on attacking enemy troops occupying solidly fortified defensive positions. When carrying out attacks, first ensure that victory in the attack is certain; carry out rapid attacks that totally annihilate the enemy and that create additional opportunities to develop and expand victories.

b)-Maneuver forces in a very flexible manner, make widespread use of the tactics of surrounding the enemy, outflanking the enemy, penetrating deep into the enemy's position, and dividing enemy forces. Always seize campaign, battle, and combat opportunities to quickly advance and expand our victories.

d)-You must constantly maintain and exploit the campaign, tactical, and battle initiative from the beginning right through to the end of the campaign, and you must achieve the goal of growing stronger as you fight.

e)-For that reason, in your tactics you need to make sure you pay attention to the following tactics:

-Secrecy, surprise, deception and tricking the enemy, suppressing and closing airfields, cutting roads and other ground lines of communications. Light the fuse by drawing enemy forces into our pre-selected battle areas so that we can first attack enemy forces in the field, when they are out in the open.

-You must alter the battlefield posture to create a posture in which you divide the enemy's forces at both the campaign and the tactical level; penetrate deep, outflank the enemy, surround him broadly, and attack continuously.

-You must resolutely mass your forces in a tight, focused manner in order to quickly shatter the enemy's posture so that you can annihilate enemy forces and liberate areas and corridors.

3.-Goals: You must cripple the enemy army's 2nd Corps regular army units. Specifically, you must:

- Destroy four to six infantry regiments or regimental-sized task forces or ranger groups and from two to three armored battalions.

- Destroy many RF groups, RF battalions, RF companies and PF platoons; shatter and disperse the enemy's forces of repression and PSDF forces in the campaign's battle area; capture large numbers of prisoners; and capture large quantities of heavy weapons and technical equipment to use to fight the enemy and to stockpile for our future use.

- In the B3 campaign area itself, you must destroy from three to five infantry regiments, one to two armored battalions, and large numbers of enemy transport vehicles [trucks].

- Open up and expand the corridor, liberate and hold the new areas, and liberate civilians.

4.-Campaign Plan:

The campaign will be divided into two phases, with the total time being approximately two months.

Phase 1, from twenty days to one month.

Phase 2, depending on the situation the length of this phase might be extended.

After the campaign you must have a plan to develop and expand your victory and to firmly hold and defend the corridor and the newly-liberated zone.

Plan:

Phase 1: Attack enemy forces moving in the area of Route 14 in southern Pleiku Province, on Route 19, on Route 14 between Ban Me Thuot and Duc Lap, and on Route 21 east of Ban Me Thuot; Annihilate enemy defensive forces in the Duc Lap-Gia Nghia-Kien Duc Area, and liberate [open] the corridor. Specifically:

- In the area of southern Pleiku, ensure mobility and mass forces to support the deployment of our campaign forces, at the start of the campaign create an immediate opportunity for the 320th Division to attack enemy forces in southern Pleiku while they are on the move and out in the open. The mission of the 320th Division is to destroy one or two infantry regiments and one or two armored squadrons [battalions]. If there is a favorable opportunity to do so, the division should strive to eliminate the enemy's network of small outposts and overrun and liberate Cam Ga without waiting for Phase 2.

- The Duc Lap-Gia Nghia-Kien Duc area is the area of responsibility of the 10th Division plus two infantry battalions and one sapper battalion from the B2 Front along with a sapper battalion subordinate to the High Command. Specifically:

+The 10th Division's mission is to overrun and liberate Duc Lap and Dac Song in two or three days.

+The Gia Nghia-Kien Duc area is the area of responsibility of the B2 units and the sapper battalion from the High Command. These forces will serve in the role of local forces. They will attack Duc Lap and Dac Song simultaneously. Their mission will be to assault and capture a number of dominant terrain features and the airfield in order to threaten and dominate the province capital, Gia Nghia, and the airfield. At the same time these forces will surround and besiege Kien Duc and will dominate and suppress air operations at the Nhan Co Airfield in order to create the proper battlefield posture for the next step, but if conditions permit then they should strive to develop the attack to take these locations immediately.

-After Duc Lap and Dac Song are taken, you must quickly use one infantry regiment along with tanks and anti-aircraft guns, the campaign's reserve force, to strike deep to overrun Gia Nghia and Kien Duc and liberate Gia Nghia and Kien Duc. The anticipated time it should take to liberate the Duc Lap-Dac Song-Gia Nghia-Kien Duc area is from five to seven days to liberate the entire area. The decisions on the specific forces to be used to conduct the attack in the Duc Lap, Dac Song, Gia Nghia, and Kien Duc areas will be made by the Campaign Command Headquarters when they draw up their concrete campaign plan.

+The 316th Division (minus) will be responsible for the area of Route 14 between Ban Me Thuot and Duc Lap. The division's mission will be to annihilate enemy relief and reinforcement troops. The division's goal is to destroy approximately one regiment or regimental-sized task force, two infantry battalions and an armored battalion, and to seize, occupy, and liberate the area from the Serepoc Bridge to Duc Lap. If the enemy does not send reinforcements or relief forces, the 316th Division's mission will spread out its battalions to clear and liberate the territory and residents around the outskirts of Ban Me Thuot City.

+The attack area along Route 19 is an important supporting [secondary] sector of the campaign. This will be the area of responsibility of the 3rd Division (minus) and the 95th Regiment, with the 3rd Division Headquarters exercising overall command of forces in this area. These forces will be responsible for destroying one or two enemy infantry regiments or regimental-sized task forces and one armored squadron [battalion] (or a number of armored troops [companies] of the puppet 22nd Division) and for cutting enemy road traffic and keeping the road cut throughout the campaign.

+The Kontum area will be the area of responsibility of the 968th Division (minus). The 968th Division's mission will be to defend and hold the liberated zone, to aggressively pin down as many enemy forces as possible, and conduct deception operations to enable our forces in the primary attack sector to annihilate enemy forces.

+The Route 21 area will be the area of responsibility of the 25th Regiment and attached reinforcing elements. The regiment's mission will be to destroy supply convoys, RF groups, and regular army units sent to clear the road, and to cut all enemy ground traffic between Nha Trang and Ban Me Thuot.

Phase 2:

-This is the exploitation phase. The mission will be to attack and take Cam Ga and to attack, seize, occupy, and liberate Route 7 and the Cheo Reo rural areas. If an opportunity presents itself, our forces will liberate Cheo Reo City, the province capital. The forces to be used in this phase will be the massed forces of two divisions (the 10th and 320th Divisions) along with local forces.

-The 316th Division will continue to carry out its mission of annihilating enemy forces and maintaining firm control of the Duc Lap area and the area around Ban Me Thuot. Later, circa late April or early May, the division will be sent south and turned over to the B2 Front.

-In the event that the enemy's 2nd Corps regular army forces are crippled and the enemy's forces become frightened and begin to disintegrate, if the opportunity arises quickly attack, occupy, and liberate Ban Me Thuot City.

5.-Command Organization

The Central Military Party Committee and the General Staff will directly command and direct this campaign.

The Campaign Resolve [Campaign Party resolution] and the Campaign Plan will be reviewed and approved by the Standing Committee of the Central Military Party Committee and by the General Staff Headquarters.

The 3rd Division and the 95th Regiment will be commanded by Military Region 5 with guidance and direction provided by the Central Military Party Committee and the General Staff.

The Deputy Chief of the General Staff has read and approved these primary ideas.

Signed
Le Ngoc Hien

Document Appendix – 1975

Editor's Note: With the decision made to attack South Vietnam, extensive planning began to determine the most appropriate military target. That review culminated in the assessment that the city of Ban Me Thuot in the Central Highlands represented the best possible target.

Document No. 23

Leadership of the Ministry of Public Security issues guidance for dealing with reactionaries in South Vietnam, 5 January 1975

[Source: *Luc Luong Chong Phan Dong: Lich Su Bien Nien (1954–1975)* [Anti-Reactionary Forces: Chronology of Events (1954–1975)] (Hanoi: Nha xuất bản Công an nhân dân, 1997), 316-317.]

On 5 January 1975 Comrade Tran Quoc Hoan, Minister of Public Security, presided over a meeting that he had convened to study and implement our National guidelines and policies on conducting the struggle against reactionaries in support of the General Offensive and General Uprising in South Vietnam. Participants in the meeting included senior leadership of the Ministry of Public Security, the Directors of the various Departments of the Ministry of Public Security, and Comrades Cao Dang Chiem and Nguyen Van Con representing the COSVN Security Section.

Our policy was to clear the way for puppet soldiers and puppet governmental personnel to enter our liberated zones and join the revolution and to punish stubborn leaders (puppet officers from the rank of captain up and puppet government officials from the district level up).

The forms of punishment to be administered to those guilty of extensive crimes was broken down into the following categories: For leaders, they could be killed immediately or arrested, tried, and sentenced to death, imprisonment, or re-education camps. As for lower ranking personnel, in the main we would try to influence and educate them and then let them move to local areas in the liberated zone where they would be kept under continued observation and parole.

Thanks to the specific and timely policies and measures spelled out in this meeting, the security forces of South Vietnam were able to score many outstanding successes in the struggle to punish the reactionary lackeys.

Document No. 24

Conclusion of Phase Two of the Politburo Conference (Excerpts), 8 January 1975

[Source: *Dai Thang Mua Xuan, 1975: Van Kien Dang* [Great Spring Victory, 1975: Party Documents] (Hanoi: Nha xuất bản Chính trị quốc gia, 2005), 21-31.]

[...]

This final battle is first of all the responsibility of our military and political forces on the battlefields of Cochinchina, including the forces of Saigon-Gia Dinh. At the same time, it is also the responsibility of the soldiers and civilians of our entire nation, but the decisive role will be played by COSVN's main force units and by large main force units sent down from other battlefields.

The 1975 operations plan lays out the responsibilities of each individual battlefield and at the same time states that the direction of operations for all battlefields will be aimed at the common goal of moving by the fastest route possible toward fighting the final strategically decisive battle in the enemy's last lair.

The Cochinchina [Nam Bo] battlefield has three important missions: to attack the enemy's "pacification" program; to attack puppet main force [regular army] units; and to surround and pressure the cities. To attack "pacification," with the focal point of our attack being the Mekong Delta, we must send between 20,000 and 30,000 main force troops from Eastern Cochinchina [Dong Nam Bo] to attack down into the delta, in coordination with attacks and uprisings by local armed forces and political forces, and open up a unified, integral liberated zone linking Eastern Cochinchina with Regions 8 and 9. At the same time, we must place heavy pressure on My Tho and Saigon, and especially on Saigon, to create conditions that will enable the masses there to rise up. To contribute to our goal of surrounding and pressuring Saigon, our main force troops must annihilate a significant portion of the puppet's main force [regular] units in Eastern Cochinchina.

In the Region 5-Central Highlands area, we will use three main force divisions to attack the Central Highlands to open up a corridor linking the Central Highlands with Eastern Cochinchina in order to create conditions that will enable our main force troops to move rapidly down into Eastern Cochinchina to support COSVN's main force units in the attack on Saigon.

We will begin the offensive with an opening attack to capture Ban Me Thuot, after which we will then strike straight down to Tuy Hoa and Phu Yen, cutting the Region 5 coastal lowlands in two and creating an additional sector through which we can advance rapidly to the south to surround and pressure Saigon.

We will use Military Region 5 forces and the military and political forces of the coastal provinces of Central Vietnam to liberate the area from Binh Dinh northward to put pressure on Da Nang.

In the Tri-Thien Battlefield, we will attack and capture the lowlands and take firm control of the area south of Hue City in order to isolate Hue from Da Nang, to put pressure on both these cities, and to prevent the enemy from regrouping and pulling his forces back to the south. We will incite armed mutinies and secession in Central Vietnam.

When the opportunity arises, we will send three additional divisions down to Eastern Cochinchina. We will use two corps to launch lightning attacks to annihilate several of the puppet regular divisions down there and then penetrate straight into Saigon.

We must have plans ready in both South Vietnam and in North Vietnam for how we will respond to possible U.S. resumption of attacks by air and naval forces. The possibility that the U.S. will re-intervene in the Vietnam War is low. However, even if that possibility is only five or seven percent, we still must be on guard, because the U.S. is still plotting to maintain its neocolonialist rule. No matter what the U.S. wants to do, it will only be able to take limited action, for example by providing a small amount of additional military and economic aid or, at the very most, by

providing air and naval fire support (and only in the event that the puppets are able to resist for a protracted period of time.

These are the primary military attacks in our 1975 strategic plan....

Politburo

[...]

Document No. 25

Reply to Cable No. 46/B19, Cable from X2 [Pham Hung] to the Ba Dinh Party Current Affairs Committee [Central Office for South Vietnam – COSVN], 6 January 1975

[Source: *Dai Thang Mua Xuan*, 1975: *Van Kien Dang* [Great Spring Victory, 1975: Party Documents] (Hanoi: Nha xuất bản Chính trị quốc gia, 2005), 71-74.]

The situation is developing very favorably, just as Ba Dinh [COSVN] anticipated, and the pace of the development is faster than previously anticipated, both from the standpoint of the enemy's decline as well as from the standpoint of the new victories we have won. On many fronts these victories have already exceeded our goals. However, our only knowledge of the situation is based on the reports the different Regions have sent back to the Central Committee. Because we are far from the battlefield, even though we have not been away for very long the situation has progressed very rapidly, so it is difficult for us to provide full and comprehensive opinions. For that reason, we (Brothers Hai and Tu [Pham Hung and Tran Van Tra]) would like to present the following ideas as our contribution to the Current Affairs Committee as it conducts its initial review of the first month of Phase 1 of the dry season campaign:

1. After working with Quang Trung [the Politburo], we can clearly see that the direction of the missions, the major activities, and the major objectives that Ba Dinh [COSVN] set forward in the dry season campaign plan as well as in the plan for the entire year of 1975 were correct.

COSVN Directive No. 8 correctly presents in a concrete manner the content of Resolution 21 and of the Dien Bien's [Central Military Party Committee] resolution that was approved by Quang Trung [the Politburo]. At present, the progress of Phase 1 of the dry season campaign has enabled us to see even more clearly the extent of the enemy's decline on the military, political, and diplomatic fronts, and we can see that the level of victories we have achieved have in many places exceeded the goals that we had set. The situation is continuing to develop in our favor, and if we aggressively work to overcome the weaknesses and shortcomings that we have repeatedly described for some time now, the situation will progress by leaps and bounds. We already have a firm understanding that our focus is on gaining additional population and on gaining control of the territory in the lowlands, and it is correct that we have raised this task to be our first priority. We need to step up our efforts in this direction even more in order to be able to build three powerful fists (main force, rural, and urban) in order to have combined strength to use to continuously attack the enemy and to continuously strengthen our own forces in all respects in a process that will continue until we achieve complete victory.

With respect to the goals for the dry season, we need to readjust them to adapt them to the actual situation (do not be satisfied with the goals that we set forward previously and that we have already achieved, but also do not subjectively [over-optimistically] raise the goals so high that they do not reflect the balance of forces between ourselves and the enemy in each individual location) so that in both spirit and content we actively overcome problems and shortcomings, vigorously attack the enemy, and continuously gain new victories. In parallel with attacking the enemy, we must also pay the utmost attention to building our own forces in all respects, including building powerful armed forces and powerful political forces in all three areas [mountain jungles, rural lowlands, cities] and building solid liberated zones that develop step by step in accordance with a people's democratic regime.

Ba Dinh [COSVN] has already issued directives to our Party chapters on these issues, but you must ensure that these issues are promulgated and understood thoroughly right down to the grass roots level and that they are put into practice through the revolutionary actions of the masses of the population as they rise up to defeat the enemy's pacification program and overthrow the U.S.-Thieu regime to secure independence, freedom, prosperity, national reconciliation, and true peace.

I wanted to provide the above summary so that you can confidently direct and control our movement properly.

2. Our purpose in reviewing the events of December 1974 and conducting a preliminary review of the first month of Phase One of the dry season campaign is to be able to direct and guide the upcoming Phase Two properly and to gain a firm understanding of all aspects of the situation so that we can understand the level of success that we are capable of achieving during the entire dry season so that we can then provide guidance to the different local areas to enable them to achieve the greatest possible success during the entire dry season. In that way, we will achieve Ba Dinh's [COSVN's] stated desire of achieving the vast bulk of the goals of the 1975 plan during the dry season. If we do that, we will have created extremely favorable conditions for ourselves to be able to achieve even greater victories during the 1975 rainy season and the situation will develop in an extremely favorable manner for us as we move into 1976, and we will make our plans after we review the actual developments in the situation and determine the balance of forces between ourselves and the enemy at the end of the 1975 dry season.

The center of attention and the focal point of our battlefield during Phase Two of this dry season is the sector belonging to F5 [5th Division] and Group 3 [3rd AKA 303rd Division]. For that reason, we must concentrate our leadership and guidance properly to ensure that it is truly excellent in that sector. As for the other battlefields, they will strive to follow the plan that has already been approved with the goal of achieving the greatest possible victories.

3. The opinions laid out above also contribute, in part at least, to the task of conducting a review of 1974 in order to draw practical, realistic conclusions for the entire year of 1975. After we receive the outline you are sending and if we have any further ideas, we will provide them to you later. Make sure that you take the greatest care to keep both our strategic intentions and our intentions and plans for each individual battlefield totally secret. We will try to make it back in time to be able to celebrate the Tet Lunar New Year at home [with you].

I wish you all good health and I hope that all local areas achieve great victories.

When Brother Sau Nam [Le Duc Anh] arrives to meet with Ba Dinh [COSVN] you should pass this message on to him to ensure that we make good preparations on the military front.

Document No. 26

Cable No. 99/B01 from COSVN to the Politburo and X2 [Pham Hung], 15 January 1975

[Source: *Dai Thang Mua Xuan*, 1975: *Van Kien Dang* [Great Spring Victory, 1975: Party Documents] (Hanoi: Nha xuất bản Chinh tri quoc gia, 2005), 77-78.]

When we learned that the Center was increasing the level of support being sent to us and that it was sending us additional new units, we were very excited and happy, and we also now better understand the Center's intentions and resolve for this dry season and for the subsequent period as well.

In the near future, based on the plan and our current capabilities, and in light of our victory in December 1974, we are even more confident that we will be able to successfully accomplish the dry season plan. The situation will continue to change rapidly, and it is possible that there will be new victories that are even greater than the level projected in the plan.

During the past month the enemy's reactions have continued to be clumsy, confused, and cautious, but the enemy has not yet committed all his forces against us. We have won a major initial victory, but we still have not fully assessed all of the enemy's weaknesses. In the coming period, even if the enemy masses even greater strength to deal with our attacks, given our coordinated battlefield posture throughout South Vietnam, and if we quickly receive additional reserve forces, we will be able to act more decisively and win bigger victories. Not only will we be able to solidly resist the enemy's counterattacks; we will also be strong enough to exploit our victory and be ready to seize opportunities to score sudden, unexpected victories.

For this reason, we would like to recommend that the Politburo reconsider its decision. If there is a way to make some adjustments, we would like you to send the new division [the 341st Division] down here more quickly. If these forces are sent immediately, right at the start of the [Lunar] new year, we will be better able to maintain the initiative by sending reinforcements down to the lowlands [the Delta] and at the same time by conducting strong operations in Eastern Cochinchina aimed at providing direct support to the lowlands and at strongly shaking the area east of Saigon.

While we realize that the Politburo has to maintain an overall view and make its calculations accordingly, because of our responsibility for this battle area we have taken the liberty of presenting these ideas for the Politburo's consideration.

[signed]
Bay Linh [Nguyen Van Linh]

Document No. 27

Cable No. 727 from the Central Military Party Committee to Headquarters B4 [Thua Thien-Hue] and Headquarters B5 [Quang Tri], 10 February 1975

[Source: *Dai Thang Mua Xuan*, 1975: *Van Kien Dang* [Great Spring Victory, 1975: Party Documents] (Hanoi: Nha xuất bản Chính trị quốc gia, 2005), 85-93.]

I-ASSESSMENT OF THE SITUATION

1. Enemy:

-In the Tri-Thien battlefield, even though the enemy still has a significant sized force, it has grown somewhat weaker, especially in terms of its morale and fighting strength.

-Although the enemy's network of repression in the lowlands is still relatively stable, it is now somewhat looser.

-The enemy has fallen into a reactive, defensive posture and it would be easy for us to cut off and divide his forces, especially in the area south of Phu Bai. He has supply problems and it will be easy for us to surround and isolate his forces.

-If we make a powerful attack, the enemy might conduct a tactical withdrawal and regrouping by abandoning his small outposts. He would use air strikes combined with commandos to attack and disrupt our rear area. He would bomb Cua Viet and Dong Ha and bring back a portion of the airborne division.

In the event he faces severe danger, he might conduct a campaign-level withdrawal and regrouping, pulling back his forces and concentrating them to defend Hue, and it is possible that, and we need to monitor this possibility, the enemy might even abandon Hue and withdraw his mobile forces back to defend Danang.

2. Friendly:

-Including both Military Region and [2nd] corps forces, we have a large force, but our combat strength is not yet truly high, even though that strength has been raised a notch. There are still units that have not yet been regrouped, consolidated, and trained.

-Our political and armed forces in the lowlands and in Hue city have improved over their previous status, but they are still weak. Our springboard position on the outskirts of Hue still has problems.

-We have a strategic posture that threatens the enemy. From the west we have a good chance of being able to cut off and divide the enemy's forces, and if we know how to exploit and develop such an opportunity we will have great strength that will be capable of destroying enemy forces, of cutting off and dividing the enemy at the tactical and campaign level, and of surrounding

and isolating Hue. However, our organizational structure is still weak in the area east of Hue, at Cua Thuan, and along the Perfume [Huong] River. Our battlefield preparations are still inadequate.

-Our military proselyting operations are still weak and do not yet meet our mission requirements.

II-MISSIONS OF THE TRI-THIEN BATTLEFIELD FOR THE YEAR 1975

In order to carry out the Politburo decision to strive to win a big victory in 1975, quickly shift the balance of forces in our favor, and create the necessary conditions to advance toward winning an even greater victory, during 1975 the Tri-Thien battlefield must successfully accomplish the following missions:

1. Destroy or disperse an important portion of the enemy's regular and local force units and of the puppet's forces of repression (for both the military region and the corps we expect the elimination of approximately 50% of the enemy's forces) in order to decrease the enemy's troop strength on the battlefield.

2. Fundamentally defeat the enemy's pacification program: annihilate enemy thugs; shatter his instruments of repression; destroy or force the abandonment of outposts, police-stations, village military headquarters [sub-sub-sector headquarters], district military headquarters, and district capitals; and liberate and gain control of 50% of the civilian population in the rural lowlands.

3. Make continuous attacks against the enemy's lines of communications, cut enemy traffic for specific periods of time, progressing to completely cutting all of the enemy's road, air, and water traffic, divide and cut off the enemy at the strategic level, isolate the enemy's forces from Hue northward; incite mutiny and secession among enemy troops; improve our strategic posture, shatter the current clear lines dividing our territory from enemy-controlled territory and from the enemy's blocking positions in the foothills. This task will require a determined and resolute plan aimed at accomplishing this mission, no matter what.

4. Move in to the outskirts of Hue to resurrect, defend, and expand revolutionary pockets and springboard areas on the outskirts of the city and to create a corridor linking our forces with the city.

Develop additional strength in the city and strengthen our movement inside Hue. Intensify military proselyting operations, cause the disintegration of the enemy's local forces (PSDF, PF, and RF) and a portion of the enemy's regular forces, and incite mutiny and secession in units that we have surrounded and isolated.

5. Destroy the enemy's reserve stockpiles and military equipment, especially ammunition, fuel, aircraft, pilots, etc.

6. Tie down enemy forces in the Tri-Thien battlefield, force the enemy to maintain his current deployment of forces dispersed throughout South Vietnam in order to create favorable

conditions for the battlefields further south and also within the Tri Thien battlefield itself; annihilate and cause the disintegration of enemy forces.

7. Build and hone our main force corps units, our main force military region units, our local force troops, and our guerrilla militia forces; implement our formula of growing stronger the more we fight.

The missions listed above are intimately connected with one another. While you are carrying out these missions, which will require a concrete, detailed plan, you must at the same time make comprehensive preparations to follow-up this campaign up with an even larger campaign next year. These preparations are an extremely important responsibility for both the corps and the military region. You need to prepare a detailed, concrete plan so that the General Staff can review it in a timely fashion and forward it to the Current Affairs Committee of the Central Military Committee.

You must maintain a firm understanding and grasp of the following missions:

-The mission of annihilating and causing the disintegration of the enemy's manpower strength;

-The mission of fundamentally defeating the enemy's pacification program;

-The mission of strategically dividing the enemy and improving our own strategic posture in order to stimulate the development of the situation in directions favorable to us, to completely change the face of the Tri Thien battlefield, and to create the necessary conditions to enable us to gain an even greater victory next year.

III-ORGANIZING THE PHASES OF OPERATIONS

1. Two separate attack phases of a combined nature will be conducted during the 1975 Dry Season.

Phase 1 will be conducted during March, April, and a part of May 1975.

Phase 2 will be conducted during July and August 1975.

We will use larger forces during Phase 2 and our goals for Phase 2 will be higher, but Phase 1 will be of decisive importance to the success of Phase 2 and will decide our success or failure for the entire year of 1975.

For that reason you must achieve as much of the goals and requirements of Phase 1 as you possibly can.

-Each phase will require two plans: a basic plan and an exploitation plan. If conditions are favorable, each phase should begin with attacks against supply facilities and airfields along with the destruction of bridges and culverts. During the time period between the two phases, you need

to have forces ready to take turns conducting constant offensive operations against the enemy and firmly defending a number of important areas and our strategic position. The goal is to tie down the enemy and to draw enemy forces out to the foothills, thereby creating favorable conditions for the lowlands to expand people's warfare operations and to conduct continuous attacks and uprisings, and for us to expand, secure, and consolidate the newly liberated zones and to advance to achieving a posture of mastery and control.

2. Phase 1.

-Destroy five enemy battalions, including completely annihilating one enemy regiment to enable us to send forces down into the lowlands, to tie down enemy regular units in order to coordinate with and support our operations throughout all of South Vietnam and to firmly hold and defend the area east and west of Route 14 and Mo Tau.

-Send forces down into the lowlands to annihilate the enemy's forces of repression, to overrun or force the abandonment of enemy outposts and police stations, and to liberate territory and advance toward gaining control over villages and hamlets with a total population of between 70,000 and 100,000 people.

-Cut the overland routes from Phu Bai to the Hai Van pass for limited periods of time, take the first step toward shattering the enemy's blocking position and eliminating the lines delineating areas of control in the foothills, and improve our strategic posture.

-Hone our troops and command cadre in combat, fight massed regimental and division-level battles, shatter pacification, and liberate villages and hamlets.

b) Attack sectors:

-Simultaneously attack and destroy enemy forces, draw in and pin down enemy forces in the foothills, open up a corridor down into the lowlands, and attack and destroy the enemy's apparatus of repression in the lowlands.

-Closely coordinate our actions on the foothills front with our actions in the lowlands front.

-Foothills Front: The primary sector will be the area between Hue and Danang, the section from Phu Bai to the Hai Van Pass; the coordinating [supporting] sector will be the area between Hue and Quang Tri and the western portion of Route 12.

-Lowlands Front: Southern Thua Thien, northern Thua Thien, and Trieu Hai [district].

c) Utilization of forces:

-Utilize forces subordinate to Military Region Tri Thien and those forces from the [2nd] Corps that are able to participate in the fighting during Phase 1 (five regiments).

- Concentrate forces in the primary sector of the Foothills Front, using four regiments from 324th Division (minus) and 325th Division (minus) plus two regiments from the military region. These forces will be organized into two echelons that will take turns attacking the enemy in the area between Phu Bai and the Hai Van Pass.

- Use three military region battalions to cut road traffic between Phu Bai and the Hai Van Pass.

- Forces assigned to the Foothills Front supporting sector: one regiment plus a number of independent battalions that are subordinate to the military region.

- Lowlands Front: armed operations teams, district platoons and companies, provincial and military region battalions.

- Forces to be held in readiness to defend Cua Viet and Dong Ha: one regiment from [2nd] Corps plus a number of field artillery battalions and anti-aircraft artillery regiments.

d) Fighting tactics for main force units and methods for destroying pacification in the lowlands:

- Guidance concepts, combat methods, and destroying pacification (at the campaign and tactical levels) are important issues that will have a decisive impact. Therefore [Party] leaders and [military] commanders must deeply immerse themselves in deciding these issues, in conducting training, and in ensuring that cadre and soldiers fully understand, depending on each unit's specific assigned mission.

Devote special attention to: audacity, certain victory, mobility, flexibility, secrecy, and surprise.

- Attack supply warehouses, command posts, bridges, and culverts before the Phase actually begins.

- Destroy enemy forces and at the same time liberate and hold territory. Main force troops must have a firm understanding of our goal of annihilating enemy forces that are occupying defensive fortifications and enemy troops being sent out as reinforcements or relief forces; make a maximum effort to create conditions that will enable us to attack arriving enemy reinforcements and relief forces; attack when victory is certain and ensure that we win the first battle; defend important locations that must be held at all costs (for instance: Mo Tau, Chuc Mao). In order to accomplish individual combat missions, you need to take measures to organize the tactical posture required for each specific mission.

- Attack the enemy in the foothills to tie his forces down and open up a corridor while at the same time we send forces down into the lowlands. Develop and expand people's war in the local areas. Depending on the specific location and timing, send in armed operations teams [armed propaganda teams], local force platoons and companies, or entire battalions. Make sure you focus on annihilating enemy thugs, on overrunning or forcing the abandonment of small outposts and

village military headquarters [sub-sub-sector headquarters], and on annihilating reinforcements sent to relieve village military headquarters. Attack district military headquarters and district capitals in order to liberate villages and hamlets, building up to overrunning district military headquarters and liberating district capitals. You must select appropriate operational methods for each individual area, depending on whether you expect to loosen the enemy's grip in that area or to elevate the area to a contested area, because when we liberate an area the enemy may contest us for control of the area, or we may liberate the area and then successfully hold onto it. You should use the above points as a foundation upon which to determine tactical formulas and methods to provide specific, concrete guidance and command to our troops.

-Always maintain a reserve force that is able to strive to hone and improve its combat strength while at the same time it remains ready to seize favorable opportunities to expand our attacks.

d) Date for opening fire to begin Phase 1: no later than 5 March 1975.

3. Phase 2.

a) The fall, July and August 1975, a period when conditions are right for the Tri Thien and Region 5 battlefields to fight large-scale battles.

Specific mission guidance: During Phase 2 the missions of the Tri-Thien battlefield may be as follows:

-Achieve large-scale annihilation, annihilate or cause the disintegration of 50% of all puppet regular and local forces; destroy battalions or regiments on a regular, widespread basis, and perhaps even to annihilate an entire division.

-Overrun and liberate a number of district capitals and district military headquarters; annihilate a number of regiments sent to relieve garrisons; permanently divide and isolate the enemy.

-Surround and isolate Hue, incite military mutinies and secessions, appeal to the mutineers to form an alliance with us, and be prepared to attack and annihilate those enemy forces that are located in Quang Tri or to attack and capture Hue if the enemy experiences large-scale panic and wavering.

b) You need to immediately begin work on a plan to make preparations for this phase:

-Prepare roads: quickly complete the road up to Bach Mai.

You must make preparations to attack Hue to ensure that we do not miss any opportunity that presents itself.

-Prepare the necessary logistics support and supplies.

-Prepare forces and tactics; prepare personnel to serve as replacements for losses of enlisted men, cadre, and technicians.

IV-ORGANIZING MILITARY COMMAND AND PARTY GUIDANCE

The two 1975 phases, the summer phase and the fall phase, are both offensive phases of an overall, combined nature that require a concentrated and unified military command and Party guidance structure.

You need to have a unified Party Committee (for the membership of this committee—see the separate resolution from the Central Military Party Committee).

With regard to the missions and plans for Phase 2, you will use the actual, concrete situation, both enemy and our own, in Tri-Thien and throughout South Vietnam after the end of Phase 1 to make your final determination.

In order to successfully accomplish the missions for 1975 and create the requisite conditions for next year, you comrades must make a correct assessment of the situation.

You must clearly recognize the new deterioration of the enemy's strength and the new advantages enjoyed by our side. You must resolutely launch attacks to destroy or cause the disintegration of the puppet army, to disrupt pacification, to secure control of the population, to strategically divide and isolate the enemy, to move our forces in close to Hue, and to seize opportunities to exploit and expand victories. You must have a deception plan, you must maintain secrecy, and you must constantly create and achieve surprise at the campaign and tactical level. You must do whatever is necessary to build model units with high combat capabilities, all the way from the small armed operations units up to infantry and technical specialty branch battalions, regiments, and divisions. You must conduct exemplary attacks and battles with a high level of combat efficiency, battles in which our casualties and expenditure of ammunition are low but in which we capture many enemy prisoners, capture large quantities of enemy weapons, and liberate large numbers of villages, hamlets, and district capitals.

If you clearly understand both the enemy and our own forces, attack resolutely, maintain tight solidarity, improve the quality of our Party leadership and the skills of our commanders, provide good guidance to the work of improving our troops' combat power, and provide good coordination between the military struggle, political struggle, and military proselyting operations, the Tri Thien Military Region and 2nd Corps will certainly have great success in achieving each of the goals that have been set for you.

You must keep the entire content of this message in the strictest secrecy. You may only disseminate this text within the Current Affairs Committee of the Front Party Committee. Otherwise, each command level and each component is to only be briefed on the specific missions that are assigned to that particular command level or component and on those items that are necessary for coordination with other friendly units.

On Behalf of the Central Military Party Committee

Secretary
Vo Nguyen Giap

Document No. 28

COSVN Directive 02 on Our Operations During Phase 2 of the 1974-1975 Dry Season, 25 February 1975

[Source: *Lich Su Bien Nien Xu Uy Nam Bo va Trung Uong Cuc Mien Nam (1954-1975)* [Historical Chronicle of the Cochin China Party Committee and the Central Office for South Vietnam, 1954-1975], 2nd ed. (Hanoi: Nha xuất bản Chính trị quốc gia, 2008), 1304-1306.]²⁶

After assessing the results of Phase 1 and the prospects for the future, COSVN has concluded:

1. Strengths:

We have now shifted to a broad-based overall offensive posture. In particular, we captured, liberated, and gained complete control over many heavily populated areas in the Mekong Delta, opened up many important base areas and transportation corridors, have seized control of the Phuoc Long province capital north of Saigon and a number of district capitals northeast of Saigon, and have expanded our liberated zones and base areas, which now have a population of 1,800,000 people.

The enemy's plan to seize the dry season crop and steal our rice has been a failure right from the beginning.

The enemy's governmental apparatus has been stretched thin in every location and has been pushed back in the focal point areas and in many areas and pockets in many different sectors. The Thieu government's military and pacification failures have caused it to lose ground politically. This has led to the following situation:

- Our forces are now stronger than the enemy and are steadily gaining the overall initiative. This demonstrates the total correctness of COSVN's policy decision to focus on defeating the pacification program and liberating the rural countryside, a decision which has also advanced our movement in the cities and the areas temporarily under enemy control another step forward.

- Our successes in the early part of the dry season opens up the possibility that we can increase the pace and the scale of our movement and speed up the enemy's collapse.

2. Weaknesses:

²⁶ The document can also be found in the first edition of *Lich Su Bien Nien Xu Uy Nam Bo va Trung Uong Cuc Mien Nam (1954-1975)* [Historical Chronicle of the Cochin China Party Committee and the Central Office for South Vietnam, 1954-1975] (Hanoi: Nha xuất bản Chính trị quốc gia, 2002), 1061-1062.

- Our ideological understanding of the situation has not kept pace with the rapid developments in the situation. We have not been sufficiently resolute, bold, quick, or flexible in our attacks against the enemy or in our efforts to build up our own forces of all types.

- Sufficient attention has not been paid to building up our forces and our movement.

- Our take-over of, administration of, and efforts to build up the newly liberated areas have been slow and awkward.

In order to correctly focus our direction of Phase 2 of the 1974-1975 Dry Season Campaign, COSVN requests that careful and detailed preparations of the following types be made for the implementation of Phase 2 of our plan:

- Study and completely digest and understand the goals and missions of Phase 2 of the plan in order to increase the resolve of and improve the efforts of every Party chapter, every section, and every branch. Ensure that guidance is truly comprehensive, speedy, and concrete. Mobilize all forces and every region to create combined, self-sufficient strength in order to strive to win the greatest possible victory.

- Develop and direct our plan for Phase 2 in such a way as to ensure that it is comprehensive, continuous, and adapted to the realities of the battlefield in order to ensure that we will win a complete and comprehensive victory in all respects (military, political, and economic). Intensify military attacks and liberate the population. Conduct military proselyting operations and recruit and develop solid agents and networks. Ensure that all aspects of our attacks and of our force-building efforts are carried out properly.

Document No. 29

Central Military Party Committee to General Van Tien Dung, cable sent at 1400 hours, C25 February 1975

[Source: *Mot So Van Kien Chi Dao: Tong Tien Cong Va Noi Day Mua Xuan Nam 1975, Chien Dich Ho Chi Minh* [A Number of Guidance Documents for the Spring 1975 General Offensive and Uprising and the Ho Chi Minh Campaign] (Hanoi: Nha xuất bản Quân đội nhân dân, 2005), 192.]

[...]

I have received your cable dated 17 February. ... Since I do not have a complete grasp of the details of the situation down there, I would only like to contribute a few ideas to you that I have discussed with Brother Sau [Le Duc Tho]:

1. You should weigh the actual situation and make your decision based on the spirit of the conversations we had with you before you left. Whether you decide to follow the plan that Dinh reported or some other plan, you should act boldly to resolve [finish off] A2 first (“Dinh” is a combat operations staff officer sent down to monitor the battle of Ban Me Thuot; “A2” is Ban Me Thuot). If the enemy there is relatively weak and is not on his guard, we will be able to secure the

element of surprise and annihilate the enemy, after which we will quickly develop and exploit that victory.

2. No matter which plan you choose, you should try to achieve the greatest possible surprise to ensure that we win a clear, clean victory, and you need to anticipate and have a plan ready to develop the victory quickly in order to annihilate truly large numbers of enemy troops while at the same time liberating important areas.

3. Have someone review and check the plan for logistics support to ensure that you receive sufficient supplies to handle the situation, including in the event that the enemy reinforces the area and attacks our supply corridor.

Signed
Chien [Vo Nguyen Giap]

Document No. 30

Cable No. 810B from the Central Military Party Committee to the Current Affairs Committee of the Tri Thien Party Committee, the Current Affairs Committees of the B4 and B5 Party Committees, and the Tri Thien Region Party Committee, 27 February 1975

[Source: *Dai Thang Mua Xuan*, 1975: *Van Kien Dang* [Great Spring Victory, 1975: Party Documents] (Hanoi: Nha xuất bản Chính trị quốc gia, 2005), 94-97.]

Comrades Nam and Hoang Dan have briefed me and the senior officers of the General Staff on your plan for the upcoming operation. Generally speaking, the plan correctly reflects the instructions provided by the Current Affairs Committee of the Central Military Party Committee, but there are a number of points that need to be revised to provide greater power and effectiveness.

Our spring and summer operations in the Tri Thien battlefield this time are being conducted in conditions that are more favorable to us than has been the case in the past, and with respect to the forces involved, this time we have both Region 5 forces and military region forces. This means that if our guidance is resolute and flexible, we will certainly achieve a great victory. When studying and absorbing the missions that have been laid out for you, the problem for you is to achieve a truly solid understanding of the relationship between the goal of annihilating and causing the disintegration of enemy forces, the goal of shattering the enemy's blocking defensive line to improve and to firmly maintain our strategic posture in the west, and the goal of stepping up people's warfare to secure control of additional population and to shatter the enemy's pacification program.

The problem of improving and maintaining our strategic posture in the west is extremely important, not just for achieving victory in this campaign, but also for creating a springboard from which we can launch our next campaign.

For those reasons:

1. On the question of the utilization of main force units (including the regiments subordinate to the Military Region), you must establish a sector blocking Moc Hoa and an important coordinating [supporting] sector.

a) The primary offensive sector is the Nui Bong-Mo Tau area where you are to annihilate enemy forces defending these positions and forces sent to reinforce and relieve them, in parallel with attacking, disrupting, and cutting road traffic.

b) The important coordinating [supporting] offensive sector is the 104-335-126-127-142-315-128-111 area.²⁷ This sector will coordinate closely with the primary sector to disperse and destroy enemy forces. You need to concentrate at least two regiments for the attack in this sector.

2. In order to shatter the enemy's blocking defensive line and improve our strategic posture, we must clearly and definitively designate the positions that must be overrun, occupied, and defended, and we must build them into heavily fortified military defensive strong-points for our troops to defend. This will not only threaten the enemy and draw in his forces; it will also create new conditions that will enable us to annihilate enemy troops and create new gaps and weaknesses in the lowlands that we can exploit to step up our activities and advance our movement there. Even along the foothill border line from Route 12 to the Trieu Phong-Hai Lang border area, you need to study how to fight battles of annihilation and how to determine which positions you can and should occupy to expand our corridor and to further disperse the enemy's forces. We must stress that this is an extremely important matter for the Tri-Thien battlefield.

3. With regard to the matter of inciting people's warfare in the lowlands, gaining control of additional population, and defeating the enemy's pacification program, you must develop a concrete plan that lays out concrete steps to be taken in terms of the methods to be used and the areas of operations and that specifies focal point areas that are to be liberated or turned into contested areas in order to create common springboard positions around Hue. The issue for you is that you must provide good guidance to the armed operations teams, you must annihilate puppet officials and spies in an overall, comprehensive manner, and you must provide good guidance to local force units in order to overrun and destroy district capitals and district military headquarters and to create the conditions necessary to assault isolated district capitals and military headquarters. In addition to annihilating or disintegrating the enemy's forces, you also need to have a plan ready to quickly develop and expand our armed and political forces and to conduct a coordinated three-pronged attack to move our movement forward so that it becomes a powerful and solid force. The more powerful we make our main force operations, the better our prospects become in the lowlands. For that reason, in your guidance you must maintain a firm grasp on concrete opportunities and devote special attention to maintaining timely coordination between our attacks in the lowlands and the attacks being conducted by our main force elements.

4. Timing: You must follow the schedule set by the High Command. Initially, you may start by using small-scale and medium-scale attacks, sapper attacks, raids against enemy warehouses and supply facilities to destroy a number of targets that have been prepared beforehand. These attacks should be combined with a number of deception operations. As for the

²⁷ This is in code and it refers to the "Chuc Mao-Son Na" area.

important attacks, you must make adequate and very aggressive preparations that will ensure certain victory, and these actions may be launched on or about D-Day plus 3.

5. We agree that two plans are needed: one plan that must be carried out and the goals of which must be met, and another plan, an exploitation plan that will be used if an opportunity arises. During the course of the general offensive, you should strive to consolidate your forces and conduct really good, exemplary attacks using our main force and local force units. When carrying out the spring and summer plans, you also need to have a plan to step up your preparations of all types for a follow-up general offensive.

6. You must lay out clear guidelines regarding [Party] leadership and [military] command.

The Front Party Committee will provide overall leadership, and at specific times you should hold meetings of the Current Affairs Committee or have consultations with the Current Affairs Committee.

These are the guidelines for [military] command:

a) Command in the Nui Bong - Mo Tau - Phu Loc area will be the responsibility of the B5 Party Committee and the B5 Command Headquarters. They will command our main force units and at the same time will provide guidance and coordination for local forces (you are to hold discussions to work out the specific arrangements).

b) The military region will provide [Party] leadership and [military] command in the Route 1 and Route 2 sectors and throughout the rest of the military region. The Military Region Headquarters Command Group should not be dispersed to different locations. The Commander, the Political Commissar, and the headquarters staff should be concentrated in a single location. The best location for this headquarters is the spot that has been chosen south of 104-335-126-127 (Vietnamese Editor's Note: This is in code and it refers to the "Chuc Mao" area).

Comrades Nam and Hoang Dan will brief you on the detailed instructions issued by the General Staff.

You comrades are to strictly carry out this directive and to forward to us reports on its implementation.

[signed]
Van [Vo Nguyen Giap]

Document No. 31

Cable 01/TK from Brother Chien [Vo Nguyen Giap] to Brother Tuan [Van Tien Dung], 11 March 1975

[Source: *Dai Thang Mua Xuan*, 1975: *Van Kien Dang* [Great Spring Victory, 1975: Party Documents] (Hanoi: Nha xuất bản Chính trị quốc gia, 2005), 110-113.]

1. I received your Cable No. 3 and am very excited about the tremendous, clear victory our troops have won in the primary sector as well as in the supporting sector.

2. This morning, before we received your cable, the Political Bureau and the Central Military Party Committee met to assess the situation. The following are the main points from that meeting:

a) The strategic and campaign plans that the Politburo and the Central Military Party Committee approved were precisely correct, our preparations for this attack were rather good, and we achieved surprise. That is why we have been able to achieve such great victories in the very first days of the campaign.

b) The victories at Ban Me Thuot and Duc Lap, along Route 19, and in other sectors demonstrate that we have the capability of winning a tremendous victory more quickly than we anticipated.

The most significant point about the current situation is that the enemy's morale has sunk very low.

c) Because of this situation, during this current phase of operations, and even in our follow-up plan, we need to display a spirit of urgency and daring, because only by exploiting this opportunity in a timely fashion will we be able to win a great victory.

d) In B3 [The Central Highlands] we must devote particular attention to the task of taking over the government and supplying the people's needs. We must pay attention to our policies on ethnic minorities (make it clear that our ethnic minority policy is aimed at uniting all ethnic groups and achieving equality, and do not mention the issue of ethnic minority autonomy). Also pay attention to our policy toward citizens of foreign countries (all Americans who are captured are to be considered to be prisoners of war; citizens of other countries are to be treated well and may be released early). Also pay attention to the work of handling prisoners of war and collecting the spoils of war.

3. I received your cable this afternoon. I believe that the policy you propose in your cable is completely consistent with the ideas discussed this morning in the meetings of the Politburo and the Central Military Party Committee. I have just discussed your cable with Brothers Ba [Le Duan] and Sau [Le Duc Tho]. We are all in complete agreement with the proposals you make in the cable; specifically:

a) In Ban Me Thuot, quickly annihilate all remaining enemy unit while at the same time we spread out forces out through the surrounding area and stand ready to attack any enemy relief force (the more enemy troops we annihilate and the more we expand the size of our liberated zone, the less capability the enemy will have to rectify the situation).

b) Quickly expand our operations toward Cheo Reo. You should send forces out ahead to immediately surround and besiege Cheo Reo in order to overrun it and at the same time annihilate the enemy troops in the area.

c) Immediately deploy your forces to surround Pleiku, block the enemy's avenues of supply, and prepare to advance toward overrunning and taking Pleiku.

As for Kontum, you should isolate it and overrun it later.

d) In order to completely isolate the Pleiku-Kontum area, the General Staff has a plan to direct F3 [3rd Division] and E95 [95th Regiment] to expand their area of control of Route 19 to strategically cut off the area and to surround and to prepare to overrun An Khe.

e) The advance to the south will be delayed until the next step.

f) During the course of developing and expanding the attack, make sure that you maintain a firm grip on our main force units, avoid dispersing your forces, and prepare a plan to quickly consolidate and ensure our logistics support.

g) The enemy has been taken by surprise, he has suffered a heavy defeat, and he is presently on the defensive and confused. We have issued instructions to monitor the reactions of the U.S. and their puppets. If I receive any news I will cable it to you immediately.

4. Brothers Si and Ba Long [Le Trong Tan] will send you a separate cable presenting a number of specific, concrete ideas.

5. The Current Affairs Committee of the Central Military Party Committee has decided to award Comrade Y-Bloc the rank of Senior Colonel. A cable on this has already been sent to Brothers Nam Cong [Vo Chi Cong] and Hai Manh [Chu Huy Man].

6. The Politburo and the Central Military Party Committee warmly commends all cadre, enlisted men, Party members, Youth Group members, and other personnel for their determined-to-win-spirit, for their heroism, cleverness, and creativeness, and for boldly and quickly winning a tremendous victory during the very first days of the campaign. We need to seize this favorable opportunity quickly in order to win even greater victories.

7. I send you my best wishes and ask that you relay my regards to the others down there. I am sending some letters and books to you.

[signed]
Chien [Vo Nguyen Giap]

Document No. 32

Central Military Committee to General Van Tien Dung, cable sent at 1900 hours, 11 March 1975

[Source: *Mot So Van Kien Chi Dao: Tong Tien Cong Va Noi Day Mua Xuan Nam 1975*, Chien Dich Ho Chi Minh [A Number of Guidance Documents for the Spring 1975 General Offensive

and Uprising and the Ho Chi Minh Campaign] (Hanoi: Nha xuất bản Quân đội nhân dân, 2005), 200-201.]

This morning, before your cable was received, the Politburo and the Central Military Party Committee met to assess the situation. The following are several main points from that meeting:

1. The strategic and campaign plans that the Politburo and the Central Military Party Committee set forward for implementation have proven to be very correct and precise and our preparations for this campaign were carried out in a relatively good manner, and that is the reason that we have won a great victory in just the first days of this campaign.

2. Our victories at Ban Me Thuot, Duc Lap, on Route 19, and in other sectors proves that we are capable of winning big victories at a faster pace than originally anticipated. The most outstanding feature of the current situation is that the enemy's morale has greatly deteriorated.

3. Because of this situation, both during this current wave of activities and during our implementation of the follow-up plan we must demonstrate a spirit of urgency by quickly and boldly exploiting opportunities. That is the only way we will be able to win great victories.

4. On the B3 Front, during this wave of operations and during the conduct of the follow-up plan you must pay the utmost attention to the need to demonstrate a spirit of urgency by quickly and boldly exploiting opportunities. That is the only way we will be able to win great victories. [Translator's Note: There were two paragraphs in the text that are identical except for the first few words in each]

5. Your cable is completely in harmony with the ideas expressed this morning in the Politburo and Central Military Party Committee meetings. I have just discussed the situation with Brother Ba (Le Duan) and Brother Sau (Le Duc Tho). We are all in total agreement with the policy decisions outlined in your cable:

a) In Ban Me Thuot, annihilate the remaining enemy forces, expand operations to the surrounding areas, and be prepared to attack enemy relief forces.

b) Quickly advance toward Cheo Reo and surround that city immediately in order to overrun and take it.

c) Immediately complete our siege ring surrounding Pleiku, strategically divide the enemy's forces, and surround and prepare to overrun An Khe in order to isolate Pleiku.

The advance to the south will be carried out later, as our next step. As you develop and expand the offensive, make sure you maintain a firm grasp on our main force units and avoid dispersing our forces...

The Standing Committee of the Central Military Party Committee has decided to promote Comrade Y Bloc to the rank of Senior Colonel. The Politburo and the Central Military Party Committee warmly commend all of the cadres, enlisted men, Party members, Youth Group

members, National Defense workers, and civilians of the Central Highlands Front for winning this great victory ...

I wish you good health and send my best wishes to the rest of you down there.

Signed
Chien [Vo Nguyen Giap]

Document No. 33

Central Military Party Committee Cable Sent to General Van Tien Dung, Info Copies Sent to Comrade Hoang Minh Thao and the B3 Front Party Current Affairs Committee, cable sent at 1200 hours, 12 March 1975

[Source: *Mot So Van Kien Chi Dao: Tong Tien Cong Va Noi Day Mua Xuan Nam 1975, Chien Dich Ho Chi Minh* [A Number of Guidance Documents for the Spring 1975 General Offensive and Uprising and the Ho Chi Minh Campaign] (Hanoi: Nha xuất bản Quân đội nhân dân, 2005), 202.]

The enemy currently plans to utilize those of his forces that have not yet been destroyed in his nearby secondary positions, together with reinforcements he will send in and with strong air support, to launch a counterattack aimed at retaking Ban Me Thuot. ... For that reason, our most urgent task is to quickly mass additional forces to quickly overrun and annihilate the enemy's units and bases in the area around Ban Me Thuot and to annihilate the enemy's relief forces. The destruction of an important portion of the enemy's manpower strength around Ban Me Thuot will be of decisive importance to the expansion and development of our campaign. At the same time, direct and guide all of our operations in the previously planned development sectors: Cheo Reo, Pleiku, and Route 19. Pay special attention to interrogating prisoners of war in order to support our combat operations and our military proselyting operations. I wish you great success.

Signed
Chien [Vo Nguyen Giap]

Document No. 34

Central Military Party Committee Cable Sent to General Van Tien Dung during the Course of the Attack on Ban Me Thuot, March 1975

[Source: *Mot So Van Kien Chi Dao: Tong Tien Cong Va Noi Day Mua Xuan Nam 1975, Chien Dich Ho Chi Minh* [A Number of Guidance Documents for the Spring 1975 General Offensive and Uprising and the Ho Chi Minh Campaign] (Hanoi: Nha xuất bản Quân đội nhân dân, 2005), 203.]

...According to instructions issued by the Politburo, we have decided that our public [open] propaganda about the battle will be put out only one step at a time. Initially issue propaganda about individual battles, and wait until the attack has been essentially successfully completed before putting out a public statement saying that we have liberated Ban Me Thuot. When putting out such propaganda reports, emphasize the enemy's violations of the Paris Agreement, say a lot about the

uprisings of the civilian masses, and at the same time also say a lot about the operations of the [South Vietnamese] Liberation Army. ... If you have any ideas on this subject, send them to me in a cable.

Signed
Chien [Vo Nguyen Giap]

Document No. 35

Cable from the Politburo and the Central Military Party Committee, Sent Through the General Staff to Region 5, B2, Tri-Thien, and 2nd Corps, 12 March 1975

[Source: *Mot So Van Kien Chi Dao: Tong Tien Cong Va Noi Day Mua Xuan Nam 1975, Chien Dich Ho Chi Minh* [A Number of Guidance Documents for the Spring 1975 General Offensive and Uprising and the Ho Chi Minh Campaign] (Hanoi: Nha xuất bản Quân đội nhân dân, 2005), 204.]

During this wave of operations and during our follow-up plan, we need to fully absorb and implement a spirit of urgency and boldness by quickly exploiting new favorable conditions to gain even greater victories. We must place the greatest possible emphasis on annihilating truly large numbers of enemy troops while they are retreating or when they send in large relief forces ... At the same time, building on our new tide of victories, quickly develop and expand your attacks in the previously designated sectors. In each specific battlefield, based on the basic plan that has been approved, you must now implement that plan with greater resolve and greater boldness....

Document No. 36

Cable 373/DK, Central Military Party Committee Cable to General Van Tien Dung, sent 0900 hours, 13 March 1975

[Source: *Lịch sử cuộc tác chiến 1945-2000* [History of the Combat Operations Department 1945-2000] (Hanoi: Nha xuất bản Quân đội nhân dân, 2005) (internal distribution).²⁸]

To Brother Tuan:

1-The campaign is now developing well and Cochinchina's operations are beginning to provide good coordination with and support to the campaign.

2-We would like to offer the following ideas:

a) Have your people closely monitor the destruction of the units of the puppet 23rd Division and order our troops to utilize our victory to quickly annihilate truly large numbers of enemy troops in Ban Me Thuot and the surrounding area. If we can annihilate the entire 23rd Division there the situation will progress even better.

²⁸ An abridged version of this document was also published in *Mot So Van Kien Chi Dao: Tong Tien Cong Va Noi Day Mua Xuan Nam 1975, Chien Dich Ho Chi Minh* [A Number of Guidance Documents for the Spring 1975 General Offensive and Uprising and the Ho Chi Minh Campaign] (Hanoi: Nha xuất bản Quân đội nhân dân, 2005), 205.

b) Issue immediate instructions to surround, besiege, and annihilate all enemy forces in the area.

c) If the enemy loses a large number of troops, along with the loss of Ban Me Thuot city and many of his district capitals, and if we maintain our strategic isolation of the enemy by keeping Route 19 cut, then it is possible that the enemy will concentrate all of his remaining forces in the B3 theater of operations in Pleiku. We must also consider the possibility that the enemy will be forced to carry out a strategic withdrawal. Therefore you must surround and besiege Pleiku immediately, using all types of heavy weapons, including anti-aircraft artillery guns, in order to totally cut the enemy's supply lines. You must make good preparations to annihilate the enemy's forces in both scenarios.

Signed
Van [Vo Nguyen Giap]

Document No. 37

Cable from Le Duc Tho to COSVN Providing Ideas on the Possibility of Conducting Attacks and Uprisings to Liberate Local Areas, 13 March 1975

[Source: *Lich Su Bien Nien Xu Uy Nam Bo va Trung Uong Cuc Mien Nam (1954-1975)* [Historical Chronicle of the Cochinchina Party Committee and the Central Office for South Vietnam, 1954-1975], 2nd ed. (Hanoi: Nha xuất bản Chính trị quốc gia, 2008), 1307-1308.]²⁹

After reviewing COSVN Directive 02/75 providing COSVN's assessment of the situation and its policy decision to conduct attacks and uprisings at the grass-roots level (village, district, and province), Comrade Le Duc Tho provided the following additional ideas for consideration:

COSVN's policy decision that "villages will liberate themselves, will eliminate village-level military headquarters, and will besiege and destroy district military headquarters, district capitals, and province capitals, leading to the complete liberation of entire district and provinces" might not yet be appropriate for the current situation. In Comrade Tho's opinion, the three-pronged attack [military, political, military proselyting] at the grassroots level is only capable of liberating enemy outposts at the hamlet and village level. Even if forces at the grassroots level are strong, they are only capable of liberating village-level military headquarters. As for district capitals, district military headquarters, and province capitals, if the effort involves only the three-pronged attacks of grassroots level forces, in the immediate and short-term future, at least, such attacks are not capable of taking such targets. Even later on, when local forces at the province level become stronger, the liberation of province capitals still can only be accomplished if main force units are available to make the primary effort. Only in the case of small provinces that have been greatly strengthened and in which enemy forces have largely collapsed will it be possible for local forces to liberate provinces and their capitals.

²⁹ The document can also be found in the first edition of *Lich Su Bien Nien Xu Uy Nam Bo va Trung Uong Cuc Mien Nam (1954-1975)* [Historical Chronicle of the Cochinchina Party Committee and the Central Office for South Vietnam, 1954-1975] (Hanoi: Nha xuất bản Chính trị quốc gia, 2002), 1063.

For that reason, when discussing the three-pronged attack at the grassroots level, only if our grassroots level forces continue to expand will there be a chance that they can meet the requirements of the new situation. If COSVN wants to launch an emulation movement for “villages to liberate villages, districts to liberate districts, and provinces to liberate provinces,” it will have to provide very specific and detailed guidance to each individual area, it will have to quickly build up forces that are strong in every respect, and it will have to provide powerful reinforcements for the grassroots levels, because at this time the enemy is seeking to pull back and regroup his forces.

With regards to building and consolidating liberated zones, in order to keep pace with the developing requirements COSVN will need to strengthen our forces on the front lines. If COSVN wishes to do this, it will need to reorganize its upper level structures, from COSVN down to the region, military region, and province levels, in order to streamline them. The excess cadres can then be formed into mobile operations teams to be sent down to the grassroots level to conduct operations there.

Document No. 38

Cable No. 05 from Brother Tuan [Van Tien Dung] to the Politburo and the Central Military Party Committee, 14 March 1975

[Source: *Dai Thang Mua Xuan*, 1975: *Van Kien Dang* [Great Spring Victory, 1975: Party Documents] (Hanoi: Nha xuất bản Chính trị quốc gia, 2005), 127-130.]

1. I have received Brother Chien's [Vo Nguyen Giap] Cables numbered 3, 4, 7, and 10. I am very excited and enthusiastic about the spirit and the substance of the Politburo's and the Central Military Party Committee's decisions on expanding this campaign:

We will strive to draft and issue implementation guidance based on the status of the development and expansion of the battlefield and will apply the guidance flexibly in order to achieve the goals set by higher authority to shorten the timing and exceed the plan by achieving in a few months the goals planned for the entire year of 1975.

2. I have a few preliminary points that I have derived from the events of the first few days of the campaign:

a) If we can force the enemy to act in accordance with our intentions, then cause him to make erroneous assessments about where we will make our primary attack, and then continue to reinforce those erroneous assessments until the time the attack in the campaign's primary offensive sector begins, then we can achieve and maintain surprise at the campaign level. From 1 March to 9 March 1975, before we attacked Ban Me Thuot, we carried out our deployment of forces for the campaign, drawing the enemy's attention toward Kontum and Pleiku, cutting roads, and isolating the primary target. It was not until just before we were about to launch the attack on Ban Me Thuot that the enemy finally realized the danger and wanted to reinforce Ban Me Thuot, but it was too late because his forces had already been stretched thin trying to defend other areas.

b) The tactics used for attacking the primary target were coordinated tactics, using combined arms forces in four columns [wings]. By bypassed the enemy outposts on the outskirts

of Ban Me Thuot, we were able to infiltrate large forces in to strike directly at enemy targets inside the city, immediately crushing the enemy's two command centers, aiming our attack at the headquarters of the 23rd Division and at tightly pressuring the province sector military headquarters. We used two infantry battalions attacking from the south (one battalion to attack the 23rd Division headquarters and the other to attack the province sector command post) while we simultaneously sent two other spearheads, each one consisting of one infantry battalion and one tank company, in from the west and the northeast. To enable the infantry battalions to keep up with the tanks and to strike the target simultaneously, in each case we used one infantry company mounted in armored personnel carriers to accompany the tank company while the battalion's other two infantry companies were infiltrated in ahead of time and waited in hiding for the tanks about two kilometers from the target (the 23rd Division Headquarters). When the tanks arrived, in each case the entire force combined to form a sharp spearhead made up of an entire infantry battalion accompanied by tanks and armored personnel carriers. This force then immediately attacked the target when the artillery shifted fire, leaving the enemy no time to react or command his other forces.

c) The quick victory of our attack on Ban Me Thuot represents the effects of a very bold surprise attack and of very good, although very complex, combined arms coordination. It also exposed a number of weaknesses when the enemy force disintegrated. Everything from our ways of thinking to our ways of doing things failed to keep pace with the situation. We are still stuck with using old ways of doing things under military region guidance. There are too many meetings, and nobody stepped forward to make decisions and take quick actions. The problems turned out to be too big, too rapid, and too complicated. As a result even though we had a great many opportunities to win additional victories but our people did not move fast enough to exploit them.

And this is without even mentioning the local Party committee levels, with all the tasks that they have to carry out – they are even more clumsy and confused. It is like a person going directly from the black of night into the blinding light of day, or from a vast green jungle straight into a city. The suddenness of the change contradicts all the old thinking, organization, and attitudes, from the nit-picking details right up to major issues. In spite of our preparations, they failed to maintain firm control of their troops. They had enough radios, but they did not use them and instead strung field telephone lines down the roads behind them. Instead of using code names and code terms, they used only the old cryptographic codes. We had prisoners who could drive vehicles for us to transport our troops forward, but they did not dare use them and instead kept their troops trudging along on foot.

I have discussed these same problems repeatedly, again and again, and now we are gradually beginning to overcome them.

Even though the enemy is in disorder and confusion, for an attack our people still insist on following the manual, preparing during the night to attack the next morning. There were cases when we were late, when we wasted almost one day and night, even though the enemy was making only a limited number of [air] attacks, and those attacks were made from high altitude, the bombs were dropped just on pre-designated coordinates, and the bombing was inaccurate.

These problems are not restricted just to B3 [the Central Highland Front]; they probably also exist in the other battlefields as well. They grow out of outdated assessments of the enemy and old ways of thinking and acting that no longer reflect the new, current conditions. We need people who can move quickly, making maximum use of time, and who have organizational and command capabilities and the decisiveness and willingness to accept responsibility of commanders who have received their orders, people who dare to act, who dare to accept personal responsibility rather than insisting that everyone share responsibility. When this campaign is over, the cadre and soldiers of the B3 Front will have taken a giant step forward in their maturity in a new combat environment.

d) With regard to training, especially for cadres, I believe that we need a period of time to train our cadres in how to exercise mobility and flexibility and to improve their ability to organize and command combat operations with great speed, urgency, and continuity.

We should set aside a period of time to train our cadre and soldiers to drive vehicles (10 days only), to be able to use both our own and the enemy's radios and field telephones, to train our different specialty branch troops in how to use enemy weapons and equipment such as artillery, armored vehicles, construction equipment, etc. In the future we must devote a great deal of attention to using captured enemy equipment to fight the enemy (in B3 we have captured 49 105mm and 105mm howitzers) so that we will not grow weaker even if our allies make further cut backs on their aid to us.

3. I agree with the propaganda steps about our victory that you laid out in your cable. The enemy is also trying to conceal the situation and deceive people, and we need to take some good, quick, careful actions. In my opinion, once the fighting in Darlac province is basically finished we could put out the news, and when we put out the news [of the victory] we will at the same time issue the proclamation of the Darlac Province People's Revolutionary Committee, announce the names of the members of the Province People's Revolutionary Committee, and issue the statements made by important enemy officers from the province whom we have taken prisoner (if we can get these in time).

4. We are now attacking the 53rd Regiment's base and the concentration of enemy troops from 45th Regiment that has just been landed by air. Our attacks are going well. If we finish destroying these forces, we will expand our attack down to Phuoc An district, Lac Thien, and Duc Xuyen. I will send you another follow-up cable.

[signed]
Tuan [Van Tien Dung]

Document No. 39

**Cable No. 11-DB from Brother Chien [Vo Nguyen Giap] to Brother Tuan [Van Tien Dung],
15 March 1975**

[Source: *Dai Thang Mua Xuan*, 1975: *Van Kien Dang* [Great Spring Victory, 1975: Party Documents] (Hanoi: Nha xuất bản Chính trị quốc gia, 2005), 145-147.]

After discussions with Brothers Ba [Le Duan] and Sau [Le Duc Tho], the following is our assessment of the situation:

1. Based on information from all sources (technical information [radio intercepts], statements by the U.S. Secretary of Defense, etc.), the enemy has now clearly realized that our primary target sector is the southern Central Highlands and he has been able to make a rather good determination of the forces we have deployed there. In addition, the enemy has also concluded that our activities in other sectors are only limited actions. For that reason, the enemy has made a clear decision to concentrate his forces to make a new effort by moving in his strategic reserve forces (the airborne brigades), and he soon may also send in a number of additional ranger groups and armored squadrons (perhaps up Route 21) to launch a relatively large operation aimed at fighting us for control of Ban Me Thuot.

Even though the size of the enemy force has increased, the enemy's morale is low and he faces many problems in the logistics and support areas.

We have ample conditions to enable us to completely annihilate their entire force.

2. For that reason, the first thing we must do is to concentrate our forces in the Ban Me Thuot and surrounding area, to maintain a firm grip on our reserve forces we have on hand and realign them, and to quickly mass our heavy weapons firepower in an effort to rapidly annihilate individual enemy columns, with the first target being the enemy column in the Phu An sector, and we must be prepared to annihilate enemy reinforcements and relief forces sent in by air and overland.

The annihilation of large numbers of enemy troops in this area will be of decisive importance to the exploitation of the campaign's victory throughout the entire Central Highlands battlefield. We need to encourage our cadre and soldiers to display tremendous resolve and to seize this tremendous opportunity to complete their assigned mission in an outstanding manner by totally annihilating all of the enemy's troops and liberating the southern portion of the Central Highlands.

3. Direct all levels to reorganize and unify their command organizations. Carry out proselyting operations among the civilian population, organize local armed forces, incite the masses to sweep away all enemy troop stragglers and all reactionary leaders. Organize people's air defense efforts and take the first step toward stabilizing the lives of the local people.

4. With regard to Pleiku, systematically, step by step, surround and besiege the city, step up operations to suppress the enemy airfields and to destroy his supply warehouses. Carry out all necessary preparatory tasks on an urgent basis in order to do a truly good job against this target before the enemy has time to react.

5. The General Staff has instructed our forces in Tri-Thien to step up their operations.

6. Just as I finished writing this cable I received your Cable No. 5 TK. We are in complete agreement with your assessment that we will complete our mission much earlier than the time specified in the overall plan. We are currently studying this subject and are making urgent

preparations along that line. Early next week, after I request further instructions from the Politburo, I will send you another cable.

7. I wish you great victories.

[signed]
Chien [Vo Nguyen Giap]

Document No. 40

Central Military Party Committee to General Van Tien Dung, Cable sent at 2000 hours, 15 March 1975

[Source: *Mot So Van Kien Chi Dao: Tong Tien Cong Va Noi Day Mua Xuan Nam 1975, Chien Dich Ho Chi Minh* [A Number of Guidance Documents for the Spring 1975 General Offensive and Uprising and the Ho Chi Minh Campaign] (Hanoi: Nha xuất bản Quân đội nhân dân, 2005), 206-207.]

To Tuan [Van Tien Dung]:

After discussing the situation with Brother Ba [Le Duan] and Brother Sau [Le Duc Tho], the following is our assessment of the situation:

1. Based on information from various sources, we conclude that the enemy now clearly realizes that our main attack sector is the southern Central Highlands and has been able to identify our units and size in that area with some precision, and that he understands that we are conducting only limited operations in the other sectors. For that reason, he has decided to concentrate his efforts and is sending in strategic mobile forces and a number of ranger groups and armored squadrons. These forces may be sent up Route 21 to mount a relatively large operation aimed at recapturing Ban Me Thuot.

Although his forces are supported by tanks, his morale is poor and he is having logistics and supply problems. We have all the conditions we need to annihilate the entire enemy force.

2. For that reason, we need to concentrate our forces in Zone A (Ban Me Thuot) and the surrounding area, maintain firm control of our reserve force, and quickly mass our troops and heavy weapons to annihilate individual enemy columns, starting with the enemy force in the Phuoc An sector. We must also be ready to annihilate enemy relief forces being brought in by air and by ground.

The next step will be to move our forces up to annihilate the enemy force at Cheo Reo.

The battle of Ban Me Thuot is now developing into a large-scale battle aimed at annihilating approximately two enemy divisions. Our annihilation of large numbers of enemy troops in this area will be of decisive importance to the successful development of the campaign throughout the entire Central Highlands. You must motivate our cadres and enlisted men on to

ensure that they have great resolve and that they seize this tremendous opportunity to annihilate all enemy forces and liberate the southern Central Highlands.

3. As for B (Cochin China), you should gradually surround the enemy, step up the harassment of enemy airfields and the destruction of enemy warehouses and logistics support facilities, and quickly carry out all necessary preparations so that the enemy does not have time to react.

Wishing you a great victory.

Signed
Chien [Vo Nguyen Giap]

Document No. 41

Central Military Party Committee to General Van Tien Dung, cable sent at 0900 hours, 17 March 1975

[Source: *Mot So Van Kien Chi Dao: Tong Tien Cong Va Noi Day Mua Xuan Nam 1975, Chien Dich Ho Chi Minh* [A Number of Guidance Documents for the Spring 1975 General Offensive and Uprising and the Ho Chi Minh Campaign] (Hanoi: Nha xuất bản Quân đội nhân dân, 2005), 208.]

...The enemy is now conducting a strategic withdrawal and regrouping earlier than we had anticipated. Faced with the development and expansion of our attacks, in the near future the enemy's strategic withdrawals will continue. His plan is to mass his forces at Saigon, Cam Ranh, and possibly also Da Nang. This is a great opportunity. Expand your attacks in whichever sectors you consider to be the primary sectors. ... Send me your answer on the question of the development sector so that I have time to seek the opinions of the Politburo tomorrow morning. I wish you and the others good health and truly great victories.

Signed
Chien [Vo Nguyen Giap]

Document No. 42

Central Military Party Committee to General Van Tien Dung, cable sent on the morning of 17 March 1975

[Source: *Mot So Van Kien Chi Dao: Tong Tien Cong Va Noi Day Mua Xuan Nam 1975, Chien Dich Ho Chi Minh* [A Number of Guidance Documents for the Spring 1975 General Offensive and Uprising and the Ho Chi Minh Campaign] (Hanoi: Nha xuất bản Quân đội nhân dân, 2005), 209.]

... Plan 1: After the Central Highlands has been liberated, or at least essentially liberated, develop your attacks by advancing in two sectors: The primary sector will involve sending the bulk of your forces in the B3 Front down into Eastern Cochin China, while the secondary sector will be the effort to expand our liberated zone in the lowlands of Region 5 using the forces currently

in place there, although we have sent the 968th Division and heavy weapons and technical units to reinforce that sector. Si (Hoang Van Thai), Ba Long (Le Trong Tan), and I are all strongly in favor of Plan 1. Tomorrow we will seek the opinions of the Politburo.

Signed
Chien [Vo Nguyen Giap]

Document No. 43

Cable from Central Military Party Committee to Military Region Tri-Thien and 2nd Corps, 17 March 1975

[Source: *Mot So Van Kien Chi Dao: Tong Tien Cong Va Noi Day Mua Xuan Nam 1975, Chien Dich Ho Chi Minh* [A Number of Guidance Documents for the Spring 1975 General Offensive and Uprising and the Ho Chi Minh Campaign] (Hanoi: Nha xuất bản Quân đội nhân dân, 2005), 210.]

... We now see that we may be able to shift over to using the opportunity plan to organize and carry out the liberation of Hue (Translator's note: "Opportunity plan: A plan to attack and liberate all of Quang Tri and Thua Thien provinces and Hue City). The situation is developing quickly and our big opportunity is arriving sooner than we had anticipated. The enemy is now being forced to deal with our attacks in the southern Central Highlands, Region 5, and Cochinchina, and he has begun to carry out strategic withdrawal and regrouping. Tri-Thien must intensify its operations on all fronts. Specifically, step up your attacks from the west against the enemy's regular army units, cut off and strategically cut Hue off from Da Nang, boldly send forces down into the lowlands to mobilize and incite the masses, step up guerrilla warfare in the lowlands with the attacks by our main force units down from the west. ...

Editor's Note: Pham Hung responds to Le Duc Tho criticism about COSVN's plans for "villages to liberate villages."

Document No. 44

Cable from Comrade Pham Hung to Comrade Le Duc Tho, 18 March 1975

[Source: *Lich Su Bien Nien Xu Uy Nam Bo va Trung Uong Cuc Mien Nam (1954-1975)* [Historical Chronicle of the Cochinchina Party Committee and the Central Office for South Vietnam, 1954-1975], 2nd ed. (Hanoi: Nha xuất bản Chính trị quốc gia, 2008), 1312-1314.]³⁰

After receiving Comrade Le Duc Tho's guidance opinions, Comrade Pham Hung sent the following reply regarding issues involving the realities of the B2 Battlefield:

³⁰ The document can also be found in the first edition of *Lich Su Bien Nien Xu Uy Nam Bo va Trung Uong Cuc Mien Nam (1954-1975)* [Historical Chronicle of the Cochinchina Party Committee and the Central Office for South Vietnam, 1954-1975] (Hanoi: Nha xuất bản Chính trị quốc gia, 2002), 1068-1070.

After the Paris Agreement, the balance of forces on all battlefields has changed substantially in our favor. Our three-pronged attack movement at the grassroots level has gradually been rebuilt and expanded in different forms and at different levels.

Reviewing the attack and uprising movement at the grassroots level, Comrade Pham Hung clearly pointed out one concrete fact:

After the 1968 offensive and uprisings, we launched a movement to eliminate small enemy outposts and liberate hamlets and villages, but the results of this effort were meager because the enemy launched powerful counterattacks.

Our local forces at the grassroots level suffered heavy losses, especially during 1969, and only in 1970 did they finally begin to recover. After the Paris Peace Agreement, our forces strove to counter and push back the enemy's land-grabbing efforts. The result was that in the Mekong Delta each month our forces managed to eliminate between 50 and 70 enemy outposts, mainly through the use of region and province level units. However, the enemy managed to retake virtually all of the outposts he had lost. During the six months of the 1974 dry season, our three-pronged movement made clear progress. It was able to eliminate many enemy outposts and to open up many new areas for our forces. Conducting combined campaigns at the province or district level, supported by main force units, our forces attacked and overran many key enemy positions and intensified the operations of our three-pronged attack. In that way we managed to liberate more than 1,000 outposts in the Mekong Delta, with village and district level forces participating in more than 30% of these successes.

The 1974 COSVN Conference and the August 1974 review of our counter-pacification campaign affirmed the ability of hamlets to liberate hamlets and villages to liberate villages. Under these new conditions, regional and province level units were used to attack and destroy key enemy positions to create conditions favorable for our three-pronged attack at the grass roots level. These operations were conducted as combined campaigns in individual provinces and districts that were aimed at essentially defeating the enemy's rural pacification program.

As for the 1974 rainy season, even though COSVN and regional main force units had conducted few operations, through the combined campaigns at the province and district level we expanded our three-pronged attack movement and continued to win major victories. Grassroots-level forces, along with district and provincial forces, made great progress, gained experience, and became more self-confident. Then our main forces launched powerful attacks that inflicted clear, clean defeats on the enemy, defeats that enabled the people to rise up and eliminate entire networks of enemy outposts and guard posts. This proved that conditions were right and that we were in fact capable of conducting grassroots-level uprisings to liberate local areas.

In Region 9, the mass uprising movement was aggressive and ferocious. Local armed forces units supported mass forces in destroying or dispersing individual enemy companies and village-level military headquarters in many locations such as Luong The in Ca Mau and Hiep My in Tra Vinh. They inflicted a continuous stream of casualties on RF battalions that resulted in the retreat and disintegration of these RF units in Cai Nuoc and Thi Keo in Rach Gia province and at Dam Doi, Rach Rang, Vinh Thuan, An Vien, etc.

In Region 9, a dozen districts now had the right conditions to make tremendous progress. Our forces were gradually isolating the province capitals and heavily lowland areas in places such as Ca Mau, Rach Gia, and Tra Vinh.

Pham Hung said that Region 8 and many other regions were carrying out reviews of operations to derive lessons learned and that these reviews clearly demonstrated the capabilities of villages, districts, and provinces to become self-sufficient in order to exploit our combined strength to create conditions that enabled our large, mobile main force units to attack and destroy key enemy military strong-points. Such attacks in turn created favorable conditions that would allow villages to liberate villages, districts to liberate districts, and provinces to liberate provinces. This trend had many practical possibilities for quickly opening up pockets, areas, and entire regions for our forces while at the same time we worked to expand, consolidate, and integrate our liberated zones in the rear.

Comrade Pham Hung emphasized that with regard to the guidance it had issued on the three-pronged attack movement, COSVN had given very specific and detailed guidance to individual area, such as the outskirts of Saigon, the areas along main roads and lines of communications, [Northern] refugee resettlement areas, ethnic Khmer areas, Cao Dai and Hoa Hao areas, etc., on properly deploying our cadre. Because of this concrete and detailed guidance, a number of areas had made great progress. Even [Northern] refugee resettlement areas in Eastern Cochinchina that were occupied by the enemy and that had been very difficult for us to infiltrate now had begun to make great progress, and we had been able to recruit many agents and build organizations inside them. Pham Hung said that this demonstrated that the possibilities of conducting uprisings to liberate these areas had become widespread.

Document No. 45

Cable No. 62 from Le Duc Tho to Brother Tuan [Van Tien Dung], 20 March 1975

[Source: *Dai Thang Mua Xuan*, 1975: *Van Kien Dang* [Great Spring Victory, 1975: Party Documents] (Hanoi: Nha xuất bản Chính trị quốc gia, 2005), 154.]

The situation has been changing very rapidly. The Politburo and the Central Military Party Committee have held discussion and have decided that I and [Le Trong] Tan will travel down to your location to brief you on our assessment of the situation and on the new decisions reached by the Politburo and the Central Military Party Committee. I have sent a cable to Brother Nam Cong [Vo Chi Cong] instructing him to remain at your location, and I have also sent a cable instructing either Bay Cuong [Pham Hung] or Tu Chi [Tran Van Tra] to go up to your place to receive our briefing on the Politburo and Central Military Party Committee resolutions and to discuss the overall plan with you. I will leave for your location circa 27 or 28 March. This message is for your information.

[signed]
Le Duc Tho

Document No. 46

Cable No. 870 from Dien Bien [Central Military Party Committee] to COSVN Military Headquarters and Brother Bay Cuong [Pham Hung], 20 March 1975

[Source: *Dai Thang Mua Xuan*, 1975: *Van Kien Dang* [Great Spring Victory, 1975: Party Documents] (Hanoi: Nha xuất bản Chính trị quốc gia, 2005), 157-160.]

1. The attacks and uprisings of the soldiers and civilians of South Vietnam have only gone on for a short period of time, but they have won a tremendous victory. This initial victory is strategically important. For the first time, we have liberated a vast, wide area by liberating the entire Central Highlands. An initial review reveals that we have essentially destroyed the 23rd Division; we have destroyed two ranger groups (the 21st and 23rd), two tank/armored squadrons (the 8th and the 21st), and 25 RF battalions; we have inflicted heavy losses on the 47th Regiment/23rd Division; we have killed almost 30,000 enemy troops and captured 6,000 prisoners (including three colonels); and we are now appealing to enemy troops who fled into the local areas to turn themselves in. We have completely liberated the provinces of Darlac (Ban Me Thuot), Gia Lai (Pleiku), Kontum, Phu Bon (Cheo Reo), and the portion of Quang Tri province that we had not previously occupied. We have captured large quantities of guns and ammunition, almost 100 artillery pieces, 48 tanks and armored personnel carriers, 600 military vehicles, one helicopter, and a large quantity of other supplies.

2. After being taken totally by surprise and suffering a painful blow, the enemy has been forced to beat a hasty retreat, abandoning the bulk of the important areas of Military Region 2. It is clear that the strength of the enemy has weakened, that the posture of the Americans has declined, and that the U.S. is suffering problems across the board. That is why up to this point the U.S. has not dared to intervene, and without the American support and assistance they had received before the puppet are increasingly falling apart. They cannot withstand our attacks. This large initial withdrawal has completely upset the enemy's strategic deployment posture. The enemy has been forced to begin a large-scale strategic withdrawal and regrouping to deal with our attacks. The abandonment of the Central highlands has caused a high level of fear and wavering in the enemy's ranks that has affected the other battlefields. That is why on 19 March the enemy was forced to abandon Quang Tri. A number of other locations, such as Hue, Dalat, Quang Ngai, and Quang Duc are also in a state of panic. They have allowed the civilian population to flee and are burning their documents. We need to continue to closely monitor these developments.

The enemy's large-scale pullback and regrouping of forces is aimed at trying to save his manpower strength from destruction, to move these forces back to defend a number of strategic targets that are militarily and economically important, and to defend and cling to the heavily populated areas that have plentiful rice crops, all in an effort to deal with our current offensive. The enemy is conducting his pullback early in order to avoid falling into a posture of complete collapse that would leave him with no foundation from which to "bargain" with us when sitting back down at the conference table. The enemy may pull back and regroup to defend the following large areas:

-One, Saigon and the surrounding area, from Ba Ria up through Xuan Loc, Ben Cat, Binh Duong, Trang Bang, Cu Chi, Tan An, and Ben Nuc.

-Two, the Mekong River Delta.

-Three, the Danang-Hue area, and he might also abandon Thua Thien-Hue if he is heavily attacked there.

-Four, the Cam Ranh-Nha Trang-Dalat-Phan Rang area.

-Five, the Qui Nhon-Binh Dinh area, initially, at least, to block the strength of our attack down Route 19, but if he comes under serious threaten there he might also abandon this area.

The situation is continuing to change, and if all of our battlefields continue to operate consistently and well, we do not exclude the possibility that the enemy will abandon all of Central Vietnam from Thua Thien-Hue down to Ninh Thuan and Binh Thuan and will mass his forces in a large defensive concentration occupying and defending the Saigon area and the Mekong Delta.

Of the above-named areas, Saigon is the area that is most important to the enemy.

The enemy's large-scale strategic withdrawal when the enemy's strength and posture has seriously deteriorated across the board. In Cambodia the Lon Nol puppets are on their death-bed, and with the U.S. currently facing a host of problems, both domestically and abroad, this will cause the already declining morale of the Saigon puppet army and puppet government to deteriorate even further. This may lead to new collapses that will exceed even the worst fears of the U.S. and Thieu.

3. Because the strategic and campaign plans formulated by the Politburo and the Central Military Party Committee were accurate and correct, because our preparations were rather complete and pro-active, because we were able to maintain secrecy and surprise, and because our guidance and command in the primary sector was flexible and bold, in a very short period of time we have gained a tremendous victory of strategic significance.

This victory has created new and extremely favorable conditions that have opened up many new possibilities for us and has given us ample conditions to be able to win even greater victories at a much more rapid pace than we had previously anticipated.

The entire nature of the situation in South Vietnam is now entering a period that is extremely favorable for our side and extremely difficult for the U.S. and their puppets. We need to clearly recognize the new characteristics of the situation and fully comprehend the enemy's new state of serious collapse.

All battlefields need to have a clear vision of the overall situation and exhibit a highly aggressive spirit. They must boldly and resolutely seize opportunities and be flexible in taking action, mass their forces to make powerful attacks, quickly annihilate entire enemy units, exploit our three-pronged attack [military, political, and military proselyting], incite the people to rise up, and sweep away the enemy's instruments of repression.

They must liberate individual sectors and areas to create a posture that presses in close to the enemy, forming a posture that surrounds, cuts off, and divides the enemy both on the campaign and the strategic level. They must create conditions that will enable us to boldly destroy enemy forces as the enemy conducts his strategic withdrawals and shatter the enemy's plan for strategic withdrawal and consolidation.

4. Recent experience in the southern Central Highlands has revealed that the reasons we won such a rapid and large victory in a short period of time were that our attack was extremely bold, we took the enemy by surprise, and we organized good combined arms coordination, even though this task was very complex. However, our experience has also exposed a number of weaknesses: our thinking and our working style has not kept pace with the extremely rapid development of the situation. We hold too many meetings and argue and discuss things too much, and we have not had individuals step forward to take decisive action. We are still too detail-oriented and small-minded, so we missed many concrete opportunities (for instance, we had radios but only used field telephones; we had trucks and prisoners who could drive them but we did not dare to use them and instead had our troops move forward on foot; the enemy was falling apart but we still insisted that we must have a period of preparation first, thereby missing many opportunities, etc.). The situation is developing rapidly, and other locations may easily face the same kind of situation. The General Staff wishes to remind all locations to pay attention to this problem.

[signed]
Thanh [Hoang Van Thai]

Document No. 47

Comrade Le Duan's Comments in a Politburo Meeting Held 24 March 1975, after our Victory at Ban Me Thuot (Notes taken by Comrade Vo Quang Ho), 24 March 1975

[Source: *Mot So Van Kien Chi Dao: Tong Tien Cong Va Noi Day Mua Xuan Nam 1975, Chien Dich Ho Chi Minh* [A Number of Guidance Documents for the Spring 1975 General Offensive and Uprising and the Ho Chi Minh Campaign] (Hanoi: Nha xuất bản Quan doi nhan dan, 2005), 213-214.]

Our victory is bigger than we expected. Ban Me Thuot marks a turning point and the beginning of a great general offensive to liberate South Vietnam. The current victory cannot be separated from the victories we have won over the past ten years. This is the culmination of so many previous victories. The general offensive has begun; the Central Highlands opened the door. We will follow up by attacking Danang. Finally, we will liberate Saigon.

The enemy was taken by surprise in four different ways: he believed that we simply wanted to passively implement the Paris Agreement; he believed that if we wanted to launch a large attack we would not be able to do so until 1976; he did not fully comprehend his own weaknesses; he did not fully comprehend our strength.

We have sufficient time to mass our forces as quickly as possible to advance into Saigon. The decisive blow will be against Saigon; we control the area around Saigon, and we have a sapper

division there. We must mass sufficient main force strength on Saigon's outer perimeter to destroy three puppet divisions. We will use three divisions to destroy one of their divisions.

The masses in Saigon are in an uproar, and if we are strong in the area around Saigon, the behavior of the masses will change. If we launch political and military proselyting attacks a portion of the puppet forces will disintegrate and surrender. If we are able to achieve the element of surprise, our strength will be doubled or even tripled. In the future the political struggle in Saigon will rise to the fore.

We must maintain a firm grasp on our three punches: main force, lowlands, and cities – the three must act as one to create combined strength.

If we are able to advance quickly, then we must advance, without worrying about whether we have time to consolidate and regroup. We have Party committees throughout the rural countryside. Our province committees and regional committees have wielded governmental power for more than 20 years. The masses already know the revolution. Our problems will be the cities, Hue, Danang, and Saigon. The important thing is Eastern Cochinchina and Saigon – if Eastern Cochinchina is lost, Saigon will rise up. Our army must quickly seize this tremendous opportunity; the enemy is now disintegrating, so we must seize this opportunity by massing our forces as quickly as possible. We must pay attention to the Mekong Delta in order to destroy the enemy's stockpile of reserve supplies and resources. The best leap forward that the revolution can make is to launch attacks and uprisings. Just go ahead and make military attacks, because when we do so, uprisings will break out immediately. We must win the greatest victory, the most profitable victory possible. We must not destroy bridges or supply warehouses and logistics facilities.

The enemy has been defeated, so he is pulling back to regroup his forces and hold his ground in order to be able to bargain with us. We will act to make him weaker as he regroups, to begin to weaken him from this moment on by annihilating his troops and by surrounding and isolating them.

Saigon already has a political movement in place, the masses already belong to us, and the masses are prepared. Our urban commando and sapper forces are already in position. Saigon is not like a number of large cities in other countries. The problem for us is to mass a very powerful force, 12 divisions – if we have overwhelming force, the situation will change. In the lowlands we must continue to take strong action to expand our control, we must not ignore the need to open up the lowlands.

Document No. 48

Cable No. 38B from Brother Chien [Vo Nguyen Giap] to Brother Tuan [Van Tien Dung], 22 March 1975

[Source: *Dai Thang Mua Xuan, 1975: Van Kien Dang* [Great Spring Victory, 1975: Party Documents] (Hanoi: Nha xuất bản Chính trị quốc gia, 2005), 166-167.]

1. The Politburo has made the following assessment: The tremendous, strategically-significant victory we have just won signals a new step in the collapse of the Americans and their puppets and marks a turning point in the military and political character of the war in South Vietnam. The enemy has revealed his desire to conduct a large-scale strategic withdrawal throughout the entire South Vietnamese battlefield aimed at pulling his forces back and concentrating them to defend primarily just Saigon and the Mekong Delta. After his retreat from the Central Highlands, he is now in the process of withdrawing from Hue and we cannot exclude the possibility that he may also withdraw from Danang.

2. In view of this situation, the Politburo's resolve is, as has already been transmitted to you, to move as fast as possible, acting with daring and surprise (in terms of direction, of forces, and of timing) to defeat the enemy's plan and quickly achieve our strategic goal in the key, focal-point sector.

3. After receiving your cable and while our troops were exploiting this victory and pursuing the enemy, I discussed the situation with Brother Sau [Le Duc Tho] and also asked Brother Ba [Le Duan] for his thoughts.

We are in complete agreement with the plan for the development of the offensive and for the employment of forces outlined in your cable.

4. Instill tremendous resolve in our cadre and enlisted men to pursue and annihilate enemy troops and to liberate the coastal provinces, including Nha Trang and Cam Ranh. You need to prepare a plan to supply additional cadre and equipment in order to quickly expand local forces in areas that have been liberated and to entrust local forces with the task of consolidating our hold on these local areas so that we can mass our main force units as quickly as possible in order to regroup them while we simultaneously carry out comprehensive preparations in the focal point sector.

5. The broad outline of our policy for the different sectors is as follows:

a) Brothers An and Linh's sector had received concrete instructions and has a plan to reinforce forces and strengthen leadership and command [Translator's Note: This refers to 2nd Corps' sector – "An" is 2nd Corps Commander Nguyen Huu An and "Linh" is 2nd Corps Political Commissar Le Linh].

b) In Brother Hai Manh's [Chu Huy Man] sector we must leave F2 [2nd Division] in the north in order to strive to destroy the enemy, especially in the event that the enemy decides to withdraw from Danang. You should send F968 [968th Division] down to reinforce Binh Dinh.

c) In Brother Bay Cuong's [Pham Hung] sector we will continue to carry out the previously approved plan but with a spirit of greater urgency. The plan for the Mekong Delta needs to be stepped up further. We are not clear on the specific situation down there, because as of this moment we have received virtually no reporting on their plan.

6. Brothers Sau Minh [Le Duc Tho] and Ba Long [Le Trong Tan] will come down to brief you, Bay Cuong [Pham Hung], and Nam Cong [Vo Chi Cong] on the Politburo and the Central

Military decisions. Then, based on the concrete situation they find down there. they will discuss with all of you developing a plan to implement these decisions.

7. The Central Highlands Campaign will certainly secure a great victory.

I wish you all good health.

[signed]
Chien [Vo Nguyen Giap]

Document No. 49

Central Military Party Committee to General Van Tien Dung, no date but sent during the campaign to liberate Hue

[Source: *Mot So Van Kien Chi Dao: Tong Tien Cong Va Noi Day Mua Xuan Nam 1975, Chien Dich Ho Chi Minh* [A Number of Guidance Documents for the Spring 1975 General Offensive and Uprising and the Ho Chi Minh Campaign] (Hanoi: Nha xuất bản Quan doi nhan dan, 2005), 215.]

...It has now become clear that the enemy intends to conduct a large strategic withdrawal of his forces back to defend Saigon and the Mekong Delta. He is now evacuating from Hue and it is possible that he will also withdraw from Da Nang. The Politburo has decided to take bold and unexpected action to quickly achieve our strategic plan in the focal point sector. I have discussed the situation with Le Duc Tho and have consulted with Brother Ba [Le Duan], and we all agree with the development plan and the utilization of forces that you proposed in your cable.... Motivate your cadres and soldiers to ensure that they have great resolve to pursue and annihilate enemy troops and to liberate the coastal provinces, including even the city of Nha Trang and Cam Ranh Bay. We need to dispatch additional cadres and equipment to quickly expand our in-place forces, mass our forces as quickly as possible, and rapidly deploy to attack in the focal point sector.

Signed
Chien [Vo Nguyen Giap]

Document No. 50

Cable No. 70 from Brother Tho [Le Duc Tho] to Brother Tuan [Van Tien Dung], 23 March 1975

[Source: *Dai Thang Mua Xuan, 1975: Van Kien Dang* [Great Spring Victory, 1975: Party Documents] (Hanoi: Nha xuất bản Chinh tri quoc gia, 2005), 175-176.]

The situation is changing very rapidly. With regard to our intention to carry out Plan 1 and the timing of the implementation of that plan (the plan that we discussed with you before you left), the situation has now changed substantially. The time for the implementation of Plan 1 is no longer as far off as we had discussed previously, and instead we may begin to carry out this plan in the near future. That is the Politburo's intention. The main reason I am coming down is to discuss this matter with you and the others. Therefore with regard to the number of forces in the sector in which

you are currently expanding your attack, you need to set definite and limited goals and time limits to achieve those goals and then quickly make preparations so that by the time I arrive and we finish our discussions with you our forces will be ready and able to begin to immediately carry out Plan 1, the plan that we previously discussed. Only in that way will we be able to keep pace with the developing situation. You must do whatever you can to ensure that by the time I have finished my discussions with you an advance element is ready and can begin moving out right away.

I wanted to briefly describe our intentions to you to make you aware of them so that you can make the necessary preparations before I arrive. I will discuss this in more detail with you and the others when I get there.

I wish you good health and that you win more and even greater victories.

[Signed]
Tho [Le Duc Tho]

Document No. 51

Central Military Party Committee to Comrade Tran Van Tra and the COSVN Military Party Committee, Info Copy Sent to Pham Hung, the COSVN Party Secretary, Cable sent at 1800 hours, 25 March 1975

[Source: *Mot So Van Kien Chi Dao: Tong Tien Cong Va Noi Day Mua Xuan Nam 1975, Chien Dich Ho Chi Minh* [A Number of Guidance Documents for the Spring 1975 General Offensive and Uprising and the Ho Chi Minh Campaign] (Hanoi: Nha xuat ban Quan doi nhan dan, 2005), 216.]

...In reality, our strategic general offensive began with the victories in the Central Highlands and the other battlefields. The fighting has now entered a phase of advancing by leaps and bounds, as you have already been informed: the victories on the Hue-Da Nang battlefield and in Cochin China have caused the enemy to collapse quickly, creating a new stage of development for us both militarily and politically, and especially in the focal point battlefield this has occurred much sooner than we had anticipated. A great strategic opportunity has arrived. We need to make the maximum use of the time available by moving quickly to mass forces in the focal point sector and we must act boldly and unexpectedly to carry out and complete the great strategic resolve that the Politburo set forward as soon as possible.

We have already sent instructions to Brother Tuan [Van Tien Dung]. This is all very new for us, and our cadres often fail to grasp the situation quickly enough to shift in time to keep pace with the demands of the situation. You need to ensure that all levels of command understand the situation better and more fully and that they mass their forces against the primary targets. Carry out the strategy of “three fists”. [Translator’s Note: The “three fists” apparently refers to attacks on the military, political and military proselyting fronts.]

Signed
Van [Vo Nguyen Giap]

Document No. 52

Cable No. 75 from Brother Tho [Le Duc Tho] to Brother Tuan [Van Tien Dung], 25 March 1975

[Source: *Dai Thang Mua Xuan, 1975: Van Kien Dang* [Great Spring Victory, 1975: Party Documents] (Hanoi: Nha xuất bản Chính trị quốc gia, 2005), 177-178.]

The other day I sent you a cable discussing the decision by the Politburo and the Central Military Party Committee on implementing Plan 1 in the immediate future, and I am sure you now understand. The extent of the development of your attack has now reached the proper level and you should not advance further. Instead, you need to quickly regroup and consolidate your forces and establish solid defenses for the newly captured areas. We are now making powerful attacks in the northern provinces, and it is certain that the enemy will be defeated quickly and will be forced to withdraw back down to the interior as we had anticipated. After the enemy is defeated up in the north, the dry season in the sector in which you are now advancing will still continue for some time, and we will be sending forces down from up here to advance into that sector and sweep away what is left of the enemy. For that reason, you need to immediately realign your forces so that when I arrive our lead element will be able to move out immediately so that we can implement Plan 1 as quickly as possible; if they begin moving earlier, that would be even better. Currently the situation is developing very favorably for us, and it is advancing by leaps and bounds, so at this time when the enemy is frightened, confused, and suffering large-scale disintegration, we must seize the moment by moving even faster.

Naturally it will take some time to complete Plan 1, but we must begin immediately. Therefore I am providing you with this additional information so that you have a clear understanding of the decision that has been reached by the Politburo and the Central Military Party Committee and so that you can immediately begin making complete and comprehensive preparations.

As for the rest of Tran's forces [Translator's Note: probably referring to Tran Van Tran's 341st Division], there are still a small number of them left that have not been able to move further south because their vehicles were taken away and requisitioned for other purposes. Tell your people to make arrangements for the rest of these forces to move out immediately so that they can arrive there in time to participate in the fighting. To leave them just sitting there indefinitely is not a good idea.

Document No. 53

Central Military Party Committee to General Van Tien Dung, Cable sent at 1900 hours, 25 March 1975

[Source: *Mot So Van Kien Chi Dao: Tong Tien Cong Va Noi Day Mua Xuan Nam 1975, Chien Dich Ho Chi Minh* [A Number of Guidance Documents for the Spring 1975 General Offensive and Uprising and the Ho Chi Minh Campaign] (Hanoi: Nha xuất bản Quan doi nhan dan, 2005), 217-218.]

...The Politburo and the Central Military Party Committee have just met to assess the situation. They have reached the following conclusions:

The B3 Campaign has resulted in a great victory and the strategic general offensive has begun. This is a turning point, both militarily and politically, in the war in South Vietnam. Our revolutionary war has now entered a period of advancing by leaps and bounds. ... The situation in the focal point sector will see new developments and will advance much more rapidly than we had anticipated, especially if we destroy large numbers of enemy troops in Hue and Da Nang and down in the Mekong Delta. ... A great strategic opportunity has arrived. We must quickly mass our forces in the primary sector and take bold and unexpected actions ... to complete our mission in the focal point as soon as possible, which may be much sooner than had been projected in the plan. The weather is now good, and prolonging things would not be to our advantage.

The Politburo has decided to:

a) Rapidly mass three main force divisions and our main heavy weapons and technical units in the Ban Me Thuot area to be ready to move down to the focal point sector.

b) Liberate Binh Dinh (the Route 19 sector) and advance down toward Phu Yen, Khanh Hoa, Nha Trang, and Cam Ranh. The Route 7 sector will use only local forces to advance down to take Tuy Hoa.

The Route 21 sector will advance to the east according to its capabilities, and only if conditions are advantageous should they move down to take Nha Trang and Cam Ranh.

The Politburo and the Central Military Party Committee have decided to launch the attack on Da Nang and have formed the Quang Da Command.

We have formed a Council to Support South Vietnam. Brother To is the Chairman of the Council ("Brother To" is Pham Van Dong). I wish Brother Dinh a speedy recovery ("Brother Dinh" is Dinh Duc Thien).

Signed
Van [Vo Nguyen Giap]

Document No. 54

Cable No. 898B from Brother Van [Vo Nguyen Giap] to Brother Tuan [Van Tien Dung], 25 March 1975

[Source: *Dai Thang Mua Xuan*, 1975: *Van Kien Dang* [Great Spring Victory, 1975: Party Documents] (Hanoi: Nha xuất bản Chính trị quốc gia, 2005), 182-185.]

1. On 25 March the Politburo and the Central Military Party Committee met to assess the situation. They concluded that, in practical terms the B3 Campaign [Central Highlands Campaign] has won a great victory, that our general strategic offensive has begun, and that the series of resounding victories we have won since then have marked a turning point in the nature of the

political and military situation in South Vietnam. The revolutionary war in South Vietnam has entered into a period of advancing by leaps and bounds.

In the near future, as he carries out his large-scale strategic withdrawal aimed as pulling forces back and concentrating them in the Saigon area and a portion of the Mekong Delta, the enemy will suffer new defeats, his forces will suffer even heavier losses, and his morale will sink even lower. America's impotence is also now very clear. There will be new developments and progress in the focal point area, and things will move much more rapidly than we had previously anticipated, especially in the event that we are able to annihilate large numbers of enemy forces at Hue and Danang and at the same time we win new victories in Eastern Cochinchina and the Mekong Delta.

2. In light of this situation, the Politburo and the Central Military Party Committee once again affirmed that a great strategic opportunity has arrived and that we must strive to move with great speed to quickly mass our forces in the primary sector and to act boldly and with surprise in order to prevent the enemy from anticipating our actions and being able to react so that we can successfully complete our mission in the focal point target area as quickly as possible (we project that we may be able to secure victory much sooner than was anticipated in the previously-approved plan, and we must take maximum advantage of the months while the weather is still good [before the rains begin]. Delay would not be beneficial to our side).

3. After receiving your Cable Number 32 and then Brother Hoang's (Hoang = Hoang Minh Thao) Cable Number 40, the Politburo and the Central Military Party Committee believe that in this new situation, if you carry out the operations contained in your plan it will take you a relatively long period of time to complete these operations, because the roads are very bad and there are logistics and supply problems. That would mean that you would not be able to re-concentrate your forces until it was too late. Therefore, we have decided:

a) You are to issue an order to quickly mass three main force divisions and your main technical and heavy weapons support units in Ban Me Thuot where they will quickly regroup and realign to be ready to move down to the focal point sector. While that is being done, you are to direct that immediate comprehensive preparations, especially rear services [logistics] and technical preparations, be carried out in that sector. When Brother Sau [Le Duc Tho] arrives he will join you and our brothers from B2 [COSVN], who will come up to your location, in a discussion the plan in order to determine a concrete, detailed plan and to determine the timing of our operation.

b) In the Route 19 sector, send in E95a [Regiment 95A], and perhaps also F968 [968th Division] down to annihilate the enemy, liberate Binh Dinh, and then advance south into Phu Yen, Khanh Hoa, Nha Trang, and Cam Ranh.

In the Route 7 Sector you should only use local forces, or if necessary you could also send E95b [Regiment 95B] to advance our attacks down to Tuy Hoa.

In the Route 21 Sector, use only E25 [25th Regiment] reinforced with the required amount of heavy technical units. Order this force to advance to the east as far its capabilities permit. Only

if a favorable opportunity presents itself should this force advance all the way down to Nha Trang and Cam Ranh.

4. For your information, the Politburo and the Central Military Party Committee have decided to open up the Danang Front [the attack on Danang]. The Quang Da Front has been formed, with Brother Ba Long [Le Trong Tan] as Front Commander and Brother Hai Manh [Chu Huy Man] as Front Political Commissar. We are now quickly sending down forces, and Brother Ba Long [Le Trong Tan] will leave here for the front in the next few days.

In B3 the decision has been made to officially form 3rd Corps, with Vu Lang serving as the Corps Commander and Hiep [Dang Vu Hiep] serving as Corps Political Commissar. Brother Hoang [Hoang Minh Thao] will return to Region 5 to command all forces in the southern portion of the Military Region, from Binh Dinh southward.

We are also forming the Central Highlands Military Region and the Central Highlands Region Party Committee, directly subordinate to the Center [Hanoi, the Central Committee]. Brother Sau [Le Duc Tho] will discuss this issue further with Brother Nam Cong [Vo Chi Cong].

We have already formed a South Vietnam Support Council [Hoi Dong Chi Vien Mien], and Brother To [Pham Van Dong] has been named as the Chairman of this council.

5. I want you to hold discussions with Brothers Dinh [Dinh Duc Thien], Hoang [Hoang Minh Thao], and Lam about how to implement this major Politburo decision. You must keep the Politburo's major strategic resolve absolutely secret, particularly with regard to the timing.

Brother Sau [Le Duc Tho] will give you a full briefing on our assessment of the situation and on the Politburo's decision when he gets there to see you.

I wish you and everyone else good health and great victories. Tell Dinh [Dinh Duc Thien] that I wish him a speedy recovery.

[signed]
Van [Vo Nguyen Giap]

Document No. 55

Cable No. 919 from Brother Van [Vo Nguyen Giap] to Brother Tu Nguyen [Tran Van Tra] and the COSVN Military Party Committee; Information Copies to Brother Bay Cuong [Pham Hung] and COSVN, 27 March 1975

[Source: *Dai Thang Mua Xuan*, 1975: *Van Kien Dang* [Great Spring Victory, 1975: Party Documents] (Hanoi: Nha xuất bản Chính trị quốc gia, 2005), 189-191.]

1. The Politburo and the Central Military Party Committee met on 25 March. During this meeting they concluded that in practical terms, our strategic general offensive began with the great victories we have won in the Central Highlands and on our other battlefields. The South Vietnamese people's revolutionary battle has moved into the phase of advancing by leaps and

bounds as we informed you earlier. The enemy's army has suffered heavy losses to its forces, the enemy's morale and his political strength have deteriorated, and he is now implementing a massive strategic withdrawal aimed at massing the bulk of his forces in the Saigon area and a portion of the Mekong Delta.

The victories we have won and the defeats that the enemy has suffered on the Hue-Danang battlefield and on the battlefields of Cochinchina have caused the situation of the Americans and their puppets to deteriorate even faster, thereby creating new steps forward for us in the military and political arenas, and especially in the focal point area, moving the situation forward much faster than we had originally anticipated.

2. The Politburo and the Central Military Party Committee have concluded that a great strategic opportunity has arrived and that we need to strive to move as fast as possible to mass our forces in the focal point sector. We must take bold action and take the enemy by surprise so that the enemy does not have time to react in order to accomplish the great strategic goal that the Politburo has laid out as quickly as possible.

3. We have sent instructions to Brother Tuan [Van Tien Dung] to quickly concentrate his forces and deploy them as quickly as possible. Brother Tuan has probably already discussed with you all the preparations necessary for this contingency.

4. In addition to the cable you sent to Brother Sau [Le Duc Tho], Brother Tuan [Van Tien Dung] has also sent me a cable laying out the points you made in the letter you sent to Tuan about B2's plan. Comrade Cuu, who came up from down there, has also briefed us on the plan. We applaud your efforts and the victories that you have won. Because we are not fully aware of the concrete situation down there, I will only raise the following general ideas:

a) In this new situation, the enemy may experience new collapses. If we do not prepare our forces, including preparing our cadre both politically and spiritually, in many cases their understanding of the situation will not change rapidly enough to keep pace with our requirements. We need to give our cadre at all levels a better understanding of the situation so that we can concentrate more of our forces against the primary targets and so that our actions are bolder, more unexpected, and more urgent.

b) While we are massing our forces in the focal point sector, we must implement our three-front strategy. For that reason, strongly intensifying our military and political attacks in the lowlands to liberate the rural countryside and surround the focal point is an extremely important mission. This mission must be carried out in parallel with intensifying our main force attacks and our combined blows in the cities.

c) In the Region 8 sector, study your ability to mass even more forces to overrun district capitals and district military headquarters, to destroy or cause the disintegration of enemy troops, to carry out the plan to expand the liberated zone in the Plain of Reeds and cut Route 4 ahead of schedule, to threaten Tan An and My Tho, and to prepare the necessary conditions to be able to move toward liberating that area and implementing strategic encirclement [of Saigon] in that sector.

d) In Region 9, we approve the general outline of the proposed plan, but you should push them to work harder and in a more focused manner.

e) In the Eastern sector, in parallel with implementing the current plan you must also step up work on the plan to achieve strategic encirclement [of Saigon].

5. When Brother Sau [Le Duc Tho] gets there he will give you a full briefing on the resolution approved by the Politburo and the Central Military Party Committee. Because time is short I have sent you a cable providing you a brief summary of the main points so that the COSVN Military Party Committee can issue timely instructions to the troops and make the necessary battlefield and material preparations along the lines that were previously discussed but which now must be carried out much more quickly than originally planned.

Brother Sau [Le Duc Tho] has also sent a cable to Brother Bay Cuong [Pham Hung]. I wish you and the other members of the COSVN Military Party Committee good health and great victories. Please transmit my best wishes to Brother Bay Cuong and the other members of the COSVN Party Current Affairs Committee.

[signed]
Van [Vo Nguyen Giap]

Document No. 56

Cable No. 83 from Brother Tho [Le Duc Tho] to Brother Tuan [Van Tien Dung], 27 March 1975

[Source: *Dai Thang Mua Xuan*, 1975: *Van Kien Dang* [Great Spring Victory, 1975: Party Documents] (Hanoi: Nha xuất bản Chính trị quốc gia, 2005), 192.]

Received your Cable No. 91/TK dated 26 March. The Politburo is very pleased. Your assessments are very much in agreement with those of the Politburo. Hue has now fallen, we have begun to attack Danang, and Danang will soon also fall. The enemy is collapsing very rapidly. For that reason you and your people need to save time for us by urgently carrying out our intentions as quickly as possible.

[signed]
Le Duc Tho

Document No. 57

Special Resolution of the 15th Plenum of the Central Office for South Vietnam (Excerpts), 29 March 1975

[Source: *Dang Cong san Viet Nam*, *Van Kien Dang Toan tap* [Party Documents Complete Series], vol. 36 (Hanoi: Nha xuất bản Chính trị quốc gia, 2004), 501-510.]

[Editor's Note: The resolution is about launching the general offensive to liberate South Vietnam.]

[...]

On Taking over and Administering Newly Liberated Areas

At the same time that we intensify our attacks and uprisings aimed at crushing the puppet army and puppet government, we must also continue to build up our old liberated zone, and in particular we must quickly take over, administer, and build the newly liberated zone that is expanding very rapidly. Particularly with respect to cities and areas dominated by certain religions, the work of administering and building these areas is something very new for us and that will involve many complicated issues that must receive the appropriate level of attention from region-level and province-level Party committees.

-With respect to the cities, preparations for and the organization of a Committee to Seize the Government will be transferred to Military Management Committees until such time as Revolutionary People's Committees are formed. As for what elements should be designated to form this organization, that decision should be based on Directive No. 05/CT.75.

-With respect to a newly liberated village, district, or province, the decision about which tasks must be carried out immediately should also be based on Directive 05/CT.75.

-With respect to captured war booty and other types of public property, we must strictly protect, maintain, and preserve these items. No one must be allowed to destroy these things or to use them indiscriminately.

With respect to economic, industrial, and agricultural facilities and installations, such as factories and plantations belonging to the puppet government or to reactionaries, we will confiscate them and preserve them intact so that we can quickly mobilize and organize the masses to resume production.

-With respect to the different social classes and to the different levels of government officials, intellectuals, capitalists, members of religious groups, and members of ethnic minority groups, we must make clear public announcements of our policies and we must implement these policies correctly (except in regard to a number of stubborn thugs who must be punished) and we must not allow leaders and the most dangerous elements to escape.

We must immediately crush all distortions and propaganda by the enemy and by reactionary saboteurs aimed at causing fear and worry among the people.

[...]

Document No. 58

Cable No. 939 from Brother Van [Vo Nguyen Giap] to Brother Tu Nguyen [Tran Van Tra], 30 March 1975

[Source: *Dai Thang Mua Xuan*, 1975: *Van Kien Dang* [Great Spring Victory, 1975: Party Documents] (Hanoi: Nha xuất bản Chính trị quốc gia, 2005), 218-219.]

1. The Politburo and the Central Military Party Committee have concluded that the South Vietnamese revolution has entered into a phase in which it will progress by leaps and bounds. The situation is changing very rapidly. In light of this great strategic opportunity, we need to make maximum use of the time available, act with great speed and daring, and gain the element of surprise so that the enemy does not have time to react. The Politburo and the Central Military Party committee are in unanimous agreement with the conclusion that we must ... [consider that] the decisive battle at the primary focal point has begun and that we have increasingly favorable conditions to step up the pace until total victory is won.

2. We have sent a cable directing Brother Tuan [Van Tien Dung] to send his forces down to you as quickly as possible and to strive to exploit the time available. New technical specialty branch units are also on the way down to further reinforce the B2 Front. We have prepared four army corps that will depart soon for southern B3 [the southern Central Highlands] to serve as a reserve force.

3. The first thing that must be done is to carry out an extremely urgent mission that was raised in the cable that Brother Ba [Le Duan] sent to Brother Bay [Pham Hung]. That mission is to cut the enemy off and strategically encircle him in the My Tho-Tan An area to move in close to Tan An and the western outskirts of Saigon. We believe that you should act boldly by quickly sending F9 [the 9th Division] and the required number of technical specialty branch units to that sector. You should act very rapidly and boldly. At the same time, you should strengthen the command organization down there. The best way to do this would be to send Brother Sau Nam [Le Duc Anh] down there.

4. As for the other sectors, I talked about them in my previous cable. However, you must ensure that our key cadre at all levels are in full and complete agreement in order to be able to act with a spirit of boldness and daring and to concentrate our forces even more.

I wish you all good health.

Document No. 59

Letter from Le Duan to Cuong [Pham Hung], Sau [Le Duc Tho] and Tuan [General Van Tien Dung], 11:00, 31 March 1975

[Source: Le Duan, *Thu Vao Nam* [Letters to the South] (Hanoi: So That, 1985), 384.]

To: Cuong [Pham Hung], Sau [Le Duc Tho] and Tuan [General Van Tien Dung]

The situation is changing very rapidly and we need to make maximum use of the time available by acting with great urgency. For that reason, Tuan should go down to see Bay Cuong [Pham Cuong] at COSVN right away to begin immediate discussions about a plan to attack and capture Saigon. Sau will go down there as well to meet with them. Bay Cuong [Pham Hung] and Tu Nguyen [Tran Van Tra] should cancel their planned trip up to the Highlands [for a meeting].

[Signed]
Ba [Le Duan]

Document No. 60

Cable from the Central Military Party Committee to COSVN Military Headquarters, 1 April 1975 (Excerpts)

[Source: *Mot So Van Kien Chi Dao: Tong Tien Cong Va Noi Day Mua Xuan Nam 1975, Chien Dich Ho Chi Minh* [A Number of Guidance Documents for the Spring 1975 General Offensive and Uprising and the Ho Chi Minh Campaign] (Hanoi: Nha xuất bản Quân đội nhân dân, 2005), 232-233.]

... Exactly as the Politburo had earlier concluded, our revolutionary war in South Vietnam is entering a phase of advancing by leaps and bounds. We currently have sufficient forces and capabilities to win total victory much more quickly than we had originally anticipated.

The decisive factor will be that we must quickly seize our opportunity...and strive to begin a large-scale offensive against Saigon by the middle of April. If we can do that, this would be our best chance and would ensure the best and most complete victory for our side. Surprise no longer exists regarding our primary sector. The enemy knows for certain that we will attack Saigon, but he believes that we will need one or two months to prepare for such an attack. Therefore, surprise now lies primarily in the matter of timing. On the one hand, we need to move forces in quickly, at lightning speed, while on the other hand we take immediate action using the forces currently in place so that we can act quickly without waiting to concentrate all of our forces before attacking. That is the meaning of the Politburo's declaration that the decisive strategic battle for Saigon has now begun.

...With respect to the two basic plans, one being to conduct a long siege in order to create the necessary conditions before we overrun and finish the enemy off, and the second being to attack boldly right from the start, attacking quickly to finish the enemy off quickly, at this time we should select the second plan, meaning that we should act very quickly and very boldly.

At the same time we should make preparations so that, if it becomes necessary, we can shift to Plan 1, although also with the goal of securing final and complete victory in a short period of time. ... Using the forces you have on hand, you must act quickly to exploit any and every opportunity that may be caused by the enemy's fear and confusion. Attack continuously, making a series of attacks to win a series of victories that will upset all of the enemy's plans to regroup and reorganize their forces and any increases in U.S. aid and support.

Time now must be measured in days, and every day counts. *You must move with lightning speed, lightning speed, win total victory, we must win total victory.*” [Translator’s note: Emphasis in the original Vietnamese text]

Document No. 61

Cable No. 971B from Brother Van [Vo Nguyen Giap] to Brother Sau [Le Duc Tho], 2 April 1975

[Source: *Dai Thang Mua Xuan*, 1975: *Van Kien Dang* [Great Spring Victory, 1975: Party Documents] (Hanoi: Nha xuất bản Chính trị quốc gia, 2005), 225-226.]

(Reference Brother Ba’s [Le Duan] Cable No. 956, 1 April 1975)

With regard to the battle plan at the focal point target, because the situation is developing so rapidly, as a follow-up to Brother Ba’s [Le Duan] cable I have sent a number of ideas to Brothers Bay Cuong [Pham Hung], Tuan [Van Tien Dung], and Tu Nguyen [Tran Van Tra] so that they would have time to study them in order to be able to begin their work of carrying out the spirit of the Politburo’s instructions that they need to have a plan to take quick, timely action with the forces that they have on hand, especially in the event of a political upheaval in Saigon, while at the same they must also prepare a plan for follow-up actions using the additional reinforcements being sent down there from the B3 Front and from up here [North Vietnam].

Deaf Hoa’s unit [Nguyen Hoa] has been ordered to move out quickly with two of its own divisions, the 320th and the 312th, along with [Nguyen] Huu An’s 325th Division. They are taking these troops from Tri Thien and Quang Da in order to try to have the lead unit arrive in the Dong Xoai area circa 10 April. The technical specialty branch units are all now on the road and moving rapidly.

I will provide you with the details of our movement plan for the reinforcement units. We have sent cadre down to supervise the movement along the route and to push the units forward quickly.

Brother Tuan [Van Tien Dung] has probably already sent you a cable informing you that Ba and Dam’s troops have left and will arrive on 6 April [Translator’s Note: This probably refers to 316th Division, commanded by Dam Van Nguy.] The 320th Division will follow and will arrive on 12 April. As for the 10th Division, it has destroyed the airborne brigade and is now advancing eastward rapidly. This means that we have been able to expand our offensive posture to win victories continuously, victories that also make it difficult for the enemy to predict where we will direct our primary effort. As for timing, according to what Brother Tuan has told us, it will take them [the 10th Division] no longer than if they had turned around and gone back to follow the old route. We believe that this is a good idea, and Brother Ba [Le Duan] agrees.

We have just received Brother Tu Nguyen’s [Tran Van Tra] cable on the battle plan. The contents reveal a greater effort, but it is divided into two stages, one stage in April and one stage in May, still following the pace of the old two-year plan. I have sent a cable to Brothers Bay [Pham Hung] and Tu [Tran Van Tra] telling them that they need to act more boldly in accordance with

the spirit of the Politburo's instructions. The people down there [at COSVN] have received Brother Ba's [Le Duan] cable and have replied that they are in complete agreement with the Politburo. They said that they are very excited and confident and that they are now discussing developing a new plan. Tuan will arrive down there on the 3rd of April.

I wish you the best of health.

[signed]
Van [Vo Nguyen Giap]

Document No. 62

Cable from Central Military Party Committee to Comrades Van Tien Dung and Tran Van Tra (Excerpts), 2 April 1975

[Source: *Mot So Van Kien Chi Dao: Tong Tien Cong Va Noi Day Mua Xuan Nam 1975, Chien Dich Ho Chi Minh* [A Number of Guidance Documents for the Spring 1975 General Offensive and Uprising and the Ho Chi Minh Campaign] (Hanoi: Nha xuat ban Quan doi nhan dan, 2005), 234-235.]

... 2. Chaos and disorder has begun to appear in Saigon, and there may be a major upheaval within the enemy's ranks. The enemy's Cam Ranh-Phan Rang front has collapsed and the enemy troops fleeing back to Saigon will create major disorders.

3. In keeping with the spirit of the Politburo's instructions to take bold and timely action, we suggest that COSVN and the COSVN Military Party Committee should prepare a plan to take immediate action with the forces you currently have on hand. This plan should be based on Brother Tu's [Tran Van Tra] plan for Step 1 but should now be carried out more rapidly and more powerfully, without moving units around in ways that would disrupt the timing.

4. Specifically:

a) In the east, mass very powerful tank and artillery forces to immediately attack the enemy's 18th Division, overrun Xuan Loc. Press in close to Bien Hoa, immediately deploy heavy artillery guns to bombard and shut down the Bien Hoa Airbase, and if conditions are favorable or if new forces arrive you should also attack and capture O Cap and cut the Long Tau River [Translator's note: "O Cap" is Vung Tau].

b) To the west, using the forces currently in place, you should turn over the task of surrounding and besieging Moc Hoa to local force units and then concentrate your COSVN and Region main force units to mount more powerful attacks down toward Route 4 in order to cut the highway and strategically divide and isolate the enemy. You should also study a plan for using additional reinforcements that you will receive in the future.

c) The situation may change very rapidly. The 9th Division must be placed under the direct control of COSVN and be ready to act when an opportunity arises. The division should not be sent to another sector at a time when new forces have not yet arrived in your area.

5. Meanwhile, continue to work on a plan for follow-up action using additional forces and heavy technical equipment that will arrive later.

Document No. 63

Cable No. 961 from Brother Van [Vo Nguyen Giap] to Brothers Bay Cuong [Pham Hung] and Tu Nguyen [Tran Van Tra], 2 April 1975

[Source: *Dai Thang Mua Xuan*, 1975: *Van Kien Dang* [Great Spring Victory, 1975: Party Documents] (Hanoi: Nha xuat ban Chinh tri quoc gia, 2005), 232-233.]

1. Have received your Cable No. 25-BC/B01. Am extremely pleased. Now we must act with lightning speed, daring, and surprise.

2. The enemy has disintegrated and abandoned Nha Trang, Cam Rang, and the Hanh Son Airfield and is fleeing south to Eastern Cochinchina. The retreating rabble will cause great fear and confusion in Binh Tuy, Phuoc Tuy, and even in Saigon.

3. While we are preparing our big plan we also need a plan to immediately concentrate our heavy artillery and a portion of our tanks and infantry to take advantage of the current terror and confusion by striking to annihilate the defeated troops that have just fled back down there, to destroy a portion of the enemy's 18th Division and capture Xuan Loc, and to push in close to Bien Hoa and suppress and neutralize the Bien Hoa Airbase. If we do that the enemy's air force will be rendered ineffective and the enemy in Saigon will become extremely frightened.

4. Brother Tuan [Van Tien Dung] leaves at noon today to go down to your location. Several days ago Deaf Hoa [Nguyen Hoa] was ordered move out as quickly as possible. Many additional technical specialty units will follow.

Hoa's first unit will arrive near your location circa 10 April.

5. I have ordered Group 559 and the other battlefields to concentrate all their forces and equipment for a decisive battle at the focal point.

6. In addition to your Cable No. 817, dated 29 March, that I already received, I would like you and Brother Tu Nguyen [Tran Van Tra] to send me a cable summarizing the main points of your plan so that Brother Ba [Le Duan] and the rest of us can contribute our thoughts on it.

7. The issue right now is lightning speed, lightning speed, total victory, total victory.

[signed]
Van [Vo Nguyen Giap]

Document No. 64

Cable from Central Military Party Committee to the COSVN Military Party Committee and the Headquarters of the B2 Front (Excerpts), 2 April 1975

[Source: *Mot So Van Kien Chi Dao: Tong Tien Cong Va Noi Day Mua Xuan Nam 1975, Chien Dich Ho Chi Minh* [A Number of Guidance Documents for the Spring 1975 General Offensive and Uprising and the Ho Chi Minh Campaign] (Hanoi: Nha xuất bản Quan doi nhan dan, 2005), 236.]

...While we make preparations for carrying out our big plan, we need to have a plan to concentrate our heavy artillery immediately, along with a portion of our tank and infantry units, to take advantage of the enemy's current fear and confusion to annihilate the defeated units that have just fled back to your area, to annihilate a portion of the 18th Division, to attack and capture Xuan Loc, and to press in close to Bien Hoa. If we can harass and shut down Bien Hoa Air Base the enemy's air force will lose its effectiveness and the enemy in Saigon will become very frightened...

Document No. 65

Cable from Brother Van [Vo Nguyen Giap] to Brothers Tuan [Van Tien Dung], Bay Cuong [Pham Hung], Tu Nguyen [Tran Van Tra] and Sau [Le Duc Tho] (Excerpts), no date given (April 1975)

[Source: *Dai Thang Mua Xuan, 1975: Van Kien Dang* [Great Spring Victory, 1975: Party Documents] (Hanoi: Nha xuất bản Chinh tri quoc gia, 2005), 242.]

[...]

...3. At the direction of the Politburo, the Central Military Party Committee has ordered Region 5 to study and carry out the capture and occupation of those islands in the Nam Sa Archipelago that are currently occupied by the puppets [Translator's note: Nam Sa is the Chinese name for the Spratley Islands]. I have directed our people down there to choose the most appropriate method and to select the best possible time to carry out this action. We have sent Comrade Nguyen Ba Phat [the commander of the North Vietnamese Navy] and a group of navy officers to Cam Ranh to take over this military port and to work with Region 5 in carrying out the above-mentioned task. We are now making preparations to send another group of navy officers to send down there also...

[signed]

Van [Vo Nguyen Giap]

Document No. 66

Cable No. 993/TK from the Current Affairs Committee of the Central Military Party Committee to Brothers Dong [Le Tu Dong], Le [Tran Le], Nam [Le Duc Anh], Hai Manh [Chu Huy Man], Nam Cong [Vo Chi Cong], and Nguyen [Dong Si Nguyen], Group 559, 6 April 1975

[Source: *Dai Thang Mua Xuan, 1975: Van Kien Dang* [Great Spring Victory, 1975: Party Documents] (Hanoi: Nha xuất bản Chinh tri quoc gia, 2005), 243-247.]

1. In a short period of time our general offensive has won an extremely tremendous strategic victory (the General Staff has issued a message on this subject). The revolutionary war being fought by the South Vietnamese people has moved into a new phase in which it is advancing by leaps and bounds. Our people's revolutionary forces have become enormously large and powerful in the military and political spheres and in the size of their population, in the size of the liberated zone, in their strategic posture, in their leadership and command arts, etc. We already have ample conditions and capabilities to move forward to completing the strategic mission that was set forward by the Politburo ahead of schedule.

2. The Americans and their puppets have suffered an extremely heavy defeat, one that is beyond their expectations. The puppet army and puppet government is now facing the danger of complete collapse. The U.S. is increasingly displaying impotence in the face of its greatest strategic defeat ever in Vietnam and Cambodia. On this rapid downward slide that is leading toward total defeat, the Americans will certainly struggle insanely, floundering like a fish out of water:

a) Currently they continue to stubbornly prop up the Nguyen Van Thieu puppet government and made the extremely reactionary puppet Nguyen Van Can the Prime Minister [Translator's Note: The cable misspells the new Prime Minister's name. It should read "Nguyen BA Can"]. There are increasingly fierce conflicts within the puppet army and puppet government. In the near future there may be upheavals in Saigon, and we cannot exclude the possibility that when it feels it necessary the U.S. will turn on Thieu and overthrow him.

b) The Americans are urging the Nguyen Van Thieu clique to consolidate their defense lines around Saigon that have been seriously weakened, to send the remnants of their evacuated troops north to strengthen the defenses of Phan Rang (where the Thanh Son Air Force Base is located), and to try to prevent our forces from advancing further south from Nha Trang and Cam Ranh. It is possible that they will abandon several provinces in Western Cochin China [the Mekong Delta] in order to muster additional forces to send to help defend Saigon.

c) They are making a great show of playing the humanitarian card, sending ocean-going ships to evacuate reactionary elements and some of the civilian population to foreign countries.

d) In coordination with the above plans, they have ordered enemy commandos who are still skulking around in our liberated zone to carry out acts of sabotage and are utilizing leading enemy thugs to sabotage law and order in our rear area. We also need to be on guard against possible actions by the enemy's air forces, either by providing support to their troops during their retreats and during defense of their lines or by making attacks against our traffic and lines of communications, especially against those locations where our important reserve supply and logistics stockpiles are located.

[Translator's note: In the original Vietnamese, it states - Note: The section from Point 3 on is not to be sent to Group 559.]

3. As the Center [the High Command in Hanoi] is now massing our forces and concentrating our guidance to speed up and intensify our strategic offensive, the Current Affairs

Committee of the Central Military Party Committee has issued directives on the work of taking over and building up the newly liberated areas.

The Region Party Committees and the Military Region Party Committees have also issued directives on this and are now beginning to carry out this work. We would like to remind you all to pay attention to and closely monitor the following important tasks:

a) Plan to move more quickly to appeal to remnant enemy soldiers to turn themselves in and to hunt them down and set policies establishing different treatment methods for enemy enlisted men and enemy officers (officers, evil criminal enlisted men, and puppet governmental official must be detained. If your local areas have trouble doing this, these individuals should be sent to North Vietnam). Continue to educate and mobilize the civilian population, on the one hand spreading propaganda about the Provisional Revolutionary Government's policy of leniency and amnesty, while on the other hand quickly punishing enemy thugs and the leaders of reactionary parties and factions. Make sure that you implement our policy correctly and avoid widespread, indiscriminate arrests and detentions.

b) Work with People's Public Security to maintain law and order, issue very strict orders to our troops to strictly follow our political and civilian proselyting disciplinary regulations, and station military policemen in the cities and province capitals.

c) While you are now implementing your defensive deployment plan, you need to review the plan and strengthen it another notch to ensure that our troops are constantly combat-ready and prepared to annihilate enemy commando saboteurs. Pay special attention to defensive deployments to protect key focal points such as Hue City and the Thuan An Inlet, the Cua Viet Inlet in Tri-Thien, Danang City, Quy Nhon City, Nha Trang City, the Cam Ranh Military Port, and Ban Me Thuot.

d) Do a good job of building new armed forces, of consolidating and strengthening main force units and specialty branch units, and of developing and expanding local force units in accordance with the plan issued by the General Staff. Quickly organize new technical specialty branch units equipped with captured weapons, such as artillery units, tank units, 12.7mm anti-aircraft units, military transportation units, etc.

e) More closely monitor and check on the administration and security guard arrangements for military logistics and technical facilities, airfields, seaports, warehouses containing weapons, ammunition, fuel, and communications equipment, etc. Quickly send captured aircraft that are in good condition to secure locations (in accordance with the plan prepared by the Air Defense-Air Force Command).

f) While you are carrying out the tasks listed above, you must assign top priority to the issue of supplying our front lines in Cochin China, and especially to arranging transportation support, protecting the routes and lines of communications, and assisting the units that are now moving forward toward the Front. Military Regions must maintain a firm grip on your armed forces in this situation where some locations have been so busy and pre-occupied with the work of taking

over and administering the newly captured areas that they have not adequately supervised and pushed the work of regrouping and strengthening our forces and ensuring combat readiness.

4. This section is for Region 5 only and is not to be sent to Tri Thien: We have just received a cable from Brother Nam [Vo Chi Cong] informing us of his intention to form a new army corps. This decision must have been born out of your Region's earnest desire to participate in the task of completing the liberation of all of South Vietnam. Brother Ba [Le Duan] and I believe that currently Region 5 has very heavy responsibilities to fulfill. Therefore, on the military side you should continue to reorganize and strengthen your current Military Region Headquarters organization. With regards to your main force units, you should reorganize and strengthen your divisions and your newly organized regiments. You should not organize a new corps at this time. The General Staff will send you all a cable informing you of the Central Military Party Committee's intentions regarding building military forces and planning the defenses of Interzone 5 so that you can study them, contribute your ideas, and then carry out these tasks.

With regard to defending Nha Trang and Cam Ranh, you are to study and carry out the capture and occupation of a number of the islands in the Nam Sa [Spratley] Archipelago. We have already sent a cable to you on this subject, and when [Le Trong] Tan arrives he will discuss this subject with you in greater detail.

5. For Military Region Tri Thien:

a) The Politburo recently issued a resolution eliminating the Region Party Committee. However, from the military standpoint you should still maintain the Military Region command level. Therefore we wished to inform you all of this so that you can correctly implement the decision.

b) You all usually send the reports of the Region Party Current Affairs Committee to the Party Secretariat and to the Central Military Party Committee. I would like to remind you all that the Military Region Party Committee and the Military Region Headquarters need to send clearer, more detailed and specific reports on the status of your armed forces units, on your force-building and development plans, and on your defense plans to the Current Affairs Committee of the Central Military Party Committee.

I wish you all good health.

[signed]
Van [Vo Nguyen Giap]

Document No. 67

Cable from the Central Military Party Committee to All Units Being Poured into the Battlefield (Exerpts), 0930 hours, 7 April 1975

[Source: *Mot So Van Kien Chi Dao: Tong Tien Cong Va Noi Day Mua Xuan Nam 1975, Chien Dich Ho Chi Minh* [A Number of Guidance Documents for the Spring 1975 General Offensive

and Uprising and the Ho Chi Minh Campaign] (Hanoi: Nha xuất bản Quân đội nhân dân, 2005), 246.]

...Order:

1. Speed, ever greater speed. Daring, ever greater daring. Exploit every hour, every minute. Rush forward to the battlefield and liberate the South. Resolve to fight to secure total victory.

2. This order is to be immediately disseminated to all Party members and fighters.

Van [Vo Nguyen Giap]

Document No. 68

Cable from Le Duan to Tuan [Van Tien Dung], Sau [Le Duc Tho], Bay Cuong [Pham Hung], and Tu Nguyen [Tran Van Tra], 1100 hours, 9 April 1975

[Source: Le Duan, *Thu Vao Nam* [Letters to the South] (Hanoi: So That, 1985), 389-390.]

To: Tuan [Van Tien Dung], Sau [Le Duc Tho], Bay Cuong [Pham Hung], and Tu Nguyen [Tran Van Tra]

I just received Tuan's [Van Tien Dung] Cable 21 K.T., dated 8 April 1975 this morning.

After discussions with Van [Vo Nguyen Giap] and the comrades at the General Staff, I believe that you all need to wait to prepare for a few more days and also wait for the bulk of 3rd and 1st Corps (including both infantry and heavy weapons and technical equipment) to arrive before beginning your assault.

From now until the big attack begins, the western and southwestern wing, commanded by Sau Nam [Le Duc Anh] should step up its operations aimed at cutting Route 4 in order to force the enemy to disperse his forces to deal with our attacks and cause additional disruption and fear within the enemy's ranks and make it difficult for him to guess our campaign plans. At the same time, you should also order our urban commando teams to infiltrate into the city. The other sectors should also take appropriate actions to support the big attack.

You need to ensure that once the attack is launched you will attack hard and continuously, striking repeated blows until complete victory is achieved. You need to attack on the outer perimeter while at the same time seizing opportunities to penetrate deep into the center of Saigon from many different directions using forces that have been prepared beforehand and that are standing by. Conduct attacks from the outside into the city as well as attacks from inside the city outward to enable the people to rise up. Do not divide the process into two separate stages.

This is the basic plan and the plan most certain of victory. In the current situation, this is how we can achieve lightning speed, daring, and surprise. I also agree with your assessment that we need to make preparations to deal with the possibility that the fighting may become long and protracted, for a certain period of time at least.

Ba [Le Duan]

Document No. 69

Cable from Le Duan to Tam Thanh [Hoang Van Thai], Bay Cuong [Pham Hung], and Tuan [Van Tien Dung], 1750 hours, 14 April 1975

[Source: *Le Duan, Thu Vao Nam* [Letters to the South] (Hanoi: So That, 1985), 391.]

To: Tam Thanh [Hoang Van Thai], Bay Cuong [Pham Hung], and Tuan [Van Tien Dung]

On 14 April 1975, the Politburo met to receive a briefing from the Central Military Party Committee about the situation on the Saigon Front and the directions and plans [policy guidelines] you cabled in to us. The Politburo unanimously approved those directions and plans. I hope that you make maximum use of the time available to make truly excellent preparations in order to win a truly tremendous victory. The Politburo agrees that the campaign to liberate Saigon will be called the “Ho Chi Minh Campaign.”

I wish you all good health.

Ba [Le Duan]

Document No. 70

Party Secretariat Directive No. 218-CT/TW, 18 April 1975

[Source: Dang Cong san Viet Nam, *Van Kien Dang Toan tap* [Party Documents Complete Series], vol. 36 (Hanoi: Nha xuất bản Chính trị quốc gia, 2004), 121-125.]

Policy towards Enemy Soldiers Who Are Captured or Surrender in the New Situation

In this new situation, the numbers of enemy prisoners of war, of enemy troops who return to our side when their revolutionary consciences are awakened, and of enemy soldiers who mutiny against their superiors are now constantly growing, and our liberated zone in South Vietnam is constantly expanding and becoming integrated into a single entity. The Secretariat has decided that these enemy troops will be categorized in the following manner and that our policy for dealing with them will be as follows:

I-Categories

Mutineers [Binh Sĩ Khôi Nghĩa]: Enemy soldiers who carry out actions directed against the enemy in order to join the revolution. Such actions include uprisings to cause mutinies, serving as internal agents inside the enemy’s ranks, sabotaging the enemy, or directly or indirectly assisting our side in battle.

Soldiers whose revolutionary consciences have been awakened and who return to the revolution [Binh sĩ Giác Ngộ Trở Về Với Cách Mạng] (they should not be surrendering soldiers):

Enemy soldiers who take the initiative to desert the enemy's ranks in order to join the ranks of the revolution.

Prisoners of War [Tu Binh]: Enemy soldiers that we capture during or after a battle.
Soldiers who turn themselves in after fleeing in battle [Tan Binh ra Trinh Dien]: Enemy soldiers who have been forced to flee and hide after our forces attack and who then turn themselves in to revolutionary governmental authorities.

II-Policies toward Each Individual Category

Mutineers: Politically, they will be viewed as revolutionary masses [civilian supporters]. In terms of their lives and rations, they will be treated the same as our own cadre and enlisted soldiers. They will be assigned to tasks suited to their individual levels of political consciousness and their individual abilities. Those who perform exemplary service for the revolution will receive commendations or awards. Those who have specialized technical skills will be utilized based strictly on their abilities. Those who are wounded or killed while carrying out revolutionary actions will be treated the same as our own wounded or martyred soldiers.

Soldiers whose revolutionary consciences have been awakened: They will receive the same rights as ordinary citizens and will be dealt with, both in spirit and in material terms, as ordinary citizens.

Prisoners of War: They will be dealt with humanely in strict accordance with our policies. In the present situation, they will be handled as follows:

a) Privates and Non-Commissioned Officers:

-Those whose families live in liberated zones will have the revolution's policies explained to them and then will be allowed to return home, where local governmental authorities will register, administer, and educate them.

-Those who come from areas still under enemy control or who are not yet able to return home because they are far from home will be temporarily concentrated together so that we can administer and educate them and use them to perform work duties. When conditions permit, they will be allowed to return home to their families.

b) Officers: All officers will be concentrated and detained for control, education, and labor purposes. Later, depending on the amount of progress made by each, they will re-categorized. Specific detailed policies for handling each category will be set at a later date.

Those individuals (including both officers and enlisted men) who have specialized technical skills that we need may be employed in individual tasks for a certain length of time, but we must be vigilant toward them and we must tightly control them. Later, depending on our requirements and on the amount of progress each individual has demonstrated, they may be recruited and employed in various sectors outside the armed forces.

c) With regards to those who are thugs [criminals], intelligence or military security service personnel, psychological warfare officers, pacification or chieu hoi cadre, and leaders of reactionary political parties or party factions within the enemy armed forces, regardless of whether they are privates, non-commissioned officers, or commissioned officers, must be sent to long term concentrated re-education. They must be imprisoned separately in secure locations, and they must be tightly controlled and administered.

d) With regards to those individuals who were formerly soldiers in our army but who deserted to the enemy and joined the puppet army, these individuals are to be dealt with as prisoners of war. Any of them who worked for the enemy as a spy, in psychological warfare operations, in pacification or chieu hoi operations, or who commanded enemy forces in attacks against the revolution will be dealt with as an enemy thug.

4. Soldiers who turn themselves in after fleeing in battle:

Those who turn themselves in and who actively, willingly carry out tasks we entrust to them or who perform services for us by telling us enemy secrets, including the location of enemy supply warehouses, caches, and documents; by informing us of the locations of reactionary leaders who are still hiding from our forces; by helping us to utilize enemy technical weapons and equipment; by encouraging large numbers of other enemy soldiers to turn themselves in, etc., will be treated as soldiers whose revolutionary consciences have been awakened.

As for the rest, in general they will be treated the same as prisoners of war, but attention must be paid to the following issues:

-Privates and non-commissioned officers will be registered, their weapons will be confiscated from them, and our policies will be explained to them. If their homes are in the liberated zone, they will be allowed to return home immediately and responsibility for administering them and educating them will be turned over to the local government. Those who cannot yet return home because their homes are in enemy-controlled areas or because they are too far from home will be concentrated together to be educated and to carry out labor duties.

-Officers must be detained so that they can be reeducated. However, depending on the political situation in individual areas, appropriate measures may be taken so that those who continue to hide out from us will not be too frightened and will be willing to turn themselves in. We may not need to imprison them at first. Based on how the situation develops, we can gradually and systematically concentrate [detain] them later.

-Thugs, spies, and those guilty of many crimes must be arrested and detained immediately.

-Those who refuse to turn themselves in within the specified time period must be arrested and detained. Those who hide from us in order to oppose and sabotage us will be punished appropriately according to the existing laws dealing with the crime of sabotage.

5. People's Self-Defense Forces and Popular Forces whose units have disintegrated:

-People's Self-Defense Force units will be disbanded, their weapons and military equipment will be confiscated, and they will be treated as ordinary civilians.

-Popular Forces soldiers will be turned over to local governmental authorities for registration, administration, and education. They will not be concentrated and detained like prisoners of war.

-Regular Army or Regional Forces soldiers who had been detailed to command or to serve as core cadre for Popular Forces or People's Self-Defense Forces units and individuals who are thugs or intelligence agents will be treated the same as those types of individuals in the prisoner of war category (see above).

Enemy enlisted men and officers from all services and all types of units who deserted to return home, who retired from the enemy armed forces, or who were previously discharged from the enemy armed forces will be treated as ordinary civilians. If anyone in this category has committed crimes, the local authorities will deal with them in accordance with our general policy toward criminals.

6. A number of special cases:

-Enemy soldiers detailed to work in governmental or police posts will be dealt with by our security agencies [the Ministry of Public Security].

-If enemy officers who have influence in ethnic minority groups or in one of the religions are needed to win over the civilian masses, an appropriate policy to appeal to them and ease their treatment may be established.

-With respect to officers of the rank of general or colonel, if it is determined that we need to use them for the good of the revolution, a suitable policy for their treatment may be devised.
... [Indicating that a section has been omitted]

-Puppet prisoners of war captured in 1972 who are still in detention will be handled like current prisoners of war. Privates and non-commissioned officers who have been successfully reeducated may be allowed to return home to their families.

Note: All military proselyting, military intelligence, and [public] security agents whom we have sent to operate within the enemy's army are considered to be cadre and soldiers in our army. Their cases must be handled carefully and exactly in accordance with our policies, and under no circumstances are they to be mistakenly handled as enemy soldiers.

At present, we will not take prisoners of war or enemy soldiers who have turned themselves in to use as replacement or reinforcement soldiers in our armed forces units.

All types of prisoners of war and enemy soldiers who have turned themselves in will be detained in "B" [Code designation for South Vietnam]. They will not be sent to "A" [Code

designation for North Vietnam] except in special circumstances, such as if we need to immediately exploit [interrogate] them in order to support our requirements.

For the Party Secretariat
[signed] To Huu

Document No. 71

Anti-Reactionary Forces study and implement a directive from the Party Secretariat on policy toward enemy troops who surrender and enemy prisoners of war, 18 April 1975

[Source: *Luc Luong Chong Phan Dong: Lich Su Bien Nien (1954–1975)* [Anti-Reactionary Forces: Chronology of Events (1954–1975)] (Hanoi: Nha xuất bản Công an nhân dân, 1997), 323-325.]

Enemy forces quickly disintegrated in the face of the lightning advance of South Vietnam's liberation forces. In order to continue to sow divisions in the enemy's ranks and to administer those enemy troops, both those captured and those who surrendered, in the liberated areas, on 18 April 1975 the Party Secretariat issued Directive No. 218-CT/TW on "Policy Towards Enemy Soldiers Who are Captured or Surrender in the New Situation." The Secretariat's directive stated that enemy troops captured or those who surrendered must be divided into four separate categories to carry out our policy correctly. These categories were: mutineers, soldiers who returned to the revolution, prisoners of war, and enemy remnants who turned themselves in. The policy for each specific category was as follows:

Mutineers would enjoy the same political rights and material benefits as our own cadre and enlisted men.

Enemy soldiers who returned to the revolution would receive the same rights as ordinary citizens and would not be called troops who surrendered [hang binh]

Prisoners of war would be dealt with in a humane fashion in strict accordance with the policy set by our State based on their rank:

+ Enlisted men and non-commissioned officers: after our policy was explained to them, they would be turned over to the local authorities where they lived for supervision. If their home area had not yet been liberated, they would be temporarily detained and used for labor tasks. When conditions permitted, they would be allowed to return home.

+ Officers: All officers would be detained for supervision, education, and labor.

+ As for vicious criminals and leaders of reactionary parties within the enemy armed forces, no matter whether these individuals were privates, non-commissioned officers, or officers, they all would be sent to long-term detention in re-education camps, where they would be detained separately in secure areas and under tight supervision.

Enemy remnants who turned themselves in: Those who turned themselves in and assisted us in tasks they were given, such as persuading large numbers of other soldiers to turn themselves in, would be dealt with the same as enemy soldiers who returned to the revolution. The rest would

be dealt with in the same manner as prisoners of war. Those who refused to turn themselves in within the specified time limit would be arrested. Anyone who hid out to oppose or sabotage us would be punished in accordance with the current law on sabotage. With respect to PSDF members and PF soldiers who had deserted: their units would be disbanded and their weapons and equipment confiscated. They would be treated like ordinary citizens. They would be required to register in their local area of residence but would not be sent to collective detention like prisoners of war.

Those who were originally members of the regular armed forces or thugs guilty of crimes would be treated like prisoners of war

The directive also noted a number of other situations to be considered:

With respect to officers who were influential among ethnic minority groups or religious organizations, if necessary to win over the population, appropriate policy considerations could be made for such individuals.

With respect to generals and colonels, if it was considered necessary that such individuals should be used for the benefit of the revolution, appropriate policy considerations would be made for them.

Thanks to this timely directive from the Secretariat, when local areas were liberated counter-reactionary forces at all levels of authority were able to coordinate with the concerned elements and agencies to effectively carry out the work of dealing with prisoners of war and soldiers who surrendered to us.

Document No. 72

Party Secretariat Directive No. 219-CT/TW, 19 April 1975

[Source: Dang Cong san Viet Nam, *Van Kien Dang Toan tap* [Party Documents Complete Series], vol. 36 (Hanoi: Nha xuat ban Chinh tri quoc gia, 2004), 143-151.]

Policy Toward Puppet Army Soldiers and Puppet Government Officials and Policy on Combating Counter-Revolutionaries and Maintaining Security and Order in Newly Liberated Areas

The strength of the powerful military attacks and uprisings conducted by our soldiers and civilians has liberated many cities and provinces. Many enemy personnel who were not able to escape in time have been forced to remain behind inside our liberated zone. Among these enemy personnel are many leaders of the puppet army, the puppet government, policemen, intelligence personnel, psychological warfare personnel, chieu hoi personnel, pacification personnel, members of reactionary political parties and factions, etc. So far a number of these individuals have turned themselves in as has been reported. However, there are also a large number of these personnel, especially from the police, enemy intelligence, psychological warfare, and reactionary political parties, and especially members of the enemy's secret stay-behind organizations, who have so far refused to come forward and turn themselves, who have refused to turn in weapons, radios, and military equipment, and who continue to either try to hide from us or to escape back to enemy-

controlled areas. A number of enemy personnel continue to use radios to communicate with one another and with enemy forces in those areas we have not yet liberated. A number of these people have joined together to work with one another to try to oppose and sabotage us.

Some reactionaries hiding behind the banners of religions or of national reconciliation forces have openly conducted political activities and have stepped forward to form local governmental organizations, to collect weapons from puppet soldiers, to issue travel permits, etc. Some reactionaries have openly displayed the puppet flag or the flag of the VNQDD [Viet Nam Quoc Dan Dang, a political party sometimes called the Vietnamese Kuomintang]. They have written reactionary banners and have fabricated false stamps, seals, and papers supposedly issued by revolutionary people's committees giving them permission to travel around to conduct their counter-revolutionary activities. Some of them have committed acts of sabotage, setting fire to fuel storage facilities and ammunition warehouses or sniping at and killing our cadre and troops. In addition, criminals and gangsters have also committed acts that violate public order. They have stolen public property, looted gold and jewelry shops whose owners have fled, committed murders, burned and looted private dwellings, extorted money, etc. This situation has had some negative effects. The civilian population does not truly feel secure enough to enthusiastically go back to work or to participate in building and consolidating the newly liberated zones.

In order to quickly establish stability, order, and security so that life in the newly liberated areas can quickly return to normal, we must carry out the following policies and measures:

1. First of all, as soon as we liberate and occupy an area we must quickly completely sweep up all leaders of the puppet military apparatus, the puppet governmental apparatus, police leaders, psychological warfare, chieu hoi, and pacifications leaders, and leaders of reactionary political parties. We must confiscate all their weapons and all implements that could be used for sabotage, and we must not allow them to join together to oppose the revolution. When we liberate enemy prisons we must continue to imprison reactionaries, gangsters, and common criminals.

2. After the above measures are accomplished, we must issue and implement public announcements regarding "maintaining order and security" and regarding "taking control over and administering public offices, agencies, barracks, and storage warehouses of the puppet government" in order to incite the masses to stand up to participate in the effort to maintain order and security, to participate in the fight against sabotage and opposition by counter-revolutionaries and common criminals to protect public offices, warehouses, and public property, to protect our revolutionary governmental institutions, and to protect the lives and property of the civilian population.

3. When making and implementing public announcements about "turning in weapons and explosives" and "reporting and registering various types of target individuals," we must appeal to all the different categories of target individuals asking them to strictly carry out all orders issued by the revolutionary government. In addition, we must also encourage the civilian population to denounce anyone who is still hiding weapons, explosive, or other military equipment, to denounce enemy personnel who are in hiding and have failed to come forward to register with our government officials, and to report all such cases to the revolutionary governmental authorities.

If some individuals continue to hide out after the time limit for turning oneself in has expired, using our campaign to incite the masses to denounce violators as the basis for our actions, the local revolutionary governmental authorities should launch searches to hunt down and deal with violators.

4. With regards to those who stubbornly continue to carry out counter-revolutionary actions or who disrupt public order and security, we must quickly and resolutely arrest them and present them to a military court for a stern prosecution and trial.

5. To ensure public order and security, we must strengthen our patrols and controls to make them constant, regular, and strict, especially in those areas where there are important political, military, economic, cultural, or scientific offices or facilities.

If necessary, martial law may be imposed in order to rapidly suppress counter-revolutionary activities.

6. Security measures must be strengthened at public offices, governmental agencies, barracks and bases, supply warehouses, etc.

-We must organize strict armed guard details, especially at headquarters and nerve centers of the Party, of the local revolutionary people's committee, and of military and security units. We need to develop careful, meticulous plans for air defense and defense against enemy ground attacks, and we must strictly implement all internal regulations regarding security and protection of headquarters agencies.

-Other important installations, such as banks, treasury buildings, weapons storage facilities, fuel and petroleum storage facilities, food warehouses, electrical power plants, water-works, radio stations, television stations, communications facilities (both radio and telephone), (public) printing facilities, and scientific and technical centers (such as the Nuclear Institute, the Germ Institute, the Seed Institute, meteorological stations, etc.) also will require armed guards and tight implementation of internal security regulations.

-Internally, within agencies and offices, we must select some of our good cadre and personnel to carry out security and protective duties under the guidance of our security agencies, and we must implement internal security regulations on the following subject areas:

+Carefully protect files and documents the enemy has left behind, especially basic documentation, and prevent these files and documents from being disrupted, stolen, or destroyed.

+Protect property and machinery, especially scientific and technical equipment. Counter all efforts to sabotage, damage, or misuse this property and machinery.

+Provide tight internal security, especially for vital, important elements.

All former employees of the puppet regiment must be screened in order to categorize and sort them out so that we can use those people we need and that we are able to use, but we must not

use them in secret, important jobs. We must constantly strengthen education to elevate the vigilance of our cadre, personnel, and soldiers and to block and counter all enemy plots to infiltrate or sabotage our installations or to assassinate or bribe our personnel.

7. In order to maintain basic public order and security over the long term, in parallel with the implementation of the above policies and measures, we must quickly analyze and categorize different target groups within the puppet army, the puppet government, the police, enemy intelligence, psychological warfare agencies, chieu hoi agencies, pacification agencies, and reactionary political parties and we must implement education and reeducation measures designed specifically for each type of target individual in order to cause the enemy's ranks to collapse organizationally, politically, and ideologically.

-The work of sorting out the different categories of target individuals in order to decide on policies and measures to deal with each category must be based on the following points:

- a) The former rank and position of the target individual within the enemy's organizations.
- b) The previous crimes and level of opposition to the revolution of the target individual.
- c) The target individual's attitude toward the revolution since the area was liberated.

-With regard to the various categories of puppet soldiers: A separate directive has been issued on this subject.

-With regard to the various categories of puppet governmental personnel, you must study and apply the following policies:

- a) Long-term detention and reeducation for the following categories:

+Within the puppet government, puppet governmental officials from the rank of district chief and deputy district chief and up.

+Within the police special branch and interrogators, from the rank of cell chief [to truong] or deputy cell chief and up.

-Within the Police Field Force [Combat Police], from the rank of sub-lieutenant (aspirant) [chuan uy] and up.

-Within prison police guard forces, from the rank of warden or deputy warden and up.

-Within other police units, from office chief or deputy office chief and up.

-For policemen detailed to local assignments, from those in charge of village police or sub-ward [khom] police and up.

- +Within the psychological warfare, chieu hoi, pacification, and other similar services, from team leader, deputy team leader, office chief, or deputy office chief and up.

- +Within the intelligence services, from network chief, unit chief, or team chief and up.

- +Within reactionary political parties and political organizations, from precinct captains and up.

b) Short-term confinement and retraining (a few months) and then release, with continued observation, education, and reeducation, for the following categories:

- +Within the puppet government, village council chairmen and thug elements in the village.

- +Within the Police Special Branch: all special branch police officers, interrogators, and prison personnel.

- Within the Police Field Force: squad leaders and deputy squad leaders.

- Village police: section chief and deputy chiefs and thugs within the village police.

- +Within the psychological warfare, chieu hoi, pacification, and other similar services, all personnel directly involved in operations, excepting personnel performing purely administrative functions.

- +Within the intelligence services, all personnel directly involved in intelligence operations, excepting personnel performing purely administrative functions.

- +Within reactionary political parties and political organizations, all thugs, party chapter secretaries, and hard-core support elements.

During the short-term confinement and retraining of the above elements, we must be alert to identify particularly dangerous individuals who should be sent to long-term detention and reeducation.

The goals of the short-term confinement and retraining of the above-mentioned target individuals are:

- To provide them with ideological education and reeducation.

- To exploit them for information and to obtain information to help us understand the enemy's entire organizational structure and all his activities.

- To prevent them from returning to the counter-revolutionary road and to give them an opportunity to make contributions in order to atone for their crimes.

-If any of these individually can be utilized for enemy proselyting operations or for professional public security operations [intelligence or counter-intelligence operations], they may be so utilized on a temporary basis, but they must be closely monitored.

c) Organize local education classes at the village and ward level for all other puppet government personnel and members of reactionary political parties and organizations.

d) Those who truly repent should be given the opportunity to make progress and to atone for their crimes.

e) Some of the enemy's policemen and fireman can be used, except for reactionary thugs, but we must insert our own cadre and hard-core supporters to administer, direct, and educate them.

8. A Number of Issues that Require Particular Attention:

a) Establishing revolutionary order and maintaining political security in newly liberated areas is a very ferocious struggle against the Americans and their puppets, because they are extremely reactionary, stubborn, and vicious, violent reactionary enemies.

We must maintain a firm understanding of the principle of the dictatorship of the revolution, we must resolutely suppress and arrest counter-revolutionaries, and we must quickly cause their ranks to collapse.

b) The policy of the Americans and their puppets in the area that they temporarily occupy is to soil and dirty everyone in order to force the people to follow them. For that reason, in our operations directed against the counter-revolutionaries, we must strike hard and strike accurately against the stubborn thuggish elements, those who actively and intentionally oppose the revolution, and the counter-revolutionaries. However, we must not confuse that group with those people whom the enemy has forced to join his political organizations or armed forces. With respect to those that have been forced to follow the enemy, we must implement a policy of leniency and mercy, educate and reeducate them, and open the door to allow them to make progress.

c) We must rely on the masses. We must educate and mobilize the masses in order to be able to discover and attack the enemy. In order to do this we must employ correct measures that the masses approve of and support. We must have a plan that works step by step, that employs appropriate measures and forms, that does not frighten the masses, and that the enemy cannot exploit to stir up the masses against us.

d) In addition to overt reactionary organizations, the U.S. and their puppets also have many very dangerous secret organizations. For that reason, when carrying out urgent, short-term operations to maintain public order and security we must also organize and develop plans to delve deeper to understand and uncover reactionary leaders still in hiding and to uncover the enemy's secret organizations.

e) We must strictly maintain internal security and keep our internal ranks pure, particularly within our Party and State leadership agencies, in our armed forces, in our security forces, and in other vital, important agencies.

We must be extremely vigilant and keep up our guard to prevent the enemy from infiltrating into our internal ranks.

For the Party Secretariat
[signed] To Huu

Document No. 73

Cable to Brother Sau [Le Duc Tho] and Brother Bay Cuong [Pham Hung] (at the B2 Front), 20 April 1975

[Source: *Mot So Van Kien Chi Dao: Tong Tien Cong Va Noi Day Mua Xuan Nam 1975, Chien Dich Ho Chi Minh* [A Number of Guidance Documents for the Spring 1975 General Offensive and Uprising and the Ho Chi Minh Campaign] (Hanoi: Nha xuat ban Quan doi nhan dan, 2005), 262-265.]

Brother Ba [Le Duan] told me to send you a message to remind you to pay the greatest possible attention to the work of reviewing and checking our educational and administrative tasks regarding discipline in the newly liberated zones and discipline regarding captured materials for those units assigned to participate in the fighting on the focal-point battlefield.

During the recent wave of attacks, our soldiers fought very courageously, flexibly, and cleverly. They always overcame difficulties in order to accomplish their assigned missions. When they took over control of newly liberated zones, and especially when they entered cities, many units strictly maintained discipline and strictly followed regulations and instructions. They actively worked with local authorities to carry out many different tasks necessary to consolidate the liberated zones, such as propagandizing our policies to the local population, protecting public order and security, helping the people to stabilize their lives, donating some of their own food to save those who were starving, etc. For that reason, the people welcomed and applauded them, and their actions have given the people increased confidence and faith in our army and our government. Overall, our takeover of the administration of Hue and Da Nang was handled properly.

However, alongside the good things there were also some weaknesses, and there are still many indications of a lack of proper organization and a lack of discipline, particularly discipline when entering newly liberated areas and discipline regarding captured materials.

This situation has created adverse effects among the people and in local Party and governmental agencies, and it has affected solidarity with local authorities and solidarity between units.

The reasons for this situation, at least among the troops, are in part due to the number of new young recruits who have just joined the army and whose knowledge and understanding of political discipline and of the need to protect public property, is still weak. However, the primary

reasons are that we had not done enough to educate our troops before they moved in to take over the cities, that our organization and administration was not sufficiently tight, and that, generally speaking, our units were not well prepared either educationally or organizationally for this task. A number of cadres failed to set an example and failed to meet our standards by taking things either for themselves or for their own units.

Meanwhile, the people also exploited the situation to steal or destroy property left behind by the enemy. In some places, such as at the Da Nang Airfield, there were days during which as many as 10,000 people entered the base to loot it. Even though we had troops assigned to stand guard, their numbers were too few and the guards could not stop them. At present, the frequency of these kinds of situations has declined a great deal, but they have still not yet completely ended.

In addition, we have still not yet swept up all of the remaining enemy troops left behind or the individuals that the enemy has planted to stay behind. Individuals pretending to be our soldiers are also causing trouble and destruction, thereby causing divisions between the people and our troops and reducing the prestige and honor of our soldiers. Through interrogations of enemy prisoners of war, we have learned that in Da Nang, as the enemy was preparing to withdraw, the enemy released all military prisoners being held for criminal acts in their prisons in an effort to sabotage us. These criminals have recently committed many very brutal robberies and murders.

The Standing Committee of the Central Military Party Committee has issued instructions to Party committees on strengthening discipline when entering liberated zones, and these instructions have already been sent to the COSVN Military Party Committee. You should direct the political staffs to study and absorb those instructions and to issue the necessary concrete, detailed instructions on issues that need attention to all headquarters agencies and units on the front, especially when you move in to take over Saigon.

Based on our experience in Hue and Da Nang, you need to pay attention to the following:

a) Carefully educate our forces and disseminate our disciplinary regulations for entering newly liberated zones and for entering cities as well as our disciplinary regulations regarding captured materials to all cadre and enlisted men, down to company, platoon, and squad level cadres.

b) Prepare detailed plans and make careful, detailed organizational arrangements to tightly administer and control our troops. Give clear mission orders for commanding and directing the work of taking over administration of captured areas to Party committees and cadres of all units. Give clear instructions regarding which units are to enter the city and which units are not to enter. Clearly spell out the specific area for which each unit is responsible for occupying. Spell out specific responsibilities for administering and protecting the property that we capture, authority to utilize that property, and clearly spell out who will be responsible between units and between the troops and the local authorities.

c) Organize military police teams, patrol teams, and guard teams to strictly and carefully protect enemy technical and material [logistics supply] facilities that have been left behind. Counter enemy efforts to sabotage these facilities, and prevent the people and/or people pretending

to be our troops from entering. Strictly prevent undisciplined cadres and enlisted men from entering to destroy and disrupt these facilities.

d) Issue commendations to those units and individuals that strictly follow our disciplinary regulations and policies for entering cities and our disciplinary regulations for captured materials, and take quick action to deal with serious violations in order so that your actions may serve as an example.

e) Local Party and governmental agencies should do a good job of educating the people to prevent instances of destruction and looting of public property.

Saigon is the largest city in South Vietnam. It has a population of more than three million residents. Inside the city there are many important offices and agencies, many enemy warehouses and military bases, many very modern technical and material [logistics] facilities, and tremendous amount of expensive consumer goods. If we do not have a detailed, concrete plan to educate and administer our troops properly, if we do not have a complete plan prepared for ahead of time, if we fail to provide sufficient detailed guidance and organizational arrangement for occupation duties and taking over the administration and control of those agencies, offices, and technical and material facilities and tightly controlling them, we will not be able to avoid losses, and such a failure could easily give rise to many complex and difficult problems.

I hope you all will pay attention to this advice as you lead and direct our takeover and administration of the city.

I wish you all good health.

Signed
Van [Vo Nguyen Giap]

Document No. 74

Cable No. 10/TT.75, KBN [COSVN] Party Current Affairs Committee Circular, 22 April 1975

[Source: *Dai Thang Mua Xuan*, 1975: *Van Kien Dang* [Great Spring Victory, 1975: Party Documents] (Hanoi: Nha xuat ban Chinh tri quoc gia, 2005), 302-304.]

1. As the result of our string of great, resounding victories and faced with the danger of the total collapse of the Saigon puppet government, the American imperialists have pressured Thieu into resigning in an effort to find a way to prevent out general offensive-general insurrection and divert the focus of the mass struggle movement in the hopes of avoiding a complete and total defeat.

The resignation of Thieu and the elevation of Huong to replace him in the current situation have accelerated the pace of the collapse of the morale of the puppet army and the puppet government. The enemy's Cabinet has been further rent by deep divisions and contradictions. This

has made the situation even more favorable for us to conduct attacks and uprisings and to rapidly secure victory in the cities and the rural countryside.

Therefore Party chapters at all levels and our entire army and entire civilian population must:

- Firmly understand that our goal is to overthrow the entire enemy government and to place the entire governmental apparatus in the hands of the people.

- Resolutely intensify the general offensive-general insurrection and resolutely secure total victory.

- Reject every thought of waiting, hesitancy, or uncertainty.

2. All levels and all sectors must concentrate their strength to step up and intensify our attacks and uprisings while at the same time properly taking over the administration and building up of the liberated areas and the development and expansion of our revolutionary forces. We must make every effort to exploit opportunities and use this favorable time period to secure total victory without the slightest uncertainty or hesitation, no matter what kind of negotiating concessions the enemy may put forward.

- We must quickly and urgently military carry out attack plans with absolute determination and resolve, annihilate truly large numbers of enemy troops, and seize and occupy the designated targets.

- We must directly and openly incite the people to rise up to seize control of the government, quickly eliminate large numbers of enemy outposts and police stations in order to liberate the rural areas, rapidly annihilate opposition thugs and saboteurs as we expand the area under our control, and create an insurrectionary movement to coordinate with and support our military attacks to seize and liberate the cities.

- In particular, we must further intensify our proselyting operations targeted on enemy soldiers and puppet governmental officials in order to take advantage of this opportunity by causing the large-scale disintegration of the puppet army and puppet government.

3. Following Thieu's resignation there will be other changes in the leadership of the puppet army and puppet government. All levels must closely monitor these developments in order to be able to constantly exploit concrete opportunities to step up our attacks and uprisings and to make timely, sharp, focused military proselyting attacks to win even faster and greater victories.

4. In Saigon and the other cities, we must quickly block and combat every American and puppet plot to spread demagogic propaganda. We must not allow the course of the struggle of the masses to be diverted at this time. We must use this opportunity to incite the masses to rise up and use political and armed violence in combination with military and puppet proselyting operations to annihilate thugs and eliminate traitors in order to seize control at the grass roots level.

We must use the revolutionary struggle of the basic masses in order to persuade petit bourgeois and progressive intellectuals to join the path of the revolution. We must not allow fence-sitting centrist forces to spread illusions of peaceful negotiations among the popular masses and to lure the masses away from the road of revolutionary struggle, away from our course of attacks and uprisings aimed at securing total victory.

You should submit immediate reports to KBN [COSVN] about the attitudes of the masses, of enemy governmental personnel, of enemy soldiers, and of both progressive and reactionary political factions in the aftermath of Thieu's resignation.

Document No. 75

Cable from the COSVN Party Current Affairs Committee on Duong Van Minh's Inauguration as President of the Saigon Puppet Government, 28 April 1975

[Source: *Lich Su Bien Nien Xu Uy Nam Bo va Trung Uong Cuc Mien Nam (1954-1975)* [Historical Chronicle of the Cochinchina Party Committee and the Central Office for South Vietnam, 1954-1975], 2nd ed. (Hanoi: Nha xuất bản Chính trị quốc gia, 2008), 1341-1342.]³¹

Immediately after Duong Van Minh took over as President of the puppet government, the COSVN Party Current Affairs Committee issued the following conclusions:

[Summary]

-The goal of the American ploy of making Duong Van Minh the President of the puppet government is to open negotiations with us aimed at saving what is left of the Saigon government. However, in reality Duong Van Minh is no longer a representative of the third force but instead has become an American lackey who is being used to oppose the revolution.

-In the current situation, anyone, no matter who he is, who is placed at the head of the puppet government is a lackey of the Americans. We must carry out our unshakable resolve to completely defeat the Americans and the puppets, destroy the corrupt Saigon government, which is the tool of American neocolonialism, completely liberate South Vietnam, and reunify our nation.

At present the puppet national government is extremely shaky, and enemy puppets and the enemy's apparatus of repression at the lower levels are confused and disintegrating. These conditions are extremely favorable for us to secure total victory. However, the Duong Van Minh card has caused a portion of the upper levels of the third force to become confused and uncertain. We must give them clear explanations to make them understand the true nature of the American scheme and to make them see that only the revolutionary road will lead to peace, true independence, freedom, democracy, prosperity, and national reconciliation. We must resolutely crush every American plot, completely overthrow the entire puppet army and puppet government, and place all governmental power into the hands of the people.

³¹ The document can also be found in the first edition of *Lich Su Bien Nien Xu Uy Nam Bo va Trung Uong Cuc Mien Nam (1954-1975)* [Historical Chronicle of the Cochinchina Party Committee and the Central Office for South Vietnam, 1954-1975] (Hanoi: Nha xuất bản Chính trị quốc gia, 2002), 1087.

Document No. 76

Cable No. 481/TV from TVKBN [COSVN Party Current Affairs Committee] to Sau Dan [Vo Van Kiet] and Nam Xuan [Unknown], 25 April 1975

[Source: *Dai Thang Mua Xuan, 1975: Van Kien Dang* [Great Spring Victory, 1975: Party Documents] (Hanoi: Nha xuất bản Chính trị quốc gia, 2005), 307-308.]

1. According to BBC Radio, Huong has met with Minh to discuss turning over the Presidency to Minh.

If this report is true, you are to immediately determine the opinions and attitudes of the different classes of the population, of the different political factions, and of third force personalities. Cable the results to KBN [COSVN] immediately.

2. Previously we had projected the things we would have to do when Thieu was toppled from power. Now Thieu has been toppled in a situation in which we are winning big victories and in which the enemy is being defeated and is confused and in disorder, but now they have played this new card and they will suggest subjects for negotiations in order to limit our victory and to divert the mass struggle.

We still maintain our firm position that we must secure total and absolute victory.

Therefore our organization in Saigon-Gia Dinh must seize this opportunity to openly incite the people to hold meetings, seminars, street demonstrations, and powerful displays of our forces focused around the slogans of peace, independence, freedom, prosperity, and national reconciliation in combination with the true interests of each social class.

Use these actions to secure control of the government at the grass roots level, because at present there are a great many locations where things are falling apart at the lower levels. You must quickly ensure that our cadre and Party members fully absorb the contents of KBN's [COSVN] Circular No. 10/TT.75 so that they understand the favorable current situation and are willing to boldly charge forward to advance our movement forward in a truly powerful manner. Naturally, this does not mean that we should send all of our cadre out to do this job, and our movement's meetings, demonstrations, etc. must all be aimed at the goal of gaining control at the grass roots level and rapidly developing and expanding our forces (as has been done at Sau Tuong's location) in order to lead up to X [sic].

We need to provide ideological leadership to our hard-core supporters in order to spread propag

anda among positive [pro-communist] members of the third force, telling them not to fall for the scheming plots of the imperialists and the reactionaries who are now scheming to play a new card and to use negotiations to prevent us from security total victory. They are now proclaiming that that Saigon will be destroyed if there is an attack in order to try to change public opinion toward supporting negotiations.

If any of you believe that a policy decision is needed on any specific question, cable your thoughts to TVKBN [the COSVN Party Current Affairs Committee].

Document No. 77

Central Military Party Committee Directive No. 113/QUTW, 27 April 1975

[Source: *Dai Thang Mua Xuan*, 1975: *Van Kien Dang* [Great Spring Victory, 1975: Party Documents] (Hanoi: Nha xuất bản Chính trị quốc gia, 2005), 310-319.]

The Central Military Party Committee is issuing this directive in order to properly prepare our units that have been given the mission of entering and administering the City of Saigon-Gia Dinh.

The attacks and uprisings of our soldiers and civilians to liberate Saigon-Gia Dinh may force the enemy to surrender quickly. However, we must almost plan for the possibility that savage fighting may occur and that we may liberate and take over the administration of one portion of the city, and then another, until we eventually liberate and take over the administration of the entire city.

1. Administering Saigon-Gia Dinh properly is a very important responsibility that is of tremendous political significance.

Victory in liberating Saigon-Gia Dinh will be a victory that has the greatest strategic significance for ending our people's revolutionary war, liberating South Vietnam, and advancing toward the peaceful unification of the Fatherland. Building on this great victory of our nation and consolidating this glorious success for the revolution are the direct responsibility and duty of all Party levels and units that have been given responsibility for administering the city, a responsibility given to them by the entire Party and the entire population. Properly administering the city will have a very great influence on our compatriots and soldiers throughout the nation, as well as on world public opinion.

The Goals and Requirements for Administering Saigon-Gia Dinh are:

Quickly destroy all remaining enemy forces, crush their resistance in their last lair, totally eliminate the entire governmental and military apparatus of the puppet army and puppet government, and eliminate all reactionary organizations.

Actively contribute to the building of a revolutionary government at all levels and of our mass organizations, correctly implement all of our policies for the newly-liberated city, quickly restore law, order, and security in the city.

Administer the city well in all areas of activities, properly administer the supply facilities and the property that the enemy has left behind to serve the common good of our entire population and our entire army.

Protect the lives and property of the people, work to disseminate propaganda about the policies of the revolution, spread propaganda about our victory in order to create a high spirit of enthusiasm and a feeling of solidarity and confidence among the population.

Actively help to stabilize the lives of the people and return them to normalcy.

In the shortest possible time, strive to ensure that all aspects of the city's life and activity, including political life, economic life, and cultural life, return to normal, and in that way raise the spirit of enthusiasm and confidence of the people of our entire nation and elevate and promote the just cause and the prestige of our country's revolution in the eyes of the world public opinion.

2. In order to properly and correctly carry out their responsibilities, those units assigned to administer the city need to have a firm understanding of the special characteristics of Saigon-Gia Dinh.

We have correctly and properly taken over the administration of many cities and province capitals during the course of our attacks and uprisings this spring. Many units have gained valuable experience. However, recently, because the situation was developing so rapidly, some policies and regulations were not disseminated in time and our personnel were not given careful enough instructions about these policies and regulations, and for that reason a number of our cadre and soldiers lacked the proper sense of discipline and spirit of responsibility, thereby causing a certain number of shortcomings and mistakes. In addition, the city of Saigon-Gia Dinh has a number of characteristics that are very different from the cities that we have already liberated, so administering this city involves many more important and more complex requirements.

The city is extremely large (700 square kilometers, including the suburbs, and just the central city itself consists of a total of 11 precincts with a total area of 100 square kilometers). The terrain is complex and consists of many central city precincts with large buildings and built-up city blocks along with suburbs that have many river, streams, and villages. The enemy has many installations deployed in a complex pattern, installations that are deployed in lines and layers, and that also include large secret tunnel and bunker networks.

The city has a very large population (3.3 million residents). The vast majority of the workers in the population have a tradition of revolutionary struggle and a spirit of patriotism, and they are very supportive of our cause of liberating Saigon-Gia Dinh, liberating South Vietnam, and unifying the Fatherland. This is a location in which large numbers of university students, government officials, and intellectuals are concentrated. It is also a place where there are large numbers of capitalists and foreigners (with the largest number being Chinese). The enemy has many organizations here that are used to control and suppress the masses. There are complicated religious and reactionary political party organizations in the city.

This is the "capital" of the puppet government, the place where the headquarters and central agencies of national government, of the armed forces, of reactionary political parties, of espionage organizations and international intelligence services, etc., are located. This is also the center for the activities of the different religions. In order to protect all of his leadership agencies and nerve

centers, the enemy has deployed a large number of armed and paramilitary forces in the city, forces headed by the most violent reactionaries.

They will organize and carry out stubborn resistance to our revolution. They may carry out acts of sabotage and other violent acts against the population when we mount our attack and even after they have fallen into a posture of defeat.

Saigon-Gia Dinh is also the place where all the foreign embassies, diplomatic agencies, commercial organizations, and international organizations with relations with the Saigon puppet government are concentrated. If we do not implement tight measures to administer and control them, many of these organizations and agencies may try to cover for and protect the Saigon reactionaries, to help hide them or help them escape abroad.

A very large number of enemy economic and logistics installations, including extremely important military and civilian economic facilities are located in the city and its outskirts. The administration of the large supply facilities and property that the enemy has left behind will be extremely important for the work of consolidating our liberated zone as well as for increasing and strengthening our economic and national defense potential, both in the short-term and over the long term.

There are many complex issues regarding the cultural and social situation in Saigon-Gia Dinh. These are the result of the influence of the depraved and reactionary culture that the American imperialists have brought into our country. This is the location where the enemy's psychological warfare apparatus is the most active and where in the past our propaganda activities there have encountered many problems. On the surface the city exhibits many signs of a false prosperity that could easily give some of our people wrong ideas when they enter the city.

3. Specific tasks to be carried out when we enter the city and take over

Based on the policies that our Party and our Government have already promulgated, based on this directive issued by the Central Military Party Committee, and based on concrete directives issued by COSVN, the COSVN Military Party Committee, and, most directly, by the Military Management Committee, we must develop a comprehensive plan to carry out tasks in all fields and areas.

Depending on the specific situation when we enter the city and take over administration, and paying proper attention to the special characteristics of the city in general, and particularly to the actual situation in the area for which the unit is assigned responsibility, fully implement all directives and regulations while employing the experience that the unit has gained in the past.

a) The most urgent tasks will be to crush all remaining enemy forces, to quickly restore law, order, and security in the city, and to eliminate the puppet governmental structure at all levels, from the central [national] level down to the ward and sub-ward level. Because of the peculiar characteristics of the city, it would be easy for the enemy to hide and conceal his forces. We must be extremely vigilant. We must rely on our political and revolutionary organizations and agents, we must rely on the workers, and we must closely coordinate with Liberation Security forces to

quickly identify and arrest important leaders of the puppet government and armed forces and of reactionary organizations. We must quickly uncover and take care of secret bunkers, confiscate all enemy weapons, closely guard enemy weapons warehouses, transportation equipment [vehicles, boats, ships, planes], and communications equipment, and prevent enemy elements from contacting one another. We must not allow military criminals that the enemy has released from prison to commit crimes and criminal acts. We must implement a tightly organized plan for conducting patrols and standing guard. Special attention should be given to organizing and giving good, proper guidance to military police units. Cooperate with public security forces in severely punishing all acts of sabotage and opposition by the enemy.

b) Using a plan prepared by the Military Management Committee, quickly liberate our comrades and other patriotic elements that the enemy is holding in the prisons and act quickly to block any enemy plots to eliminate or to evacuate prisoners. Actively participate in effort to rescue and care for our brothers and sisters who are in danger. Quickly establish contact with our organizations and with political organizations inside the newly-liberated prisons.

Help other brothers and sisters to return to us in accordance with the regulations and policies that have been disseminated.

c) Quickly arrange for the security and defense of the city. Immediately occupy all key areas, administrative and military centers, and important traffic nodes. Control the important airfields, docks, bridges, and intersections inside the city. We must deploy our forces to focus on key locations in order to avoid being sucked into covering less important targets and thereby spreading our forces too thin. Immediately deploy military police forces. Have a plan ready to fight to protect the security of the city as a precaution against counterattacks by enemy forces remaining inside the city and in surrounding localities. A strict system of guard duty and combat alert duty watches must be implemented. There must be a plan for all forces administering all areas inside the city and the surrounding areas to coordinate their actions. They must have a unified command structure and solid communications.

Pay special attention to building local armed forces, to expanding our militia self-defense forces, to providing timely training to these forces, and to developing a good plan to coordinate these forces in battle. When developing and expanding our forces, we must place great emphasis on quality, and under no circumstances may we allow any gaps, weaknesses, or lack of vigilance to develop.

d) Correctly handle the problem of enemy prisoners of war and enemy remnant military personnel. We should apply the policies and directives issued by the Party Secretariat and conduct this effort under the guidance of the Military Management Committee. The number of prisoners of war and of those whom we must arrest and detain will be very large. We must coordinate very closely with Party and governmental agencies in order to implement a program to register and categorize these individuals quickly and carefully. With respect to enemy officers and troops who have laid down their arms and who have recognized the justice of our cause, our policy is to handle them humanely and leniently. As for stubborn elements, they must be sternly and severely punished. Leading reactionaries, high-ranking officers, and important thugs must be imprisoned and closely guarded to prevent them from escaping.

e) In accordance with a plan prepared by the Military Management Committee and in coordination with all of our forces, quickly take over the administration of all supply facilities and property that the enemy has left behind, including both civilian and military installations. This is an extremely large responsibility that is part of the work of taking over the administration of the city of Saigon-Gia Dinh. It is a responsibility of important economic and political significance. All levels must carefully study all current directives, regulations, and plans regarding this task in order to carry out this assignment properly. This is not a matter of simply collecting captured war booty, but it is in fact the taking over of virtually the entire supply and material support structure of a social order that the American imperialists have built up in South Vietnam over the course of the past several decades. Relying on our own information and on information we are able to obtain from puppet governmental and military personnel, we need to develop an overall policy and a comprehensive and systematic plan to take control of and run this entire network of very important material, technical, and supply facilities, to utilize these facilities properly to carry out our immediate responsibilities, and to administer and preserve them properly so that we can use them over the long term. We must not allow this network of facilities to be disrupted or sabotaged. This is an extremely vital task that we must carry out in order to properly rebuild the military, political, and economic apparatus in Saigon-Gia Dinh, and in South Vietnam in general, and to restore it to normal operations, thereby making an enormous contribution to our cause of defending and building our country.

g) Actively participate in stabilizing every aspect of the lives of the people and of its foreign residents.

We must pay special attention to the fact that Saigon-Gia Dinh has a large population, that it has many foreign residents, and that its daily life and activities are very complicated. For that reason it will be very difficult for personnel from our agencies and organizations to handle this task smoothly, especially immediately after we enter the city.

All units must actively participate in this work, must utilize all of their forces and equipment, and must have very concrete plans for coordinating with agencies and mass organizations to contribute as much as possible to the work of propagandizing and educating the working class in order to stimulate the spirit of enthusiasm, confidence, and solidarity among the working population of the city. Strive to help the people stabilize every aspect of their daily lives. Caring for the lives of the people is a combat goal of our revolutionary armed forces. It is the very fundamental policy direction that is required to strengthen solidarity between the army and the civilian population and to create armed forces with the tremendous strength required to accomplish their difficult and complex missions, both when assigned to administer the city as well as when accomplishing all other assignments.

In our contacts with the different classes of the population in the newly-liberated city, we need to pay special attention to educating our cadre and soldiers so that they have a firm understanding of all of our policies, so that they maintain a correct and modest attitude, so that they understand the need to respect the lives, property, and customs of the population, and so that they do not even lay a finger on so much as a needle and or a piece thread that belongs to the

people. We must strictly forbid any action directed against the property of the people, against State [Government] property, or against captured military equipment and supplies.

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* *

All units to which the Party and the people have given the responsibility of representing our entire army by advancing into Saigon and taking over the administration of the city that bears the name of our illustrious Uncle Ho have been given a very great honor. In order to be worthy of that trust and confidence, Party committees at all levels, all Party chapters, all cadre, enlisted men, Party members, Youth Group members, and units entrusted with the mission of administering the city must strive to fully understand and grasp our general policy guidelines and policies and the Party's directives and resolutions and then to carry out their responsibilities properly and correctly.

In order to fully accomplish their assigned responsibilities, cadre and enlisted men must maintain the noble and beautiful quality and traditions of our army and they must exhibit the attitude of revolutionary soldiers and the posture of victors in this war. No one must be allowed to do anything that would adversely affect the good name of our people's armed forces.

You Must Properly Carry Out the Following Requirements:

First: You have discipline, but you must maintain an even higher level of discipline. Every individual must be conscious of his own actions. Administration and control must be tight. Punishment must be stern, and commendations must be timely.

You must strictly carry out all of our policies and regulations in the newly-liberated area.

You have solidarity, but your solidarity must be even stronger. You must maintain solidarity between Party and governmental agencies, between the different types of armed forces [main force, local force, guerrilla militia], between units, and between agencies in carrying out your administrative management duties in order to maintain a high level of unity and prepare concrete coordination plans for the sake of the common good of our revolution.

Second: You must make clear assignments of responsibility, and you must have a concrete, specific chain of command. The distribution of responsibilities and missions to the different units must be clear and decisive, clearly designating which units are authorized to enter the city, the size and scope of the area of responsibility of each individual unit, and which units are not authorized to enter the city.

Clearly spell out the responsibilities and powers of each level, of each unit, and of each unit involved in the mission of administering the city, and there must be a focused, single, unified chain of command.

Third: You must implement many different concrete organizational measures and you must maintain a profound, flexible, and cautious attitude in order to decide how to deal with different

situations. [Military] operations, political, and rear services [logistics] staff agencies must have their own concrete plans.

Preparatory tasks must be carried out carefully but with a sense of urgency, and they must be carried out throughout the period of our preparations for battle. Give particular attention to maintaining a firm grasp of educational and inspection activities. You must establish an organization that is specifically responsible for this task to provide close guidance and monitoring.

The Central Military Party Committee hopes that this directive will be fully and completely studied and absorbed down to the party cell, platoon, and squad level, and that it will be strictly implemented. We are confident that all units will accomplish the glorious mission with which they have been entrusted in an outstanding manner.

For the Central Military Party Committee
Secretary
[signed]
Vo Nguyen Giap

Document No. 78

Cable No. 505/TV from KBN [COSVN] Party Current Affairs Committee to P.10, Sau Dan [Vo Van Kiet], All Region Party Committees, B.76, N.50, and All Sections and Branches, 28 April 1975

[Source: *Dai Thang Mua Xuan*, 1975: *Van Kien Dang* [Great Spring Victory, 1975: Party Documents] (Hanoi: Nha xuat ban Chinh tri quoc gia, 2005), 320-322.]

1. Faced with the prospect total defeat, with our soldiers and civilians about to attack directly into their final lair, the American imperialists, who had previously removed Thieu from office, now have replaced Huong and moved Duong Van Minh up to become President. Their scheme is to conduct negotiations with us in order to try to save what is left of the Saigon regime.

When he stepped forward to accept the post of President at this time, Duong Van Minh ceased being a representative of the third force ... Duong Van Minh's action is part of the American scheme, and at the same time it is also in line with the political position taken by the Minh faction, which is that they do not want the Saigon regime to totally collapse and want to block the glorious victory that has been won by our nation at this historic moment.

This plan is clearly revealed in the contents of the proclamation issued by Duong Van Minh when he accepted the Presidency at 1650 hours on the afternoon of 28 April.

In that proclamation Minh said nothing about the United States, and he did not mention our two basic demands that were laid out in the proclamation issued by the Provisional Revolutionary Government on 26 April. Instead he appealed for "an immediate ceasefire and mutual cessation of all attacks," and he appealed to the puppet army to "maintain your ranks and hold your positions in order to carry out your new mission, the mission of protecting what is left of our country."

Appealing for the cessation of attacks, for national reconciliation and concord, and demanding the implementation of the Paris Agreement in generalized statements at this time means simply that one is carrying out the scheme of the Americans, which is to prevent our soldiers and civilians from attacking and causing the complete collapse of the current rotten and corrupt Saigon regime.

2. As was stated clearly by the Party Current Affairs Committee in Circular No. 10/TT.75 and in Cable No. 490/TV, dated 27 April 1975, “in the current situation in which the puppet government is facing the prospect of complete collapse, any lackey who takes power ..., even if he announces that he will implement the Paris Agreement, that he will carry out peaceful national reconciliation, or makes any other such statement, is just supporting the American plot and is demonstrating that he has become a lackey of the Americans.”

Our entire Party, our entire army, and our entire population are determined to implement our unshakeable resolve to totally defeat the U.S. and the puppets; to overthrow the rotten and corrupt Saigon regime, which is the tool of American neocolonialism; and to totally liberate South Vietnam and reunite our beloved country. We are determined to intensify our attacks and uprisings until total victory is achieved, exactly as has been set forward in our plan and with not even a single change or deviation.

In this situation, with Huong’s removal and Minh’s rise to take his place, ...the lower-level lackeys together with the enemy’s entire apparatus of repression are becoming increasingly frightened and are disintegrating. This provides us with very favorable conditions to win total victory.

... Only one road leads to true peace and independence, to freedom and democracy, to prosperity and national reconciliation: that is the road of crushing every American plot, of totally overthrowing the entire puppet army and puppet government, and of placing the entire government in the hands of the people.

All localities should closely monitor the editorials and opinions being broadcast on Radio Hanoi and Liberation Radio and should urge the people to listen to our radio broadcasts. You should use the proclamation issued by the Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Republic of South Vietnam on 26 April and the editorials published in the newspaper Nhan Dan on that same day, 26 April 1975, and on subsequent days as the foundation for the explanations that you give to our cadre and our people as well as to the upper, governing classes. However, the key issue, the most vital problem, is that we will do whatever is necessary to gain total victory. That is the best way to describe the situation to the members of the upper classes.

As the situation develops further, the Party Current Affairs Committee will provide additional guidance.

Document No. 79

Party Secretariat Cable No. 601, 1 May 1975

[Source: Dang Cong san Viet Nam, *Van Kien Dang Toan tap* [Party Documents Complete Series], vol. 36 (Hanoi: Nha xuat ban Chinh tri quoc gia, 2004), 182-184]

To: Brother Tam [Hoang Van Thai] and Brother Bay [Pham Hung]
(COSVN HQS: Please forward this message to Brother Tam)

1. We would like to inform you of the following: Brother Ba and the Government both think that the question of a tripartite government is now passé. When we form a government we must not include lackeys of the Americans in order to prevent the U.S. from having any source of support, and we must make the masses clearly recognize the power and the strength of the revolution. We will incite the masses and at the same time will force the U.S. to change its strategy. A government that reflects that spirit must be composed of our own people and of patriotic people who truly accept and approve of our policies of peace, independence, democracy, national reconciliation, and unification of the Fatherland.

2. The Politburo has decided that with regards to those individuals, people like Duong Van Minh for instance, who have surrendered to us, we will not arrest them, but we need to have a way to administer, control, and monitor them. We will only punish those who are still currently sabotaging us...

3. When you incite a mass movement to carry out revolutionary actions, make sure that you select our hard-core supporters among the masses and give them additional instructions. In order to have sufficient cadres to send out rapidly to incite and mobilize the masses, you should select a number of Party cadres and mass organization cadres, along with some military cadres, and give them a short period of training (a few days) in our policies, in our working methods, and in discipline.

4. When organizing national celebration ceremonies, the Politburo believes that a delegation of representatives from South Vietnam should be sent up to attend the meeting and celebration in Hanoi, and that a North Vietnamese delegation should be sent down to attend the ceremonies in South Vietnam.

[Signed]
Lanh [Le Van Luong]

Document No. 80

COSVN Party Current Affairs Committee Guidance on Categorizing Detained Puppet Soldiers and Puppet Officials and Continuing to Hunt Down Reactionaries, 20 August 1975

[Source: *Lich Su Bien Nien Xu Uy Nam Bo va Trung Uong Cuc Mien Nam (1954-1975)* [Historical Chronicle of the Cochinchina Party Committee and the Central Office for South Vietnam, 1954-1975], 2nd ed. (Hanoi: Nha xuất bản Chính trị quốc gia, 2008), 1365-1366.]³²

After we achieved victory in our resistance war against the Americans, we arrested many puppet soldiers and puppet officials. This work went well, but in a number of localities this work was not carried out exactly in accordance with our policy guidelines. In order to completely suppress all sabotage plans and actions of the reactionaries and at the same time to grant provisional release to those who accepted reeducation properly, on 20 August 1975 the COSVN Party Current Affairs Committee issued Directive No. 12/CT/75 providing guidance to local authorities to overcome deficiencies in implementing our program:

1. In their work of detaining and categorizing target individuals, many local areas still do not have a firm understanding of our concept and of our positions. A number of localities have expanded the range of those who should be arrested, detained, tried, and sent to reeducation camps much too broadly, and at the same time they have been slow in conducting the categorization of target individuals, which has reduced the effectiveness of their efforts. A number of other localities have dealt too harshly with the large number of soldiers whom the enemy forced to join its army and with ordinary government officials within the enemy's apparatus.

2. Many areas do not have a firm understanding of the goal of our program of educating puppet soldiers and government officials.

3. In many areas the work of inciting the masses to rise up to hunt down enemy thugs, of dealing with those families whose husbands or sons were forced to join the enemy's armed forces, and of building and consolidating revolutionary governmental institutions at the grass roots level has not been properly carried out. Bad elements have been allowed to infiltrate into our governmental institutions and to spread distortions about our policies and guidelines.

COSVN has set forward a number of measures to overcome these problems:

-A unified concept regarding our policy on resolving the problem of categorizing and trying target individuals appropriately: We have to identify which individuals are currently active thugs and reactionaries and we have to detain, try, and send to reeducation those individuals who had previously committed many crimes but have now agreed to cooperate with the revolutionary government. We must distinguish between the categories of those who are to be reeducated and thugs who must be tried. As for enemy troops who were forced to join the enemy's army, they must be educated to understand their responsibilities as citizens under the new regime.

³² The document can also be found in the first edition of *Lich Su Bien Nien Xu Uy Nam Bo va Trung Uong Cuc Mien Nam (1954-1975)* [Historical Chronicle of the Cochinchina Party Committee and the Central Office for South Vietnam, 1954-1975] (Hanoi: Nha xuất bản Chính trị quốc gia, 2002), 1108-1109.

-Quickly categorize those who have been detained and reeducated in order to deal with them correctly in accordance with our policies.

-With regards to privates and non-commissioned officers who were forced to join the enemy's army and who have experienced a proper political awakening during reeducation, these should be allowed to return home to make a living, sponsored and with guarantees provided by their families. With regards to a small number of them who were turned into villains and who had served in the puppet army for a long time, they should be kept under house arrest so that local village and hamlet officials could monitor their activities.

-As for handling those who were previously categorized incorrectly, we must maintain a firm understanding of the Party's principle for dealing with them: "Those who committed crimes must be punished."

-Greater attention must be devoted to the work of inciting the masses to sweep away any remaining enemy agents, to punishing enemy thugs, and to purging bad elements who have infiltrated revolutionary governmental organizations.

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