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*Some aspects
of guerilla warfare
in Vietnam*

SOME ASPECTS OF GUERILLA
WARFARE IN VIETNAM

SOME ASPECTS OF CURRENT
WARFARE IN VIETNAM

1770-1771

LIEUTENANT-GENERAL
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**SOME ASPECTS
OF GUERILLA WARFARE
IN VIETNAM**

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

In the present situation of the world, however small and weak a people may be, once it rises up united and struggles resolutely along a just line for independence, it is quite able to vanquish a powerful army of an imperialist aggressor and his hirelings, and shatter all his manœuvres.

This striking truth of our epoch has been evidenced in Vietnam by two wars of resistance : the first from 1945 to 1954 against the U.S. - supported French colonialists, which ended with the 1954 Geneva Conference, and the second against the U.S. imperialist aggressors who are losing their "special war" in South Vietnam and their escalation in North Vietnam.

In answer to our request, Lieutenant-General Hoang Van Thai, Deputy-Head of the General Staff of the Vietnam People's Army, has been kind enough to outline the problem of guerilla warfare within the general framework of the national revolution and people's war in Vietnam. We have

deemed it interesting to collect some short stories to illustrate this important, if not fundamental, aspect of our struggle against imperialism. Without a look into it, no understanding is possible as to how Vietnam, a colonial people poorly armed and equipped, could achieve such a great feat as the Dienbienphu victory and can now face the U.S. Army successfully.

FOREIGN LANGUAGES
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PART I

ON SOME FUNDAMENTAL QUESTIONS OF GUERILLA WARFARE IN VIETNAM

Vietnam, a relatively small country without a very large population, has a long past marked by struggles against foreign invasion and for national construction.

Bachdang, Chilang, Dongda*, Dienbienphu, and many other names have been throughout the ages glorious landmarks in the history of the Vietnamese people's struggle for independence.

Since the birth of the Indochinese Communist Party headed by Comrade Ho Chi Minh, the Vietnamese people have scored achievements of unprecedented importance. They made the 1945 August Revolution, broke the French-Japanese yoke and founded the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, the first people's democratic state in Southeast Asia. Then they vanquished the French imperialists and

* Victories over foreign invaders won by the Vietnamese armed forces and people:

Bachdang (1288): A river in North Vietnam where General Tran Hung Dao destroyed an army half a million strong under Gengis Khan's grand son.

Chilang (1427): A mountain pass in North Vietnam where Le Loi gained a victory over the Mings crowning ten years of people's resistance.

Dongda (1789): A place near Hanoi where Nguyen Hue, leader of a peasant insurrection, defeated a 200,000-strong army of the Tsing invaders.

U.S. interventionists in the first war of resistance (1945-1954). At present, the South Vietnamese people are waging a second war of resistance against the U.S. aggressors and their stooges, a liberation war which is winning ever more decisive successes.

In the course of the revolutionary struggles and wars of resistance in Vietnam, guerilla warfare has always occupied a very important place. This short account will deal with some fundamental problems and mention a certain number of experiences relative to that warfare.

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ROLE AND IMPORTANCE OF GUERILLA WARFARE IN VIETNAM

Marxism-Leninism has taught the Vietnamese people a lesson which has been confirmed by their own experiences: to free themselves from the yoke of the imperialists and their agents, they have no other way than *to use revolutionary violence to smash the rulers' administrative machinery and build up for themselves a people's dictatorship.*

The Indochinese Communist Party, the present Vietnam Workers' Party, have creatively applied Marxism-Leninism to Vietnam's practical situation. Under their leadership, the Vietnamese people has made a national-democratic revolution along a correct line to overthrow the imperialist oppressors and the reactionary feudal class, and win back national independence and land for the tillers.

This correct line has encouraged the large masses of the people, especially the toiling peasants to rise up and wage an evergrowing struggle for the accomplishment of the revolutionary tasks set by the Party. Availing itself of the experiences drawn by the world proletariat

from their revolutionary struggles, *our Party has worked out adequate forms of political and armed struggle at the various stages of the revolution.* At each stage, each form of struggle has a role to play and exercises a definite action. But in the whole process of the revolution, armed struggle has had a direct and decisive action. It has always been linked to political struggle from which it stemmed, then developed into armed insurrection and reached its highest form which was the people's war, a war fought by the entire people on all planes.

In Vietnam, guerilla warfare is a form of armed struggle in particular and of revolutionary struggle in general.

It was a guerilla warfare conducted in localities where conditions were available, which led to the creation of revolutionary conditions in the period of preparation for the 1945 August Revolution in order successfully to stage local insurrections and general insurrection. In this period, *guerilla warfare was a form of armed insurrection for the seizure of power, and a question of revolutionary strategy.*

During the first war of resistance (1945-1954), guerilla warfare helped us to push the struggle ahead and turn the patriotic war against the French imperialists and U.S. interventionists into a real people's war, a war waged by the entire people on all planes. Guerilla warfare was a school for the Vietnamese people to train themselves in the fight for national salvation, to form cadres and build up military and paramilitary forces. In the enemy's rear, guerilla warfare demoralized, wore out, disintegrated and destroyed his troops, pinned down his mobile forces, and co-ordinated its action with that of the regular warfare on the main theatre of operations. Better still, it was a form of armed insurrection for the seizure of power and establishment of guerilla base areas. It effectually frustrated the enemy's "lightning war" plan and his manoeuvres to feed war with war and make Vietnamese fight Vietnamese. It transformed the enemy's rear into zones of operations, and helped us create a permanent strategic offensive position there. *During the war of resistance*

against the French imperialists, guerilla warfare constituted an important strategic problem, one of the two basic forms of the people's war, gave birth to regular warfare, and co-ordinated its action with the latter to defeat the enemy.

At present, the struggle for liberation waged by the South Vietnamese people is a guerilla warfare at its highest stage. It started with local insurrections by which the toiling peasants seized power in the villages, and gradually expanded into a vast and steady movement of political struggle by rural and urban masses in co-ordination with guerilla warfare which unceasingly grew in intensity everywhere. During the last ten years, with no arms in hands at the beginning, the South Vietnamese people have achieved a great work, liberated four-fifths of the territory with over ten million people, shattered all the U.S. imperialists' aggressive schemes and won glorious victories: Apbac, Chala, Locninh, Bienhoa, Binhgia, Anlao, Pleiku, Quinhon, Phumy, Saigon... All this series of successes testified to the rapid growth of the guerilla warfare carried out by our fourteen million Southern compatriots, a war long and hard but certainly victorious. It shows that the U.S. imperialists and their agents are doomed to failure: U.S. special warfare has been and will be defeated by the people's guerilla warfare. *At present, guerilla warfare in South Vietnam constitutes not only a military tactics or strategy, but also a form of armed insurrection by the peasantry in the process of a protracted revolution taking place in a set balance of forces between revolution and counter-revolution in a backward agricultural country under neo-colonialism.* Stemming from the people's political struggle, it has become a tool for the maintenance and development of the revolution staged by the masses.

Dominated for many decades by imperialism, Vietnam was in the same conditions as many other colonial and dependent countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America. Thanks to revolution and long years of a

revolutionary war, North Vietnam has been completely liberated and is steadily progressing toward socialism, while South Vietnam has been winning decisive successes. Reality has shown that *revolutionary violence, revolutionary struggle and protracted revolutionary war in which guerilla warfare occupies an extremely important place, is the path our people must follow to reconquer independence, freedom and happiness.* Reality has also shown that in the present juncture of the world, *when a people, however small and weak, is united to rise up and follow a correct line, determined to struggle for its dearest aspirations, and creatively applies adequate forms of struggle, that people is fully able to vanquish a powerful army of any imperialist aggressor and his hirelings,* be the U.S. aggressor, chieftain of world imperialism.

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CHARACTERS AND FORMS OF GUERILLA WARFARE IN VIETNAM

In Vietnam guerilla warfare is a form of armed struggle of the large masses of the people, of the local military and paramilitary forces which are weak or relatively weak, against much better equipped enemy troops. It consists in dealing blows to the enemy everywhere, with all means and weapons available, in conducting scattered fights and, at the same time, in mobilizing the people for the struggle with most varied forms. It aims at thinning out and destroying the enemy's live force, defending and preserving our political and economic strength. It compels the enemy to disperse his forces, thus creating conditions for us to develop our regular warfare and operate in co-ordination with it to achieve victory.

In Vietnam, guerilla warfare bears the following fundamental characters:

1. *Mass character, people's character.* Guerilla warfare is a common form of armed struggle by various strata of the people, old and young, men and women of all religions, nationalities and political tendencies. *In a backward agricultural country like Vietnam, it is the common form of armed struggle by the toiling peasants.* "He who has a gun should use his gun, he who has a sword should use his sword, he who has no sword should use picks, mattocks, and sticks"*. It is in this spirit that every Vietnamese patriot has risen up against the invaders. It is for this reason that guerilla warfare has developed throughout the country, in delta and mountain, in town and countryside. It constitutes a kind of magic network which holds the enemy in its meshes, scatters his forces, harasses him day and night, wears him out and drives him to a war of attrition without a way out.

2. *All-sided character.* By means of guerilla warfare, the Vietnamese people have fought the enemy not only in the military but also in the economic and political fields. *The close connection between armed struggle on the one hand and economic and political struggle on the other, is a characteristic of guerilla warfare in Vietnam.* Economic struggle consists in blocking the enemy's economy, sabotaging his economic bases, frustrating his design of feeding war with war, turning his rear into ours, and depriving him of his sources of manpower and wealth. Political struggle aims at mobilizing and organizing the masses in the enemy's rear to defend their vital rights, denouncing his manoeuvres and attack his political foundations so as to weaken and dislocate them.

In Vietnam, guerilla warfare has been waged in the conditions in which *the people have to face an enemy much superior in equipment and technique: French imperialism in*

* Appeal by President Ho Chi Minh for national resistance (December 1946).

the first war of resistance, and U.S. imperialism at present. This experience lies within the scope of a general law governing all wars of liberation made by oppressed peoples against stronger imperialist enemies. With their bare hands at the start, the Vietnamese people have resolutely risen up and resisted to the end, carried out construction while combating, grew with the fighting, and equipped themselves with weapons captured from the enemy. They have opposed their courage and self-sacrificing spirit to enemy aircraft, cannons, tanks and warships. Therefore in Vietnam, guerilla warfare has been *bitter and fierce, long and hard.*

In guerilla warfare, the Vietnamese people have created extremely varied forms of struggle: sabotage, scorched land policy, non-co-operation with the enemy, stratagems to harass or wear out the enemy, spike traps, mine traps, and traps of many other kinds, attacks on communication lines, ambushes, raids against the enemy post network, airfields, dumps, C.P.s, gun-nests... Guerilla warfare takes higher forms, when the fighters storm the adversary's posts to attract and destroy his reinforcements, frustrate mopping-up operations, raze concentration camps and strategic hamlets while building combat villages. All these forms are suitable to the people's and all-sided character of guerilla warfare, they are an expression of the large masses' participation in the patriotic war in which weak forces are opposed to strong ones, and rudimentary weapons to modern ones. They drive the enemy's troops into an impasse in spite of his superiority in arms and equipment (aviation, navy, armoured force and others) and make him unable to counter-attack efficaciously. U.S. military theorists have admitted that the war in Vietnam is holding in store for them surprises which are to be found in no military text-books. The more developed the guerilla warfare with an ever larger participation of the people, the richer its concrete forms.

LESSONS TAUGHT BY GUERRILLA WARFARE IN VIETNAM

The success of guerilla warfare in Vietnam is that of a just war waged by the people over the unjust war by aggressive imperialism. It is also that of our correct political and military lines, and of the creative application of Marxism-Leninism to the concrete situation in Vietnam.

Following are the main lessons we have learnt:

1. *We must mobilize, train, and organize the masses and encourage them to participate in ever greater numbers in guerilla warfare.*

Every achievement is performed by the people. We must see to uniting the entire people, mobilizing and arming them. This springs from our following conception: revolution is the work of the masses of the people who precisely decide the outcome of the war. To be able to mobilize and organize the masses, *we must first and foremost work out a correct political line likely to satisfy the fundamental aspirations of the toiling masses*, particularly the workers and peasants; we must constantly foster their love for the fatherland and their hatred for the enemy, inspire them with high revolutionary consciousness, courage to fight whatever aggressor, spirit of relying on their own strength and will for independence and sovereignty; we must train them in enduring privations, overcoming difficulties and fighting resolutely until final victory is won. We must organize them into a broad united national front on the basis of the worker-peasant alliance, unceasingly consolidate the political forces which form the cornerstone of guerilla warfare, set up the people's military and paramilitary forces and temper them in the fight.

2. *We must constantly and closely co-ordinate political struggle with armed struggle, firmly grasp the three fundamental tasks of guerilla warfare, correctly lay down the*