

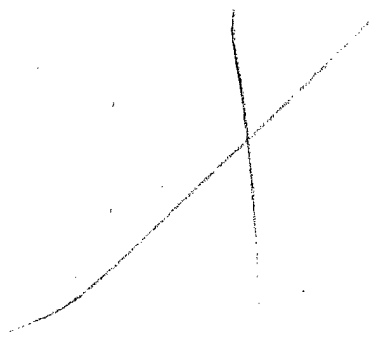
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Vietnam Report

No. 2375



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2 July 1982

VIETNAM REPORT

No. 2375

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MILITARY AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC SECURITY

FORMER CORPS COMMANDER WRITES ABOUT ATTACK ON SAIGON

Hanoi QUAN DOI NHAN DAN in Vietnamese 28, 29, 30 Apr 82

[Article by Major General Le Linh: "Advancing on Saigon"]

[28 Apr 82 p 2]

[Text] Editor's Note: In the general offensive of the spring of 1975, the offensive column of the 2nd Corps attained high combat effectiveness and rapidly advanced on Saigon. On the occasion of the seventh anniversary of the victory (30 April 1975 - 30 April 1982), we would like to introduce some pages dealing with the corp's victorious advance from Phan Rang to Saigon excerpted from the book "Tien Theo Chieu Dai Dat Nuoc" [Advancing Down the Length of the Nation] by Major General Le Linh:

We had reached Phan Rang! On the afternoon of 15 April the puppet General Tran Van Don had flown to central Vietnam to encourage his men to "defend Phan Rang to the death." They were not willing to accept defeat easily. One of our rather strong units had attacked and surrounded the Thanh Son airfield of the puppet 6th Air Force Division more than a week ago but the enemy still refused to surrender. Should we dislodge them or detour by way of Da Lat?

The Front Command decided to annihilate Phan Rang, which was a very correct decision. In the present situation, a bold attack would create unexpected strength. During the night of 15 April and the early morning of 16 April the long-range artillery detachments completed the process of taking up battlefield positions. Many artillery pieces which had just arrived were positioned just next to Route 1 to prepare the fire support element. The infantry were formed into small detachments and interspersed among the tanks to form many columns to divide and outflank the airfield and the city. At 0540 hours on 16 April our tanks and artillery simultaneously began an incessant, strong shelling of the airfield from the west and northwest. The enemy were terrified over the storm-like surprise attack by our artillery and tanks. They didn't expect that such firepower, such a strong tank unit, could come down on their heads like lightning. All the armored vehicles they could round up were sent in the direction of Route 1 in hopes of stopping our attack. Our tanks, which had terrified the enemy from Route 9 in southern Laos to Thua Thien-Hue, roared up and attacked the enemy armored vehicles and infantry. After setting afire two enemy M48 tanks the tank commanded by company commander Sinh ran out of ammunition. Very calmly, he sped ahead and used the momentum and strength of his T54 tank to ram

some enemy M113s which were attempting to flee. The steel-against-steel test of strength was fierce. On the crest of victory, our tanks and infantry split up into two columns, one of which cut the airfield in half and the other of which penetrated to the center of the city. The dumbfounded puppet pilots threw away their flying suits and mixed in with the fleeing infantry. But where could they flee to? Even Nguyen Vinh Nghi and Brig Gen Do Ngoc Sang (commander of the 6th Air Division) hid in the bushes for 3 days but were captured by our troops. With bowed heads and shaking all over, they pleaded that their lives be spared.

We took Phan Rang and routed tens of thousands of the enemy within a period of less than 24 hours.

The Phan Rang victory once again demonstrated the strong assault force and great mobility of the main-force corps. It once again demonstrated the combat organization ability of our cadres and their ability to apply tactics very flexibly and very boldly. The Phan Rang victory also demonstrated the intelligence and ability to act of all our cadres and men under the various circumstances. Especially, they knew how to develop their strength to a high degree by means of unexpected actions, meticulous organization, and strong surprise attacks which created the high effectiveness of the main-force fists, which struck at the enemy's vital points at the right time in order to defeat them.

Thus Thieu's distant "shield" defending Saigon was penetrated, and once again the enemy were surprised. All of their calculations were incorrect. They didn't expect such a strong "coastal column," and Saigon was faced with a situation from which it could hardly be saved. Thieu clearly understood that. And now he knew how to learn from experience and how to deal with the situation cleverly -- by fleeing. His presidency ended on 22 April and the garbage heap that was the puppet administration fell into the hands of the old man Huong, while Thieu gathered up all his possessions and fled abroad.

But that did not mean the enemy were ready to surrender immediately. When Phan Rang was lost they sought all ways to slow down our coastal column. They sent one flight of airplanes after another to bomb our positions, and under the supporting fire of warships off the coast a company of rangers went ashore in Tuy Phong District (north of Phan Thiet). Our infantry and reconnaissance forces immediately pursued it. Within 2 hours we had captured or killed the enemy rangers. But then flight after flight of F5E and AD6 jets dived down to bomb our formations. Several warships off the coast continually shelled both sides of Route 1. Very calmly and rapidly our artillery on the road lowered their barrels and fired at the pirate ships. Only one who has watched the artillery practice firing on moving targets at sea could understand the skill demonstrated by our artillery at that time, which was truly marvelous: the sixth round fired set afire an enemy warship. Company A72 (armed with small, shoulder-fired missiles), which was on the move and had not yet arrived to report to its commander, was ordered to join the fighting. It deployed immediately and shot down an enemy F5E with the very first missile. Meanwhile, hundreds of trucks transporting troops, equipment, and weapons of the various kinds dispersed very rapidly along a stretch of road tens of kilometers long. Within a few minutes there were no signs of a large military unit that was on the move, except for anti-aircraft guns spewing bullets into the air and imposing, powerful 130mm guns firing rounds to chase away the pirate ships. A very

beautiful coordinated battle, under very urgent conditions, proved that our troops had made outstanding progress in fighting the enemy while on the move. That new, creative, and timely fighting method strengthened the revolution's ability to overwhelm the enemy and grasp the historic opportunity.

There, for the first time, the people could see our troops in broad daylight and witness their marvelous strength. A deep sentiment was created. As soon as the gunfire ended all the people living in the nearby villages and hamlets rushed up and gathered around the troops. The troops were allowed to rest for a night. The corps' movie projection unit immediately set up shop and showed the film "May 1st: A Historic, Happy Day." That was revolutionary culture. The people, who at first had been abashed, became admirers and more confident in the revolution, and were full of praise: "Our party is truly skilled."

Then the convoy continued to race along on the road leading south. After Phan Rang was liberated, Phan Thiet and Ham Tan were next. How could they defend Phan Thiet after the 812th Regiment took high-point X and looked down their necks? Thus Military Region 6 was completely liberated and 2nd Corps was elated, enthusiastic, and confident. For years they had wrestled and struggled to hold each mountain and defend each hamlet in that heroic part of the homeland, from Lam Dong to Ham Tan and from Dat Do to Binh Thuan. They experienced a myriad of difficulties. They had to go to the Central Highlands to obtain each case of ammunition and to Binh Dinh to bring back cargo-bicycle loads of corn to ease their hunger, but they continued to resolutely hold their ground and took advantage of the opportunity to rapidly liberate Da Lat and liberate the entire Military Region. I thanked them for having helped the main-force troops and created favorable conditions for us to rapidly advance south. It was certain that they would be allowed to participate in the liberation of the city that would bear the magnificent name of Uncle Ho.

Everyone felt larger and stronger. No one dropped out along the way. One comrade who had a temperature of 40°C pretended to be healthy and covered up his illness so that he wouldn't have to remain behind at an aid station and be absent in the historic campaign. To his glory, he was able to advance the entire length of the nation. From Hai Van pass to Song Cau, then to Nha Trang and Ca Na, in all places there were deeply etched in the memory of the troops the unsurpassed scenery and natural setting of our country, and images of the many activities of the people.

On the afternoon of 23 April the High Command sent a message which inquired, "How far has the 2nd Corps advanced?" We replied, "The entire formation has reached the assembly area."

That assembly area was the rubber plantations in eastern Nam Bo, the starting point of the final battle. The tank battalions (which set out from Da Nang on 14 April) also arrived on time, with the spirit of an assault force which terrified the enemy. Shunning all rigid formulas and mechanical calculations, between Quang Tri and Da Nang the tank troops collected our abandoned tanks and tanks recently captured from the enemy, along with all kinds of spare parts and components. Wherever they stopped they maintained and cleaned their vehicles. The arrival on the battlefield of our powerful tank units completely upset the enemy's calculations.

"On to Saigon, we will eliminate the enemy,

"On to the lowlands, we will march on the capital...."

Never had our troops who heard the song "Saigon Uprising" been as moved and inspired as during the last days of April 1975. Young soldiers going to eat, going to cut leaves for camouflage, or digging fortifications, and even female soldiers who sat at the switchboards or who sat typing, sang during work breaks. All of the young soldiers dreamed of the day when Saigon would be liberated, when they could walk the streets of a Saigon resplendent with flags and flowers. Happiest of all were the men who were setting out to take up assault positions. As they went along their singing shook the jungle. The rubber plantations of eastern Nam Bo still retain the souvenirs of those exciting days.

Saigon, the city that would bear the name of Uncle Ho, the final lair of the U.S.-puppets, was in the line of advance of the corps. Saigon was only 60 kilometers from the assembly area as the crow flies. In comparison to the path the corps had taken since the beginning of the 1975 spring campaign, this was the payoff step. The enemy threw in their final reserve units in order to set up defensive lines around Saigon. Their remaining forces consisted of the still-intact IV Corps, part of III Corps, and some special mission brigades of the Saigon-Gia Dinh Special Zone. During the past several days the enemy had cut off all roads leading to Saigon. Although the new defensive lines were hastily set up they were quite thick. They had concentrated a total of 30,000 to 40,000 troops around Saigon. Saigon was full of soldiers. The city was placed under martial law. Tanks and armored vehicles patrolled the main roads night and day. The people of Saigon were apprehensive and worried.

[29 Apr 82 p 2]

All of the cadres and men were anxious. One day of waiting seemed like a month. But ultimately they had to take things as they came. The 2d Corps participated in that historic campaign with the specific mission of launching an attack from the east, along with the 4th Corps, and advancing directly on Saigon. Along with the 3rd Division, it would attack simultaneously in three directions:

-- In the first direction it would annihilate the Nuoc Trong base, take the Long Binh area, coordinate with the sappers in taking the Bien Hoa Highway bridge, then advance directly into Saigon.

-- In the second direction it would annihilate the cluster of enemy troops at Long Thanh-Phu Hoi and in Thanh Tuy Ha, take the Cat Lai naval base, cross the Dong Nai River, and take Precinct 4.

-- In the third direction it would advance along Route 2 to take Duc Thanh District and the city of Ba Ria, then advance to annihilate the enemy's naval base at Vung Tau and cut off their escape route to the sea via the Long Tau River.

The other corps concentrated two or three divisions and coordinated in combat with the local troops. The 1st Corps, which had just moved down rapidly from the north to participate in the campaign, would attack from the north to take Tan Uyen and Lai Thieu, then Go Vap and the puppet General Staff. The 3rd Corps, still brimming with energy after its victory in the Central Highlands, had the mission of attacking from the northwest, annihilating the puppet 25th Division at Dong Du, then

taking Tan Son Nhat airbase. The 4th Corps, which had just annihilated the 18th Division at Xuan Loc, would take Bien Hoa Air Force Base then advance directly into Precinct 1, where the puppet presidential palace was located. Group 232, made up of the main-force divisions of Nam Bo, blocked the enemy's escape route south of Saigon and pinned down the puppet 7th, 9th, and 22nd divisions. In general, there were five major columns advancing on Saigon, each of which was divided into two or three smaller columns, each with the assault force of a division with supporting units. It was the greatest concentration of forces, and the largest-scale battle, of the two resistance wars against France and the U.S. and, it may be said, during our 4,000-year-long history.

To the east, the direction of attack of the 2nd Corps, the enemy concentrated a thick network made up principally of the schools training officers and technical personnel: the armored school, the Thu Duc Training Center, the Officer Cadet School at Vung Tau, the ranger school, the Long Binh general depot, the Vung Tau military port, the Cat Lai military port, etc. Since they discovered the existence of the "coastal corps" the enemy had reinforced their forces in the east. The Marine and Airborne remnants had been sent there, and all of the central and local troops had been formed into a fortified defense line. They well understood that if the outer defensive perimeter were lost Saigon could not be held, and that Saigon, their last lair, where all of their headquarters organs were concentrated, had to be defended at all costs. In addition to troops they provided additional war facilities: weapons, artillery, and tanks. Every day hundreds of sorties were flown to monitor and attack us.

Who cared! The time had arrived. We could wait no longer. To delay at that time would have been to commit a crime against the homeland. All preparations were reviewed for a final time and deficiencies that had been revealed in the process of action were promptly corrected. That was the work style of the corps in the new conditions. As it moved its forces it met to make decisions and discuss the method of fighting. As it moved its forces it prepared rice and ammunition.

At exactly 1700 on 26 April the whole corps opened fire and attacked. The eastern column began its attack 3 days before the other columns of the campaign. The Front Command made that decision because the corps was farther from Saigon and there were several rivers in its path that would be very difficult to cross if the enemy destroyed the bridges. The early attack was advantageous in that it achieved the element of surprise, but the corps would have to bear the enemy's concentrated reactions. The enemy's entire defense line, nearly 100 kilometers long, was shaken and rocked from the very first hours. The attacking columns reported to headquarters that they had fulfilled their mission of taking the defensive positions on the outer perimeter. A large number of prisoners were taken, including a deputy province chief and many field-grade officers. In the area of the Nuoc Trong armored school the 304th Division, along with tank, artillery, engineer, and communications units, broke through the enemy's defense line. Colonel Ta, commander of the armored school, screamed that the enemy had to be thrown back at all costs. Our communications troops could hear him exhorting his troops over the radio.

In the Long Thanh area the 325th Division and its attached units also acted promptly. After salvos of 130 mm shells rained down on the Long Thanh military subsector our tanks, followed by the infantry, rushed forward and cut through a

rubber plantation to Route 15. By 2100 we had taken the town. Taken by surprise, the enemy didn't have time to react and had to give way. Large numbers of the enemy surrendered, entire platoons and regiments. We confiscated their weapons and sent them off toward the rear.

In the Ba Ria-Vung Tau area the 3rd Division (a Military Region 5 unit assigned to the corps) also launched a strong attack, taking the generating plant and the water-works and then gaining control of the city during the night of 26 April. The division's fighting strength greatly increased during those historic moments.

27 April:

After several hours of confusion the enemy gradually recovered and at all points they rallied their forces and launched fierce counterattacks. At Nuoc Trong, Colonel Tam called an emergency meeting of the commanders of the schools to discuss ways to cope with our attack, then sped along Route 15 to the front to inspect the situation and urge on his troops. The fighting there became very fierce; we and the enemy contested every mound of earth and every house. The bombs and shells of the two sides were flying about everywhere. It was truly a day of tense, fierce combat.

At Long Thanh the situation was developing more favorably. On 26 April the enemy counterattacked the places we had just taken. Our offensive columns were separated from one another. We had to launch a strong attack to open a liaison-transportation route and defend the trucks carrying ammunition. At 1200 hours on 27 April the 325th Division used tanks to launch a second attack. Launching a flank attack, a tank company, with the close coordination of infantry, broke through to Route 15 and veered toward the district capital to smash and annihilate all of the enemy's surface and dug-in defensive positions. The enemy troops fled, every man for himself, throwing down their weapons, abandoning tanks the motors of which were still running, disguising themselves as ordinary people in order to escape. By 1800 hours we had completely mastered the battlefield and raised a half-red, half-blue flag from a water tank in the middle of the district capital. We continued to advance strongly in the direction of Thanh Tuy Ha and Cat Lai.

In the Vung Tau area, after mopping up the enemy around Ba Ria the 3rd Division advanced directly toward the military port. The enemy had blown up the Co May bridge the night before. We located and joined together various kinds of boats to take our vehicles across the river.

On 28 April we crossed the river with difficulty. The enemy counterattacked many times, at one point after another. We retook those positions and cleared a supply route. An hour later, when ammunition trucks arrived the sound of much gunfire could be heard: swarms of enemy troops were firing from their positions and houses. Our troops had attacked strongly and overrun the enemy but had not left behind forces to secure their rear, so the enemy troop remnants had reassembled. Thus our transportation and liaison detachments had to mop up the enemy and clear the road. We had to take some positions a third time.

On the afternoon of 28 April we received surprising news: five strange airplanes had bombed Tan Son Nhat. I was certain that our planes had carried out the attack. Thanks to our air force's very timely attack, the enemy's bombing began to slacken.

Only later did we learn that we had used enemy airplanes captured at Phan Rang to carry out that attack.

On the morning of 29 April attacks were simultaneously launched from all directions. Saigon was engulfed in fire and shells. The puppet troops, who were almost completely dispirited, did not expect that their final day would arrive so fast. That was the most disastrous day for the enemy at the eastern gateway, although they threw everything they had at us in hopes of pushing us out of the Nuoc Trong area. But even bombs and shells could shake the determined will of the cadres and men of the 304th Division. The situation did not permit us to be even an hour late. The Standing Committee of the corps' Party Committee decided to allow the 304th Division to throw its reserve unit into the fighting. We had to supply the 304th Division with many additional artillery rounds and resolutely send tanks to lead the way, with infantry following closely behind, so that the enemy could not have time to react. The artillery also had to clear the road as it went. When it reached Nhon Trach it set up positions and fired strongly into Tan Son Nhat airbase.

In the face of our powerful, relentless attacks the enemy's defense line gradually fell apart and we completely liberated Nuoc Trong and Phu Hoi. Taking advantage of the opportunity, the 304th Division immediately took the Co Bong bridge to create a staging area for attacking and taking the Long Binh area. Early in the morning our 130mm artillery began to fire relentlessly into Tan Son Nhat air field! Hurrah for the artillery! The artillery roared, spewing shells across the sky above Saigon, which fell on Tan Son Nhat airfield and shook all of Saigon. Tan Son Nhat airfield was submerged in fire and shells. The number of bombing sorties gradually declined and during the afternoon of 29 April the bombing ended altogether. By the end of the day we had completed the taking of the Long Binh depot area, Route 15, Vung Tau, Nhon Trach, and Cat Lai.

[30 Apr 82 p 2]

On the same day, at 1415 hours, the 3rd Division completely liberated the city of Vung Tau and captured intact the port, the communications station, and hundreds of enemy warships. Their last escape route had been completely cut.

Thus the entire enemy defense line east of Saigon had been smashed. Like water pouring over a waterfall, our troops stormed into Saigon.

On 29 April the corps carried out storm-like attacks and very rapidly took the objectives assigned them. The 3rd Corps annihilated the puppet 25th Division and captured Brig. Gen. Ly Tong Ba. The 4th Corps very fiercely attacked the puppets' III Corps headquarters and Bien Hoa Air Force Base. The 1st Corps annihilated the Phu Loi and Lai Thieu bases and Brig. Gen. Le Nguyen Vy, commander of the puppet 5th Division, had to commit suicide. To the south, the units of Group 232 attacked, and annihilated and routed, the puppet 22nd Division, and had advanced close to the city.

After smashing the enemy's eastern defense line, the 2nd Corps urgently organized a strong assault unit consisting of four tank and armored vehicle battalions, an infantry regiment, an anti-aircraft regiment, two artillery battalions, and a combat engineer battalion, under the direct command of the corps. The formation of that unit resulted from the combined experience of our attack on Hue, our assault on Da Nang, and the battle to take Phan Rang.

The principal mission of that assault column was to, after the other units succeeded in taking the outer defensive perimeter, take the Bien Hoa Highway bridge, launch a strong attack down the highway into the center of Saigon, and take Independence Palace.

In fact, the taking of Independence Palace did not lie within the corps' sphere of responsibility, but if favorable conditions arose the opportunity should not be missed. Furthermore, who didn't want to raise the flag of victory above Independence Palace, which would signify the complete victory of the campaign and the complete liberation of the South? The Campaign Command ordered that the lead unit of the first column to enter the city should advance directly to take Independence Palace.

But if the eastern column wanted to advance into Saigon and take Independence Palace, what key problems did it have to resolve?

It had to hold the bridges on the Bien Hoa Highway, the most important of which was the Highway Bridge. Sappers had been assigned that responsibility. On 27, 28 and 29 April the 2nd Sapper Division, which had been assigned to the Corps, used its special fighting methods to take the Bien Hoa Highway Bridge, the Rach Chiec Bridge, and the Saigon Bridge and then wage guerrilla warfare to prevent the enemy from blowing them up and keep open the path of advance of our assault forces. The enemy frantically counterattacked with tanks, infantry, and armored vehicles to retake the bridge. The battle to retake the bridge was fought continuously and fiercely. Until the final minutes, when our tanks and infantry crossed over, it remained intact, stalwart, and proud. The way to Saigon was thrown open. The fighting will and flexible fighting methods of the sappers held the bridge so that the corps could continue its strong, rapid advance to the final objective. Hurrah for the sappers, resolute warriors who resolutely held their ground in that beloved part of our country and were the first to wave the flag of liberation in the city!

The cadres and men of the armored brigade determined the route to Independence Palace very cleverly. They studied a map (just captured from the enemy) and saw that Independence Palace was located in Precinct 1. To reach it, they would have to cross Thi Nghe bridge and follow Hong Thap Tu Street seven intersections, then turn left. So everyone memorized the phrase "seven intersections, then turn left." "Seven intersections, then turn left" became an attack slogan and was a very simple but very accurate way of determining coordinates.

30 April

At exactly 0400 hours the corps sent out a strong assault column aimed straight at Saigon. The distance of more than 20 kilometers (from the Bien Hoa Highway Bridge to Saigon) ordinarily took only 20 minutes, but it took us 6 hours, fighting as we advanced. The enemy had placed on the highway hundreds of piles of earth and set up dozens of defensive positions to hinder our advance. Although some of the enemy were as obstinate as mayflies, in the face of the strong assault by our tanks and armored vehicles they could only put up a hopeless resistance and then bite the dust.

But we could not reach the Independence Palace as easily as if we were going to a deserted place. Nor had the enemy thrown open the gates to greet us.

Before the moment of victory many of our beloved comrades fell in combat. At the Thu Duc Training Center, where the professional officers were trained and which had the tradition of accepting children of distinguished families, the enemy resisted insanely. One of our tanks was set afire and four of our men heroically sacrificed their lives. The old men and women in the village of Tan Nhon Phu still burn incense and visit their tombs in remembrance on the first day of Tet and when the moon is full. At the Rach Chiec bridge, near the Ha Tien cement plant, the enemy, taking advantage of strong fortifications and blocking the road with tanks which served as blockhouses and hiding places, spewed out bullets. In view of that situation, one of our tank detachments immediately changed its formation, with some keeping the enemy's heads down while the others attacks. That pocket of resistance was eliminated by 0900 hours. One of our cadres who was monitoring the radio turned to the Radio Saigon frequency and suddenly recognized the voice of Duong Van Minh, who was appealing for both sides to honor a ceasefire and negotiate ways to turn over the government. What did he have left to turn over? There would be no negotiations! That was the natural response of all of our men. They were correct. There was nothing left about which to negotiate. As if more oil had been sprayed on the flames, or as if strongly propelled by an explosive charge, the tanks increased their speed. We had to advance even faster! We had to advance rapidly, very rapidly, to capture Duong Van Minh and his cabinet.

A few minutes later the Saigon Bridge appeared ahead. It was a very large, bow-shaped bridge surfaced with shiny asphalt. The bridge lay astride a border, on the other side of which was Saigon, with its pretentious, multi-story white buildings. Our tank convoy roared across the bridge but suddenly had to halt. From the Saigon military port enemy tanks, firing in confusion, rushed forward to block the road. Several warships berthed at the port turned around and pointed their guns in our direction. In the fierce fighting our tanks rained shells on their targets. The enemy tanks were set afire one by one and the enemy warships pointed their prows in the direction of the sea. There was another loss: battalion commander Thiet, whose confident shouts of "fire!" were familiar to all, was killed. Was there any greater price to pay before the moment of glorious victory? We would make the enemy pay for that. After wiping out their targets and the enemy defensive positions, our tanks sped along the Bien Hoa Highway, ignoring the frantic enemy troops who were firing wildly, in despair.

The Thi Nghe Bridge was just ahead! There was a large black sign with white letters: "Saigon-Gia Dinh Boundary." Let's confirm the coordinates! We had to remember the phrase "even intersections, then turn left." Why not let the people show us the way? A young girl with short hair who was wearing lavender sunglasses told Bui Quang Than, the company commander, who was sitting on tank 843: "Go straight ahead. When you reach Cong Ly Street, turn left. You will pass Nguyen Binh Khiem Street and at Thong Nhat Boulevard you'll find the gate of Independence Palace."

By providing that guidance, the girl became a staff cadre of the corps. We had to carry out a pincers movement by following two routes and converging at Independence Palace. Bui Quang Than led one column which followed Hong Thap Tu Street, while the second followed Thong Nhat Boulevard.

The two columns met at the palace gate. Company Commander Than used his tank, No 843, to knock down the left wing of the gate so that the tanks could enter. "Independence Palace" was like an enormous tomb, as silent as if there was no life. The officers and enlisted men guarding the palace threw down their weapons and fled in panic and Duong Van Minh and his cohorts were hiding somewhere, so there were only some foreign reporters who were "not afraid of the Viet Cong" who ran out, pointing the lenses of their still cameras and movie cameras, pressing the shutters continuously.

The cadres and men of the 2nd Corps who were present at that historic moment soon found Duong Van Minh and the entire puppet cabinet upstairs. All of them stood at attention, bowed their heads, and in turn gave their names and positions. Duong Van Minh said, "We have been waiting for you a long time so that we could turn over the government." That may have been true, but we responded appropriately: "What do you have left to turn over?" Indeed, they had nothing left. Even their stomachs were empty, for they hadn't eaten since morning, although the menu written on a blackboard included ginseng chicken, bird's nest soup, etc. After a brief discussion among comrades Bui Van Tung, Pham Xuan The, etc., Duong Van Minh was forced to announce an unconditional surrender. Duong Van Minh was willing to do so but resisted calling himself "President," preferring instead to call himself "General Duong Van Minh."

When he stepped up to the microphone at the radio station Duong Van Minh had to announce to the world that "The President of the Republic of Vietnam surrenders unconditionally." All members of his cabinet were arrested. The lackey dictatorship of a militarist clique had come to an end. The yellow flag with three red stripes, which represented treason and complete dependence on a foreign country, and was hanging sullenly on the roof of Independence Palace, was pulled down. Our flag of benevolence and justice flew in the breeze. That flag had been exposed to the elements during many campaigns and had served as a torch which illuminated the way to all victories. It was a hand waving a greeting to a new era. History had turned a new page.

The time of that historic event was 1130 hours, 30 April 1975. Meanwhile, the other units, the main-force corps, the sappers, and the commandos who had operated in the city for decades, had taken all of the principal objectives, such as the puppet General Staff, the national police headquarters, the Capital Special Zone headquarters, the new port, etc. The 3rd and 4th corps, which had also intended to arrest Duong Van Minh, also sent detachments to Independence Palace at noon on that day. The people enthusiastically took to the streets to greet their liberators.

That historic campaign, the campaign which bore the name of our beloved Uncle Ho, the greatest campaign in the military history of our nation, had won a complete victory.

We were very pleased to have been able to fulfill that obligation to the homeland and be worthy of the love of our beloved Uncle Ho.

The campaign bearing the name of Uncle Ho will always be a dazzling peak in our country's 4,000-year-long history of national development and national defense, and will always be a source of pride in our lives. That glory will always belong to our glorious Party and to our beloved Uncle Ho, who guided us past each difficulty and persistently sacrificed and fought for 30 year to win that victory.

That glory belongs to the nation's heroes who were killed in combat during that 30-year period.

The Americans had been forced out and the puppets had collapsed! Our heroic Vietnamese homeland won complete victory and unification. The north and the south were reunited and that great victory opened the way to the horizon of happiness.

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PARTY ACTIVITIES AND GOVERNMENT

PARTICIPANT PROVIDES DETAILS OF AUGUST REVOLUTION

Hanoi HANOI MOI in Vietnamese 14-17, 19-24, 26-31 Aug and 4 Sep 80 p 2

[Excerpts from memoirs of Lieutenant General Nguyen Quyet: "Hanoi in August"]

[Text] During July 1945 the Red River rose more and more every day. The bottom-lands of Phuc Xa, Nghia Dung, Pha Den, etc., were gradually flooded. Many families took their elderly parents and children to the dikes to live temporarily in tents. Many old people 70 or 80 years old looked at the swirling waters of the Red River and said, "I haven't seen such high water in decades." Before the famine had ended the floods came. The people of Hanoi exchanged worried looks.

But there were also many signs that better times were ahead. On the European front the German and Italian fascists were being defeated by the peerless strength of the Red Army of the Soviet Union. After the Yalta Conference the Allies were urgently preparing a general offensive against fascist Japan. An atmosphere of defeat was spreading among the Japanese enlisted men and officers in Indochina. Favorable conditions for the revolution were coming. In the Viet Bac war zone, the Liberation Army was attacking the Japanese troops, were winning one victory after another, and were advancing to the Bac Giang area. The southern army was advancing to the prefectures of Doan Hung and Phu Tho. Part of the Liberation Army had advanced to Dong Trieu and Luc Ngan. The revolutionary bases throughout the nation were being increasingly consolidated and developed. The prestige of the Liberation Army and the Viet Minh Front became increasingly widespread among the popular masses.

That news caused the revolutionary movement in Hanoi to become even more seething.

The revolutionary forces in Hanoi were consolidated. There were only 50 or 60 party members, but the party organization was strong. There were tens of thousands of national-salvation association members, not to mention a very large number of masses who were prepared to support the revolution. The party members and cadres, under the close guidance of the Party Central Committee and the Regional Party Committee, were not only armed with the lines and policies of the Party and absolute confidence in its leadership but also shared a common will and were prepared to sacrifice themselves for the cause of national liberation. That had the effect of leading and winning over the national-salvation organizations and the broad youth, student, and petty bourgeois forces in the city to participate enthusiastically in

the revolution. Especially, the combat self-defence forces had developed until they included dozens of detachments which had been trained in the necessary military subjects and had been steeled in struggle with the enemy by holding rallies and demonstrations, eliminating spies, etc.

The concern of the Party Central Committee and the close leadership of the Regional Party Committee near Hanoi were very basic advantages which stimulated the development of the city's revolutionary movement and ensured that the uprising in Hanoi would win a smashing victory. However, our Municipal Party Committee still confirmed that it was necessary to manifest a spirit of self-reliance and take the initiative in preparing forces in order to create and take advantage of an opportunity to win political power for the people and avoid waiting on or depending on the upper echelon. When we learned that the Liberation Army had defeated the Japanese in many places and was moving into the midland provinces near Hanoi, we reconnoitered the Japanese positions at the Lang fortress, at the Xuan Tao fortress, at Don Thuy, in the city, at Bach Mai airfield, in Gia Lam, at the So intersection, in Nam Dong, and at the Long Bien Bridge, and drafted a plan to coordinate with the Liberation Army in attacking from without and within in order to ensure the success of the uprising.

The armed propaganda work continued to be developed strongly and widely. Leaflets and banners were continually appearing on the streets, in government offices, and in enterprises. The seething revolutionary movement emanating from Hanoi influenced the other provinces. And the revolutionary movement in the neighboring provinces increasingly overflowed into Hanoi and terrified the Japanese fascists. The reactionary parties and the puppet administration were perplexed and confused. The revolutionary masses became increasingly enthusiastic and confident of victory. But the enemies of the revolution were still obstinate and refused to give up. The Japanese fascists intensified their economic plundering to provide supplies for the war and endeavored to suppress and terrorize the revolution, while also installing the leaders of the puppet administration to urgently "legalize" its existence. They recommended such demagoguery as purging the old French officials and replacing them with new, pro-Japanese intellectuals, announcing a "tax reduction," promulgating a "reform of the education curricula," etc. Ta Thu Thau rallied the Trotskyites, unified the organizations of Nguyen Te My and Truong Tuu, and adopted the insidious new policy of having people infiltrate the Viet Minh organizations to sabotage the Vietnamese revolutionary movement.

At the beginning of July, comrades Thoi Huu, Hoang Huu Nhan, and Hoang Van Khanh were selected to go to the war zone to study at the Anti-Japanese Resistance Military Administration School. In mid-July the liberated zone convened a National Congress at Tan Trao. Comrades Vu Oanh and Phuong Chu, representing the Municipal Party Committee, and a Viet Minh Front delegation including comrades Nguyen Anh Bao, Vu Quang, etc., set out to attend the Congress.

On the day we selected the Hanoi delegation to attend the National Congress, we intended to select a worker who he had long desired to visit the war zone, "even if just for a minute." But when his name was mentioned he grimaced and said, "please pick someone else. I don't want to go half a step from Hanoi, with the movement the way it is!"

As for comrade Bao, before setting out he grasped my hand and said hesitantly, "I know that being allowed to go to the war zone to participate in the Congress is a great honor, but I don't know whether or not I'll have time to return to participate in the uprising in Hanoi."

The situation was changing very rapidly. On 8 August, the Soviet Army divided into four columns and launched large-scale attacks against Japan's Kwantung Army in northeastern China. At the same time, the Soviet Pacific Fleet landed troops in northern Korea, the southern part of Sakhalin Island, and the Kuril Archipelago in coordination with the other attacks. The Soviet Army had pushed more than 1 million Japanese troops into a pocket and were disintegrating them in large chunks.

Within a period of 10 days the Soviet Army smashed nearly 1 million Kwantung troops. All of the Japanese troops in northeastern China, northern Korea, southern Sakhalin, the cities of Dairen and Harbin, and the Kuril Archipelago had to throw down their arms and surrender unconditionally.

The Japanese fascists had planned to withdraw to that strategic area if the Allies took Japan. With the more than 1 million Kwantung troops they could hold out for a long time. But now their last hope had been extinguished and the Japanese fascists had to surrender unconditionally to the Allies.

Although the Japanese in Hanoi tried to hide the truth, that news flew all over Hanoi as if it had wings. The Japanese fascists had been boastful and had declared themselves suzerain, but now they were confused and demoralized. The peace faction and the war faction argued during meetings which always ended by guns being drawn and shots being exchanged. In the city they concentrated their widely scattered troops in large camps. At night groups of Japanese soldiers sullenly stood guard, hiding in the shadows. Now and then a small tank shining amber lights passed by on patrol. By about 2100 hours the streets were deserted. Many Japanese officers held their heads and cried profusely. Some of them killed themselves with swords and pistols on Hoa Ma Street.

The situation was developing favorably. The Japanese in Hanoi were very afraid that there would be a popular uprising in the city. They published warnings that anyone guilty of terrorism or of harboring weapons would be punished according to law. The commander of the Japanese military police threatened to "severely punish those who disturb the peace."

At the same time, the puppet administration and the counterrevolutionary lackeys were extremely shaken by the surrender of their master. But, having always been traitors, they plotted to change masters and were prepared to embrace new ones: the English and Americans.

On the Hanoi political stage at that time, the puppets continually performed historic "tragic-comedies" directed by the Japanese.

On 13 August Tran Trong Kim gave the Viceroy of Tonkin complete freedom of action, above all to set up a so-called "Political Guidance Committee" to cope with the confused situation.

On 14 August the daily newspapers in Hanoi published a notice of the Palace of the Viceroy: "In view of the serious situation, the cabinet headed by Prime Minister

Tran Trong Kim has been directed by the Emperor (i.e. the puppet emperor Bao Dai) to form a 'provisional government'. In Tonkin, the officials retain the positions they held in the past. The Government ardently appeals for the people and the political parties to calmly reflect, not act rashly, and avoid disturbing order in the country." The "provisional government" issued the following proclamation: "In order to restore the trust of the Emperor, all members of our Cabinet are resolved not to retreat before any difficulty in order to fulfill its missions of carrying out national reconstruction and consolidating the independence of the homeland. To attain those objectives we will continue to cooperate closely with the Japanese authorities, and we will never forget that the Japanese army liberated us from the oppressive yoke of a foreign country."

Also on 14 August, the daily newspapers printed the following news: the Cabinet had convened a Tonkin National Advisory Council, which "held its first extraordinary session" on 17 August, purportedly so that "the government can clearly understand the desires of the people, so that its actions can be in accord with their aspirations ... and to seek ways to cope with problems that may arise." A contemporary hack journalist obsequiously wrote in a newspaper article that conference had the nature of a Star Chamber meeting." The "provisional government" also instructed the youths of Tonkin not to "credulously fall into the trap of provocateurs or people who plot to create confusion and disorder."

The leaders of the pro-Japanese political parties also thought that the Japanese would turn over their weapons to them so that they could oppose the revolution. On 12 August the "National Service" group held a demonstration and appealed for solidarity. On 13 August the "National Dai Viet" gang also held a "demonstration," appealed for unity, and posted a notice appealing for a meeting to consolidate the independence of Vietnam. Emperor Bao Dai and the "provisional government" also begged the Japanese fascists for a number of organs controlled by the Japanese, such as the Indochinese Guard camp, the Security Service, the press censorship office, the Education Agency, and the university. They even expressed a wish to invite a Viet Minh representative to discuss the critical situation the country was in.

All of those nose, hurried activities only proved that the master had become extremely weak and that the time to arise to win political power had arrived.

On 15 August 1945 the Japanese fascists officially surrendered to the Allies. The Japanese army collapsed on all fronts. Our principal enemy had fallen.

Later, from Party documents we learned that during its National Congress, which lasted from 13 to 15 August, our Party decided to urgently carry out a nationwide uprising before the Allied troops reached Vietnam.

On the night of 13 August the National Uprising Committee set up by the Viet Minh High Command issued Order No 1 launching a national uprising.

On the night of 14 August the Tonkin Regional Party Committee held a conference. On the basis of the Party Central Committee directive on "Fighting between the French and the Japanese and our activities," and on behalf of the Viet Minh Zone Committee, issued an urgent communique on promptly grasping the opportunity and carrying out an uprising to win political power:

- "1. Disarm and occupy the provincial capitals (you must concentrate the military forces of the prefectures and districts to attack the provincial capitals, districts to attack the provincial capitals, and you may win over the province chiefs or threaten them so that they have to turn over the weapons in the province to us).
2. Fully implement plans to carry out sabotage by such acts as cutting telegraph and electrical transmissions lines, interdicting the railroad lines, and digging up the roads.
3. Prevent the pro-Japanese Dai Viet from disarming the prefectures and districts. Punish its leaders and paralyze the activities of their lackeys.
4. Be on guard against people who deceive the people and do bad things in the name of the Viet Minh.
5. Guard the villages very carefully.
6. Organize Revolutionary People's Committees in all villages in the provinces (the Assault Propaganda Units must go to the villages to explain the committees and organize them, and announce the abolition of the old regime).
7. Localities along the dikes must mobilize the people to carefully guard them in order to protect the people's crops.

A good opportunity has arrived for Hanoi to win political power. The specific measures for winning political power have been pointed out by the Party Central Committee and the Regional Party Committee. The many tasks that must now be carried out will accumulate if we fail to grasp three principles: Concentrate forces on the principal task; unify all military and political aspects, activities, and command; and act promptly in order not to miss opportunities."

One of the principal missions on which the Hanoi Municipal Party Committee had to concentrate its efforts during that period was building strong armed forces, drafting appropriate military plans, and not missing any opportunities.

The Municipal Party, carrying out the directive to "concentrate forces on the principal tasks," convened a special conference of military cadres, attended by the self-defense unit commanders and the commanders of the youth units, which met at the Ha (Dich Vong) pagoda to recapitulate the revolutionary situation and forces in the city and to set forth the urgent tasks that had to be carried out well once the uprising had succeeded.

During the past 4 or 5 months the revolutionary situation around the city had undergone unusually rapid changes. The peasants in the city's outskirts, which had always been a "safe zone," under the direct leadership of the Party Central Committee, the Regional Party Committee, and the Municipal Party Committee, arose everywhere. The Party bases and Viet Minh associations had recently reported to the Municipal Party Committee much very encouraging information: in some places the enemy administrations had been paralyzed. The Viet Minh had confiscated the seals of the village chiefs and set up Provisional Liberation Committees in Nam Dong, Mai Dong, Hoang Mai, Quynh Loi, and Tuong Mai. A number of Viet Minh People's National

Salvation Youth associations ordered the dismissal of the canton chiefs and village chiefs, confiscated their seals, organized rallies, and appealed for the people to support the Viet Minh and participate in the uprising. Many village chiefs, assistant village chiefs, and village clerks, faced with the strength of the revolutionary masses, voluntarily turned over their seals to the Viet Minh. All organizational activities of the national salvation associations and the formation of combat self-defense units were carried out openly or semi-openly all over the outskirts, etc.

In the city proper, although the puppet administration still controlled a number of government offices and some civil guards and policemen, it was confused and indecisive, had no confidence in its authority, and no longer dared to brazenly oppress the people. As for our armed forces, there were 700 to 800 self-defense militiamen organized into many companies and armed with pistols, rifles, and grenades.

The "Hoang Dieu" Assault Youth company, the most heavily armed company, had 37 rifles, 26 pistols, and 2 grenades. Everyone else was armed with a scimitar or sabre, and many armed themselves with long, sharp Japanese swords.

After reviewing and judging the situation the military cadre conference decided to implement the following action plan:

- Organizing parades in all wards and villages and encouraging the masses to participate in the uprising.
- Organizing rallies and displaying flags and banners to test the Japanese attitude.
- Preparing our ranks and equipping them with additional weapons in order to cope with the Japanese should they attempt to suppress us.

After that conference the national-salvation self-defense units, the Assault Youth units, and the national-salvation associations organized many parades in the city proper and in the outskirts. Leaflets announcing the news that Japan had officially surrendered and urging the people of Hanoi to support the Viet Minh and participate in uprisings were scattered all over the city. The newspapers CUU QUOC, GIAI PHONG, HON NUOC, etc., published much news about the victorious uprisings in many districts in many provinces all over the country, which caused the anticipation of the people of Hanoi to become even more excited.

On 13 August, at the Palace of the Viceroy (now the government's guest house on Ngo Quyen Street) there was a meeting between the Viceroy of the puppet government set up by the Japanese and a representative of the Viet Minh Front. In accordance with a directive of the Tonkin Regional Party Committee, comrade Nguyen Khang was selected for that mission and to thereby grasp the situation and intentions of the puppet government.

The Viceroy, properly dressed in native clothing, had an attitude of currying our favor and respecting us: "Dear sirs! We are very honored to meet with you, representatives of a notable political force, to invite you to join a provisional government."

Comrade Nguyen Khang immediately took the offensive: "What provisional government? You are an administration set up by the Japanese. You have no prestige among our country's people. You are not recognized by any foreign countries. Our Viet Minh Front is a patriotic organization which arose to, along with all the people, expel the Japanese fascists and win independence for the homeland. We will set up a revolutionary government and will not participate in your puppet government."

Pham Huu Chuong, assistant to the Viceroy, said in a threatening voice, "Although Japan has surrendered to the Allies, it still has sufficient strength in Indochina to fight the Viet Minh. To avoid bloodshed but still win independence, don't pick a fight with the Japanese, which would create great confusion. Let us negotiate with the Japanese. Japan will grant independence to the Vietnamese people."

"You evaluate the Japanese too highly. The Japanese troops have been defeated and are in a state of confusion, and no longer have the stomach for opposing the revolution. So you would ask the Japanese to grant us independence? How could the aggressors grant our people independence? Independence can only be won by fighting for it. The Viet Minh, along with the entire population, arise to win political power." At that point comrade Nguyen Khang, stressing each word as if giving an order, said, "It would be best if all of you resigned!"

Pham Huu Chuong's face paled and he hesitated before replying. But he proved to be only a person who knew about politics within the Palace: "Your position is too hard, which is not beneficial. Furthermore, a few days ago we learned that it is raining very heavily upstream and that flood water is coming downstream and the Red River is rising very rapidly. Let's concentrate on fighting the flood and saving the people from famine"

"Only now do you think about the country. It's too late. We already have a plan and have organized the people to fight the flood."

Three days later (16 August), the Palace of the Viceroy again invited a representative of the Viet Minh Front to a meeting. The representative of the puppet administration repeated the same old arguments and requests as during the previous meeting. The Viet Minh delegation headed by comrade Nguyen Khang again rejected their proposals and clearly stated our stand: the puppet administration had to disband and the Viceroy had to resign.

Defeated by the correct, clear-cut stand of the Viet Minh delegation during the two meetings at the Tonkin Palace, the puppet administration thought up a new plot. After holding secret talks with a number of pro-Japanese intellectuals, on 15 August the Viceroy proposed to Bao Dai and Prime Minister Tran Trong Kim the urgent formation of a "Political Guidance Committee" composed of Nguyen Xuan Chu, Nguyen Tuong Long, Tran Van Lai, etc., to assist the Viceroy in the urgent situation.

In Hue the "provisional government" agreed to the formation of the "Political Guidance Committee" and recommended that Japan turn over the maintenance of order and security and the broadcasting station to the puppet administration. Only then did the Japanese turn over to the puppet administration a number of administrative organs and schools, such as militia camps, the Security Service, the Education

Agency, and the university, to further embellish the "independence" granted the puppets and divert the revolution. When it was learned that Sainteny, the French representative in Kunning (China) was negotiating with the Allies for the return of Indochina to France, and that a French ship was bringing a number of officers to negotiate with the Japanese, the reactionary parties made a big deal out of opposing the French, in hopes of diverting the revolution. The daily newspapers printed the exhortations of the so-called "National Salvation Committee" and appealed for the people of Hanoi to participate in "opposing France for national salvation." At the same time, the Allied radio stations announced that the Emperor of Japan had surrendered and that Allied troops would go to Vietnam. In accordance with an agreement between England and the U.S., English troops would occupy the country south of the 16th Parallel and the troops of Chiang Kai-shek would occupy the country north of the 16th Parallel to disarm the Japanese army.

Also on 15 August the Regional Party Committee continued to meet. The conference decided to stage uprisings in delta provinces within the sphere of responsibility of the Regional Party Committee: Ha Dong, Hung Yen, Hai Duong, Kien An, Bac Ninh, Thai Binh, Nam Dinh, Ninh Binh, Ha Nam, etc. Those localities would carry out uprisings, first occupying the prefectures and districts and then staging uprisings in the provincial capitals. The comrades carefully weighed the situation in Hanoi, which was an important city and contained a large Japanese military force. The conference decided to set up a Hanoi Revolutionary Military Committee under the direct responsibility of Nguyen Khang, a member of the Standing Committee of the Regional Party Committee, to lead the uprising. The Hanoi Revolutionary Military Committee (later the Uprising Committee) consisted of comrade Nguyen Khang, comrade Nguyen Huy Khoi (alias Tran Quang Huy), and comrade Nguyen Duy Tien.

On the morning of 16 August, carrying out the assignment of the Regional Party Committee comrades Nguyen Khang and Nguyen Huy Khoi traveled by bicycle to meet us in order to disseminate the resolution of the Regional Party Committee.

The meeting took place in a house at No 101 Gambetta Street (now Tran Hung Dao Street), the vacant house of a daughter of Hoang Trong Phu. Phu was a powerful official of the French who had committed many crimes against our people. The house was arranged and decorated like a temple. We selected that house to hold the meeting to avoid detection by the enemy. A member of the National Salvation Association who was an employee of the owner of the house provided us with the meeting place and acted as our lookout.

After disseminating the urgent communique and the decision to set up the Hanoi Revolutionary Military Committee, comrade Nguyen Khang, Chairman of the Revolutionary Military Committee, stressed the opportunity for an uprising stated in the directive "The Japanese and French Fight Each Other and our Actions" of the Standing Committee of the Party Central Committee and continued: "The Regional Party Committee analyzed the situation and concluded that although the Allied troops have not yet landed in Vietnam and the revolution in Japan has not yet broken out, the Japanese fascists had been defeated and the Allied troops would soon come to Vietnam to disarm the Japanese troops. The revolutionary spirit of the masses was seething. That afforded a favorable opportunity, so the Regional Party Committee decided that it was necessary to promptly lead the people in the provinces within the sphere of responsibility to carry out uprisings to win political power.

After listening to the explanation by comrade Nguyen Khang, the members of the Hanoi Revolutionary Military Committee unanimously agreed with the resolution of the Regional Party Committee. That was a rare opportunity, and it was necessary to promptly carry out an uprising. To hesitate would be to miss a ripe opportunity and would be a crime against the homeland. The time had come when it was necessary to act with an extremely bold, extremely prudent spirit. But how should the uprising be led? On what day? Should we fight the Japanese troops? How should we fight? Which should come first, an uprising to win political power in the city proper or an uprising in the outskirts, etc.? Those questions were posed during the meeting and were energetically discussed by all of the participants. All aspects of those questions were gone over again and again.

The meeting was held in a seething atmosphere. Everyone enthusiastically and seriously expressed opinions with a strong sense of responsibility, and hoped to contribute to finding specific measures to ensure the victory of the uprising:

-- If we used only our combat self-defense forces to attack the Japanese troops we would not have sufficient strength to annihilate them.

-- The Japanese troops were confused and extremely hesitant, so avoiding a bloody armed clash would be very beneficial for the revolution. Thus we had to weigh things very carefully.

-- Could we use the form of rallying the broad revolutionary masses to hold rallies and demonstrations, with the armed forces acting as the backbone and rushing forward to take political power?

The Revolutionary Military Committee was very concerned over and heatedly debated the third opinion: combining political struggle with armed struggle and political forces with armed forces, and creating a combined strength with which to win political power. But we also wanted to investigate, study, and grasp the situation further before making specific decisions.

For the immediate future, the Revolutionary Military Committee decided to step up the political activities to inspire and encourage the people to urgently complete the organization of combat self-defense organizations among the workers, peasants, youths, and students; promote the drafting of combat plans (grasping the enemy's situation, organizing command, and deploying forces to take the specific objective) in the city; providing weapons, including primitive ones; and fostering a spirit of readiness to fight, of fighting bravely and, if necessary, of readiness to sacrifice for the victory of the revolution. With regard to the Japanese, we had to exacerbate the low morale and worry among their enlisted men and officers. To carry out that task the Committee assigned comrade Nguyen Huy Khoi to write leaflets, then had National Salvation Association members who knew Japanese translate them and send them to the Japanese enlisted men and officers. The leaflets concentrated on sowing among the Japanese troops a feeling of confusion and disgust, a longing for the homeland, and a desire to return to their parents and families, showed them how to save their lives, and encouraged them to await the day they would return home and not intervene in the national liberation struggle of the Vietnamese people.

While the Revolutionary Military Committee was in the midst of its seething discussions it was learned that the reactionary Dai Viet and Nationalist parties, after their pleas to the Japanese to turn over political power to them went unheeded, encouraged the militia to oppose the revolution. But the militia were also terrified of the Viet Minh, so none of them would listen to them. Only the General Association of Officials was authorized by the puppet government to hold a large meeting at the Opera House to bolster the morale of the Japanese lackeys and appeal for the people to "support independence," in hopes of winning over the masses to serve as a base of support in opposing the revolution. The meeting, originally scheduled for 18 August, was to be held a day earlier, on 17 August.

Learning of that, the Revolutionary Military Committee decided to urgently organize forces to disrupt the enemy's meeting and turn it into a large meeting for us.

On the night of 16 August the "passive defense" streetlights, the bulbs of which were covered by large black shades, cast small, dim rays of light on the street, providing inadequate light, so the streets were deserted and desolate. Only on a few streets with hotels and night clubs was bright light cast on the streets from inside the buildings to attract customers. A few drunk, hopeless Japanese soldiers walked along the streets signing songs.

Meanwhile, under the guidance of the Revolutionary Military Committee, on the night of 16 August the Hoang Dieu Assault Youth unit simultaneously entered three theaters -- the Quang Lac (on Ta Hien Street), the Hiep Thanh (on Dao Duy Tu Street), and the To Nhu (now the Chuong Vang theater on Hang Bac Street) to announce that Japan had surrendered and appeal for all strata of people in Hanoi to be prepared to participate in an uprising to take political power.

At the To Nhu theater, just after the curtain was raised and a female performer was singing the opening number, three youths from the Assault Youth unit quickly jumped up onto the stage. One of them, a tall youth wearing European-style clothes, a felt hat, and sunglasses, calmly walked out to the middle of the stage. The other two stood on either side, pistols in hand, prepared to cope with any eventuality.

The singer stopped singing and looked surprised, not yet understanding what was going on. The audience became noisy and disorderly, but they immediately understood the situation: "The Viet Minh are making a speech!" Thus they became quiet and waited confidently.

Sure enough, after calmly and confidently surveying the theater (in addition to the three people on stage, there were a number of Assault Youths on guard around the theater and at the exits), the youth wearing dark glasses began to speak forcefully: "Dear compatriots! The Japanese fascists have been defeated. The Emperor of Japan has signed an agreement to surrender unconditionally to the Allied army. The time for the general uprising has arrived! The time has come for our people to arise and regain their political power and independence! The entire nation must take advantage of this unique opportunity, devote all of its strength and courage, rally around the Vietnam Liberation Army, and be willing to sacrifice their lives in order to win freedom and happiness for the people. All over our country, from

the war zones to the provinces, the people, under the leadership of the Viet Minh Front, are carrying out uprisings to win political power. The Liberation Army is advancing to Tuyen Quang, Phu Tho, and Thai Nguyen and is opening the way to Hanoi. Hanoi. The people of Hanoi have always had a tradition of unyielding struggle and are prepared to take to the streets and sacrifice their lives for the revolution. Arise to win political power for the people."*

During that time, the persuasive speech and save-the-nation appeal reached the hearts of all who heard them. The audience felt an upsurge of patriotism that had been simmering and had now come to a boil. Throughout the theater there resounded shouts of "Support the Viet Minh!" "Vietnamese independence forever!"

Meanwhile, the Assault Youth unit members who were standing guard below the stage kept their eyes on a Japanese officer who was squirming on a front-row seat. Seeing that everyone in the audience was standing and shouting the slogan "Support the Viet Minh," he stood up and then suddenly ran toward the exit. An Assault Youth pointed his gun to stop him, but the Japanese officer used jodo to knock down the guard and then fled. Immediately the other Assault Youths pursued him, chasing after him and shouting "Stop!" "Stop!" But the Japanese officer continued to run for all he was worth. Two pistol shots rang out at the same instant and the Japanese collapsed on the sidewalk. The passers-by were pleased that the Japanese aggressor was punished for his crimes by our accurate bullets.

Vo Van Cam, head of the "Patriotic Youth" organization, was also present in the theater. At first, when he saw the Assault Youth make their appearance and deliver a speech, he intended to remain silent and mix in with the audience in order to avoid detection, and was thinking of a way to sneak out and inform the Japanese so that they could suppress the meeting. But he noticed a youth who was watching him attentively. When he saw the Japanese officer flee and then heard the shots outside the theater, he panicked and fled through the exit. Someone shouted "Stop!" He continued to run. Several pistol shots were fired. Cam exclaimed "Ah!" but continued to stagger along and disappeared into an alley. After the victory of the Hanoi uprising Vo Van Cam escaped and, following his old path, organized reactionary forces to oppose the revolution. They kept weapons and important documents at No. 58 Heran de Bridit Street (now Thi Sach Street). When the combat self-defense soldiers arrived to arrest him, he organized forces to put up a resistance, then sneaked out the back door to Petsiade Street (now Phu Dong Thien Vuong Street) but he could not escape.

Also on the night of 16 August the Municipal Party Committee convened an expanded conference of cadres in Duc Tu hamlet, Dich Vong Village, to urgently promulgate Military Order No 1 of the National Uprising Committee and the decision of the Regional Party Committee regarding the formation of the Hanoi Uprising Committee.

The conference reviewed the forces, discussed plans, and urgently prepared for the uprising, while entering deeply into examining the specific development of the

* Appeal of the Viet Minh High Command on 14 August 1945, "Chat Xieng" [Cut the Chains], Su That Publishing House, Hanoi, 1955, p.69.

combat self-defense forces. From the self-defense cells in the national salvation organizations at the end of 1944, under the guidance of the Municipal Party Committee, the self-defense forces had developed more and more every day and had rapidly come of age. The self-defense unit members participated in strikes to demand salary increases, raids on rice granaries, meetings, and armed propaganda activities and continually grew with regard to revolutionary will, combat ability, etc. There were then more than 700 combat self-defense members divided into three detachments, each of which had three companies. That does not include thousands of national salvation association members who had just been selected to transfer to the self-defense organization. Although there was still a shortage of weapons, there were many more than when the organization was formed. The companies, except for the Hoang Dieu Assault Youth Company, which was the most heavily armed unit, had only about 10 weapons, including rifles and pistols.

Although it was late at night, everyone participating in the conference on that day was very alert and enthusiastically contributed opinions that were useful in preparing the uprising. The conference decided to propagandize and encourage the people to urgently prepare to participate in the uprising, while also urgently preparing forces, readying weapons, and rapidly supplementing equipment, so that each unit member had at least one weapon, etc., in order to prepare to take advantage of the opportunity. It was necessary to do a good job of implementing the following principles: "The military and political must accompany attack, unify leadership ... maintain contact with the command organ."*

On the morning of 17 August, the sky above Hanoi was scattered with black clouds. After exchanging opinions with us, comrade Nguyen Khang went to report to the Standing Committee of the Regional Party Committee at Ha Dong. I hadn't had time to wash my face when I heard the voices of young newspaper sellers on the street:

"Newspapers! Latest newspapers! At 1400 today there will be a special meeting held by the General Association of Officials at the Opera House For details, buy the latest newspaper!"

I stepped out onto the street and saw everyone gathering around the newspaper sellers. During the past several days the people in the city had followed events very closely, so they crowded around buying newspapers. I bought the last one.

After I had finished reading the newspaper a number of cadres and party members arrived to exchange opinions on secretly deploying self-defense forces at the meeting of the General Association of Officials to see what they had to say and what the reaction of the masses toward the meeting was. At about 0800 hours Nguyen Khang arrived from Ha Dong. We reported on the state of preparations to sabotage the afternoon meeting in accordance with the resolution of the Municipal Party Committee, which had met the night before, then I handed him the latest newspaper. I added:

"The puppet administration is also urgently convening an 'advisory council' at the Tien Duc Cultural Club (now the airline ticket office on Le Thai To Street) to discuss ways to oppose the revolution."

* The action plan of the Uprising Committee. "Chat Xieng" [Cut the Chains], Su That Publishing House, Hanoi, 1955, p.71.

Brother Khang put down the newspaper, appeared to be angry, then picked up the newspaper and read on. He suddenly smiled a wry smile and said in an angry voice, "Look at this. The mayor has published an appeal for the people to remain calm, determined, and disciplined so that the nation's leaders can easily carry out their work." "Easily do what? Easily ... become lackeys?"

He then asked us about the results of the speeches made by the Assault Youth on the previous night at the Quang Lac, Hiep Thanh, and To Nhu theaters. After we completed our report he nodded: "The enemy are confused and in disagreement. The Party and the national-salvation associations have made good initial preparations. The masses ardently support the revolution. Those are signs that the revolution will win complete victory."

By noon of that day the sky had cleared. It was August but it was as hot as in mid-summer. Nguyen Khang and I went to the square in front of the Opera House to directly guide the disruption of the General Association of Officials meeting. We looked around and estimated that more than 20,000 people had come from all parts of the city to assemble in the square in front of the Municipal Opera House. Everyone was red-faced and sweating profusely. Having read the reports sent by the bases on the previous night, we understood that they people had not come to listen to the boastful words of the pro-Japanese lackeys. Because of the positive propaganda carried out by the revolution, the people understood, in part, that the situation had reached a decisive phase. Japan had been defeated and the prestige of the Viet Minh was steadily spreading. It was very possible that there would be a great political change relevant to the destiny of the nation and to everyone in the city. Therefore, whenever they heard that there would be a speech everyone knew that the Viet Minh would appear. Thus without anyone having to tell anyone else the various strata of people came in hope of being able to grasp -- or at least to understand -- whatever was about to occur.

Brother Khang and I mixed in with the crowd attending the rally. Scattered about the crowd were self-defense cells and National Salvation youths who were awaiting the order to disrupt the rally. Each of the secret cells carried along a few small red flags with gold stars. The action plan had been carefully explained to all cadres and unit members.

At 1400 hours the rally began. An elegantly dressed "orator" stood up and introduced the program into the loud speaker. When a second "orator" began to speak a member of a self-defense unit standing beside me waved a red flag with a gold star.

"A Viet Minh flag! a Viet Minh flag!" "Hurrah for the Viet Minh flag! Hurrah for the Viet Minh flag!"

Tens of thousands of people cheered happily and a sea of humanity ebbed in the direction of the red flag that had just appeared.

Then small flags appeared all over the place. The self-defense unit members and National Salvation Association members, holding flags high, led crowds from one place to another. The human sea was agitated. Order at the rally completely fell apart. There were hundreds of militiamen, guns at the ready, guarding the rally,

but more of them dared intervene but only dumbfoundedly looked at the flags and the crowd. The police were even more terrified and stood on if frozen in place.

At a prearranged signal, three Assault Propaganda unit members rushed up, and at gunpoint forced the "organization committee" into a corner. A self-defense unit member rushed up to the "podium" and with a slash of his shiny knife the flag of the puppet administration, which had been flying on high, was lying on the ground. Then a very large red flag with a gold star was suddenly unfurled from the balcony of the Opera House and covered a large part of its front. A sea of humanity clapped and shouted. The revolutionary soldiers and people who participated in that rally, when recalling the days of the Hanoi uprising, can never forget that moving, enthusiastic scene.

The applause and cheers arose in one wave after another, as if they would never end. But when an Assault Propaganda cadre stepped forward, without anything being said order was immediately restored. Over the loudspeaker the Assault Propaganda cadre spoke of the most recent developments in the world, announced that Japan had surrendered unconditionally, and urged the people to "quickly unite into a single bloc. The independence of our homeland and the freedom of our people can only be built on our blood and bones. We must act urgently. We must take up arms and arise" The Mrs Dieu Hong, who had been assigned that task by the organization, appealed for the women to participate in the uprising. Those appeals echoed all over Hanoi.

The spirit of the masses was on the rise. They expressed an attitude of supporting the Viet Minh and readiness to ardently join the revolution. Brother Khang and I exchanged opinions that it was necessary to strengthen the spirit of the masses by means of specific actions. We were in agreement. Brother Khang made his way through the crowd to the podium. He said over the loudspeaker in a stern voice, "Fellow countrymen!" By that time, order had been restored. More than 20,000 people attentively listened to the appeal of the Chairman of the Revolutionary Military Committee. His voice carried far and was enthralling and attractive. I stood beneath the podium listening to him, my heart beating enthusiastically. He explained the policies of the Viet Minh and urged the people to support the revolution. In a vibrant, healthy, eloquent voice he concluded his speech with a succinct appeal:

"The Japanese bandits invaded and took over our country. They inflicted countless miseries and deaths on our people. Now they have been surrounded and have laid down their arms and surrendered. The time has come for our people to arise and overthrow the Japanese fascists and the lackey puppets to win true independence! Respond to the appeal of the Viet Minh and arise!"

As soon as comrade Nguyen Khang finished his speech the sounds of the masses shouting slogans and cheering arose like thunder:

"Support the Viet Minh!"

"Down with the Japanese fascists and their lackey puppets!"

"Vietnamese independence forever!"

I joined the people by raising my fist and shouting those slogans as loudly as I could. Comrade Nguyen Khang remained on the podium, wiping sweat from his forehead. Smiling, he continued, "Dear compatriots! To manifest the patriotism and determination of the people, who ardently support the Viet Minh Front, we request that you participate in a demonstration, beginning now."

"Support the Viet Minh!"

The sound of shouting again arose. The people responded immediately and quickly formed into ranks, under the direction of the self-defense and National Salvation Association unit members. Then, in accordance with a command broadcast over the loudspeaker, the ranks began to move. From the head of Trang Street a group of people lined up behind a large red flag with a gold star moved directly toward Bo Ho. Along the way, people on the sidewalks joined the procession in increasingly larger numbers. As they marched they continually shouted slogans:

"Support the Viet Minh!"

"Down with the puppet!"

"A completely independent Vietnam!"

When the demonstration reached the intersection leading to the Palace of the Viceroy, several warning shots could be heard coming from the direction of Hang Dau Street. But the sound of the slogans shouted by the demonstrators could be heard as far as the meeting place of the "Council of Advisers." Those who were attending the meeting were terrified and fled, every man for himself. The puppet advisory conference had dissolved itself.

The procession reached Bo Ho area, the electric tramway tracks. There were hundreds of militiamen and policemen who at first stood on the sidewalks shouldering weapons but who, when the procession reached Chi Linh park, joined the ranks of the demonstrators. The demonstration passed along Hang Dao and Hang Ngang streets, past the Dong Xuan market, and turned in the direction of Hang Dau park. The sky appeared ready to pour down rain. However, no one abandoned the ranks. The demonstration continued along clamorously, and like a large wave into which many smaller waves flowed, at each step along the way the demonstration added people.

The demonstration continued on past Cu Bac to the Palace of the Governor-General (now the Office of the Chairman), and then to Cua Nam, where it branched off in all directions. One large part, accompanied by militiamen, went on to Hang Bong and Hang Gai streets, then to a point near the Tien Duc Cultural Club, etc.

The demonstration continued until 2100 hours. Before dispersing at the Bo Ho electric tramway station, the people participating in the rally stopped for 5 minutes to salute the Vietnamese flag and shout a slogan:

"Vietnamese independence forever!"

The demonstration took place enthusiastically and exceeded our plan. The mass movement strongly advanced the struggle and persuaded tens of thousands of people to take to the streets and struggle with unexpected vigor. The Japanese did nothing. When the slogan-shouting demonstration passed by the Palace of the Governor-General, then the headquarters of the Japanese army, the officers took no actions. The

Japanese soldiers guarding at the gate just stood there, looking wide-eyed at the procession passing by. The puppets were afraid and confused.

That night, the Municipal Party Committee sent an Assault Propaganda unit to enter the TIN MOI printing plant and persuade the editor to print an account of the demonstration by the city's people in the next day's newspaper.

We later learned that news of that large demonstration by the people of Hanoi rapidly spread to the provinces of Hung Yen, Hai Duong, Bac Ninh, Ha Nam, Nam Dinh, Phuc Yen, Vinh Yen Son Tay, etc. In Thai Binh the masses spread a rumor that the Viet Minh had taken political power in Hanoi. In Phuc Yen, when it was learned that a large rally and demonstration had been held in Hanoi there was immediately convened a conference of district, municipal, and village cadres to decide upon a policy of uprising.

On the night of 17 August the Standing Committee of the Regional Party Committee held a special meeting in hamlet of Van Phuc (Ha Dong City) while the demonstration by the people of Hanoi was clamorously taking place. The conference decided that the situation in Hanoi was seething and that conditions there were ripe for an uprising. Finally the Regional Party Committee decided to carry out uprisings to win political power in Hanoi and Ha Dong, while paying attention to closely monitoring and promptly guiding preparations for uprisings, and the carrying out of uprisings, in the other provinces.

Also on the night of 17 August the Municipal Revolutionary Military Committee convened an enlarged conference of cadres to continue to discuss specific measures for carrying out the uprising in Hanoi to ensure its rapid, efficient success. The conference was held in the home of Mrs Hai Nha, a revolutionary base of the Municipal Party Committee in the hamlet of Dich Vong Tien, Cau Giay (now part of Dich Vong Village, Tu Liem District). Participating in the conference were my self, Tran Dinh Long, Tran Ngoc Minh, Le Thu, Thai Hy, Quang Nghia, Tran Quang Huy, etc. Comrade Nguyen Khang was absent because he was attending a meeting of the Standing Committee of the Regional Party Committee.

I still remember an incident which was small but expressed the readiness of the people to support the revolution from the very beginning. Now all families of cadres, workers, and officials have at least a bicycle. But during the period of domination by France and Japan people rarely had enough money to buy one. So when I saw a messenger leading a "Stechlin" bicycle from the house I was surprised and asked him, "Where did you get such a valuable 'iron horse'?" He happily replied, "Uncle Nga, who has a tailor shop in the neighborhood, returned home from the demonstration yesterday and, seeing how hard it was for me to get around, donated it to the revolution so that the common effort could proceed more rapidly."

With that bicycle, within a short period of time the messenger informed the base cadres all over the city and in the outskirts so that they could arrive at the meeting on time. The meeting was well guarded by the self-defense units, in coordination with the National Salvation Youth of Dich Vong Village. Everyone who entered the house anxiously waited to be assigned a mission. It was so longer necessary to hold down the laughter and talking, as it was when we were engaging in

secret activity. All of us were still seething with the revolutionary spirit of the demonstration that afternoon. With enthusiasm and emotion I presented my thoughts:

"Comrades! On the basis of our show of force this afternoon the Regional Party Committee has concluded that the revolutionary masses, especially the masses of the national salvation organizations under the leadership of the Municipal Party Committee and the Revolutionary Military Committee, are prepared to struggle violently with the enemy. And how about the enemy? They were confused and perplexed, and in disagreement. The Japanese troops did nothing to oppose the revolution. The puppet government was helpless to react, and the mass revolutionary movement rose to a very high level. Most of the militiamen and policemen did nothing or leaned toward the revolution. So the conditions for the uprising that had been outlined by the Party Central Committee and the Regional Party Committee had appeared in our city. The opportunity that would allow us to lead the people in an uprising had arrived.

How sacred, seething, and exciting the atmosphere of that meeting was! The speeches made during that historic meeting were inspiring and stimulating: "The homeland demands that everyone overcome many obstacles and resolutely advance." "The greatest possible sacrifices must be made to win complete victory for the general uprising." Everyone attending the meeting agreed with those thoughts and were prepared to act in a very urgent, resolute, disciplined manner, according to the missions assigned by the revolution.

With regard to the policy toward the uprising, the conference reached complete agreement and decided to resolutely use the strength of the masses, with the armed forces serving as the hard core, to take political power.

The timing of the uprising was heatedly discussed and carefully weighed. There would not be sufficient time to mobilize and organize forces by the next day -- 18 August -- for an uprising is a serious matter and is not to be trifled with. In less than a day it would be impossible to assemble a rather large force of self-defense unit members and tens of thousands of the masses. But if we delayed it a few more days we could easily miss the opportunity, for by the evening of 17 August the revolutionary spirit of the masses was very strong. We had momentum and it was necessary to rapidly advance to more fierce struggle; it would not be good if we waited too long, it would be difficult to maintain our high morale, and it would be necessary to be on guard against the Japanese fascists, because for some reason they might attack us directly or assign that task to the reactionary Dai Viet and the Nationalist Party, who were dependent on the Japanese and were armed. That could cause us many unexpected difficulties. After debating the question at length, the conference decided to carry out the uprising on 19 August. It could not be delayed longer than that, even for a day, for carrying out an uprising is a matter of taking the offensive and attacking the enemy suddenly, when they are still unprepared, and winning victories minute by minute.

The conference drafted the following uprising plan:

On the morning of 19 August there would be organized a large rally to appeal for the masses to unite in overthrowing the puppet administration. It would be followed by an armed show-of-strength procession, using mass forces, to the key organs in the

city, such as the Palace of the Viceroy, the City Hall, the militia camp, the Security Service, etc., in order to take political power. Since more than 20,000 people participated in that afternoon's procession, the conference decided to mobilize 100,000 people or even more.

-- The self-defense units, the hard-core armed forces of the uprising, would be deployed in mobile positions so that if the enemy were stubborn our forces could immediately arrive to suppress them, especially when the masses were being taken to occupy such key organs as the Palace of the Viceroy, the City Hall, the militia camp, and the Security Service.

Furthermore, the conference held that night carefully debated another important matter: what should our policy be toward the Japanese army? In the past, the Japanese had tried to terrorize the revolutionary movement, but now they were confused and disgusted over the situation. During the past several days they had appeared to want to be left alone and had not intervened in our affairs. So what steps should be taken to ensure that they would maintain that attitude, in order to facilitate our taking of political power? On the basis of that accurate analysis of the Japanese troops, the conference adopted the policy of refraining to attack the places where the Japanese troop were stationed, such as the Palace of the Governor-General, the General Staff headquarters at No 33 Pham Ngu Lao, Don Thuy, the old citadel, etc. The matter of disarming the Japanese was not brought up. The conference concluded that should the Japanese troops recklessly create armed clashes our armed forces would fight back, but mass political forces had to be organized to coordinate, support, and apply pressure, in order to create conditions for our self-defense forces to win victory.

The conference very carefully discussed all matters related to the uprising and even decided what actions we would take to win victory if the worst possible situation developed.

The conference worked until late at night. Some cadres had eaten nothing all day but everyone was alert, happy, and full of determination and confidence. Before bidding adieu and scattering in all directions to mobilize our forces, the cadres shook hands. Everyone had eager faces full of hope that in the future our country would be able to live in independence and freedom and that our people would be free of suppression and exploitation. I still remember the question comrade Minh had posed: "When will the people of Hanoi have the freedom and happiness of the people of the liberated area?" I replied, "The day is no longer far away." It would only be about two more months until the people's aspirations would be fulfilled. I cannot describe in words my enthusiastic sentiments during that historic moment. Several years afterward, and even farther into the future, when I recalled the meeting on the night of 17 August would my solemn sentiments at that time be faded by the work at hand? I think that the meeting in an ordinary thatched house in a village in the outskirts of the city with people wearing ordinary clothing, their faces worn by a sleepless night, working enthusiastically but carefully, romantically but seriously, to reach such a sacred decision, will always leave behind a special impression in our revolutionary activity.

The meeting concluded as the sound of a rooster crowing signalled that morning was near. We went our separate ways to agitate the masses, as directed by the conference's resolution.

After the success of the August Revolution the Revolutionary Military Committee and the comrades leading the uprising in Hanoi exchanged opinions with one another and reached complete agreement that "Under the leadership of the Party Central Committee and the Regional Party Committee the revolution in Hanoi was responsive to the over-all situation, firmly grasped the situation of the enemy in the city, promptly took advantage of opportunities, and bravely decided to use local forces to carry out an uprising to win political power in the very place where the enemy had their headquarters. That was a revolutionary, scientific, creative, and resolute policy. The uprising to win political power in Hanoi was staged at a time when the situation was undergoing a turning point and was extremely responsive to the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. In Hanoi, we could not carry out the uprising before 15 August, for the Japanese fascists had not yet lost their will to commit aggression and to fight, the news that Japan had surrendered unconditionally to the Allies had not yet been widely announced, and the Revolutionary Military Committee had not yet ascertained the attitude of the Japanese fascists. The Japanese troops and the militia, if so ordered by their commanders, might turn their guns on us and suppress the revolution. But if the uprising were delayed a few days beyond 19 August it would encounter many difficulties. The pro-Japanese Vietnamese traitors, the Trotskyites, and the leaders of the puppet administration would establish relations with England, the U.S., and Chiang and would join the Nationalist Party and Dai Viet reactionaries in setting up a government that was a lackey of the imperialists. The U.S., England, and Chiang, taking that as an excuse, would not only not recognize the revolutionary administration but would use the Japanese troops to attack the revolutionary forces, purportedly to "put down a rebellion" that was preventing the Allies from disarming the Japanese troops, restoring peace in Vietnam, etc. Later, after the revolution succeeded, we learned that while the Japanese were refraining from taking action they were plotting to ally with England, the U.S., and Chiang to oppose the revolution. But the uprising took place at the right time, which prevented them from having sufficient time to carry out their plot.

The decision to stage the uprising on 19 August was completely appropriate to the developing situation, for the principal enemy of the revolution -- the fascist Japanese army -- had completely lost its morale and its will to fight. The fascist Japanese officers did not have enough time to come up with a specific policy and, like snakes the heads of which had been cut off, could not decide on a clear-cut course of action. They were awaiting specific orders from the Emperor of Japan. During the time when the ranks of the enemy were still perplexed, confused, and worried, and the masses were prepared to carry out a revolution, the Revolutionary Committee concluded at the time was ripe and took the initiative of using on-the-spot forces to attack and mobilizing the masses to join with the revolutionary armed forces to arise to victoriously overthrow the lackey administration of the Japanese and liberate themselves. That was entirely in accord with the art of leading uprisings. But all of those advantages would have become meaningless if the Hanoi party organization had not positively created bases, not taken the initiative in comprehensively developing forces, or, especially, not strictly carried out the lines and policies of the Central Committee and the guidance directives of the Regional Party Committee. Otherwise the historic event of 19 August could not have happened. Clearly, the opportunity did not create it self but was created by our subjective efforts.

While everyone was urgently preparing for the general uprising information was received that caused the entire city to be very worried. In Hanoi it had been raining for several days but the rain had been sporadic, like the rain always is at the end of the dry season. But in the provinces upstream the rain had poured down continuously for several days and nights. On 13 August the Vinh Bao dike in Hai Duong, then on 17 August the Quang Cu dike in Vinh Yen, the Bat Bat dike in Son Tay, and then the Hung Nhan dike in Thai Binh, the My Loc dike in Nam Dinh, and the Cong Vuc dike in Bac Ninh, along the Red, Day, Da, Cau, and Ca Lo rivers were broken in more than 150 places. Six provinces in the Tonkin Delta were extensively flooded. More than 700,000 mau of ripening rice were inundated. So before our people had recovered from the famine at the beginning of the year there was a flood and another famine. Our party members and cadres were worried about the lives of the hard-up masses, and especially that the uprising plan would be affected by the unexpected natural calamity and could not be carried out. In Hanoi, the level of the Red River rose more and more every day and was nearing the top of the dike. The people in the flood plain had taken their possessions to the dikes or into the city to avoid the flood. On the morning of 18 August the sky above Hanoi was lead-colored, heavy, and suffocating, as if there was about to be a storm. But on the streets of Hanoi that day there was an extraordinary atmosphere. On Hang Bai, Trang Tien, Hang Ngang, and Hang Dao streets, at the Dong Xuan and Hom markets, etc., small groups of people could be seen discussing the uprising. Everyone was restless, waiting to destroy what had been oppressing them for a long time.

We were on our way to a safe house when suddenly we heard the sound of shouting and cheering. The cheering became louder and louder and spread to many other streets. It was the cheering of thousands of the masses when they saw red flags with gold stars appearing at the same time on many streets in Hanoi. We realized that that was the result of the Viet Minh who, in accordance with the plan approved the night before, were vigorously carrying out propaganda regarding the coming general offensive.

A convoy led by an automobile bearing a red flag with a gold star sped along the streets, making appeals over a loudspeaker for the people of Hanoi to participate in a demonstration to be organized by the Viet Minh on the morning of 19 August. Following it were groups of people on bicycles, now and then weaving in and out of traffic, who carried Viet Minh flags and threw leaflets which spread like white butterflies all over the street, urging the people to urgently prepare to take to the streets to demonstrate and march. Self-defense unit members and Assault Youth, wearing red bands on their arms, were pasting slogans and posters on the crowded streets, at the bus stations, etc.

At about 0900 hours the sky above Hanoi suddenly cleared and the city became unusually animated. Many families asked for a model flag, then went to buy cloth to sew Viet Minh flags. The tailor shops worked all day and throughout the night of the 18th. Many of them volunteered to sew flags free of charge. The Municipal Party Committee received one report after another from the enterprises and factories which reflected an enthusiastic spirit of preparing forces for the uprising to take political power. In many places workers committees were formed and were enthusiastically welcomed by the workers. Many people volunteered to join self-defense units and take to the streets to struggle. In many factories, combat

self-defense units wearing red arm bands stood guard and protected the machinery. The bosses and foremen dared not intervene and many even led the workers to places where machinery and raw materials were stored. There was a seething revolutionary spirit in the enterprises. In the city's outskirts, on the night of 17 August, while the Municipal Party Commission was holding a cadre conference, the national salvation organizations of Dich Vong and Tay Ho Villages confiscated the seals and charters of the village chiefs and organized rallies to announce the formation of a revolutionary administration. On the morning of 18 August another bit of happy news inspired people: the Viet Minh flag was flying in the areas around the city. The villages of Nam Dong, Tu, Tam, Tuong Mai, Mai Dong, and the villages in Buoi Canton, etc., had arisen and victoriously taken political power.

Also on that morning the Municipal Revolutionary Military Committee moved from the outskirts into the city. The house at No 101 Gambetta Street was still used as the command headquarters. The work of the revolution increasingly accumulated. The cadres in the suburban villages which had taken political power requested advice about organizing administrations and the cadre roster of the Uprising Committee. In the villages that had not yet arisen there were questions about how to carry out uprisings and requested self-defense forces to support them. The national salvation workers in the factories and enterprises requested advice on how to cope with bosses and foremen and requested struggle slogans or cadres to make speeches. All of the tasks demanded urgent action. We stayed up all night on 17 August, until noon on 18 August, without a grain of rice entering our stomachs, but no one felt hungry. A member of the Revolutionary Military Committee and I were assigned to go down to the base level to grasp the situation, prepare forces, and discuss ways to cope with the eventualities that might arise. Comrade Nguyen Huy Khoi drafted an appeal to be made during the next day's rally. Comrade Nguyen Khang and a number of other party committee members reviewed the struggle slogans, drew diagrams, and estimated the standing room at the rally site. With regard to the struggle slogans, we based ourselves on the Party's general line and the urgent situation in Hanoi in drafting the slogans in the inaugural appeal of the Revolutionary Party Committee (i.e. the Hanoi Uprising Committee) on 19 August:

- "Overthrow all forces violating the independence of Vietnam."
- "Down with the French, who want to restore their sovereignty in Indochina!"
- "Overthrow the puppet government of Tran Trong Kim."
- "Set up the Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam."
- "A completely independent Vietnam!"
- "May the liberation revolution be successful forever."

The policy toward the Japanese troops was discussed in detail once again. During the demonstration on the afternoon of 17 August we observed that the Japanese reaction was to do nothing, that they dared not intervene in the affairs of the revolutionary masses. Therefore, in the coming uprising we would have to flexibly implement the policy adopted by the cadre conference: taking advantage of the enemy's basic weakness -- their desire to save their lives -- in psychologically

intimidating and attacking the enemy troops. If the Japanese did not intervene in the uprising we would ensure that their lives would be saved and that they could return to their country. However, the Japanese military forces in Hanoi were still large (30,000). Thus another contingency that was foreseen was that if they should as a last resort recklessly attack our rally and demonstration we would combine military means with the political forces of the masses to oppose them. The political and the military had to accompany each other and had to be applied very flexibly in the specific circumstances.

At that time there was also news that Emperor Bao Dai, in his capacity as chief of state, had issued an appeal for "... famous and anonymous patriots who have fought for the rights of the people and for the independence of the homeland to help me cope with events." As for the puppet government, it proposed that a delegation be sent to Chungking to establish contact with Chiang Kaishek when Chinese troops were sent to Vietnam. There was also a report that the Tonkin Viceroy had resigned, and that a "Provisional Political Committee" had been created to replace him. Nguyen Xuan Chu, Pham Hua Chuong, and another person hurried over to the headquarters of the Revolutionary Military Committee and requested the holding of negotiations. A member of the Revolutionary Military Committee was assigned to receive them. After scrutinizing the scene one of them said in a voice reeking of psychological warfare, in hopes of weakening the will of the adversary:

"Surely you know that the Allies have decided to send troops to Indochina to disarm the Japanese troops. The Allies have drawn a boundary. Chinese troops will be stationed north of the 16th Parallel and English troops will be stationed south of the 16th Parallel. We should cooperate with each other in dealing with the Allies."

The representative of our Military Committee immediately took the offensive: "All over the country the Viet Minh are leading the people in staging uprisings to win political power. The Vietnamese revolution, made up of the combined strength of the Vietnamese people, is sufficiently strong to smash all reactionary powers." They continued to be brazen and beseeching:

-- "We propose that you take political power in areas at least 15 kilometers from Hanoi and let the administration in the city deal with the Allies and request the Japanese weapons."

-- "No!" The representative of the Military Committee interrupted, saying that "We don't need you to deal with anyone. If there is any dealing to be done it will be done with the Viet Minh Front, the only true representative. It would be better if you left."

They were dejected and sullen. They added, half admonishingly, half threateningly. "You are greedy for power and will not unite. This means that we will also have to give up and our country is in danger of being divided and lost. You must accept complete responsibility for the consequences."

Then they departed in silence, their faces gloomy.

At noon on 18 August, after Nguyen Khang came from Hanoi to give his report, the Regional Party Committee completely agreed with the Hanoi Revolutionary Military

Committee's policy and plan regarding the uprising and urgently directed the provinces of Ha Dong, Hung Yen, and Bac Ninh to mobilize people to provide strong support for the Hanoi uprising.

At 1400 on 18 August, when all preparatory tasks were going smoothly and favorably in accordance with the plan, something unexpected happened which, if not promptly and cleverly resolved, might have affected the over-all uprising plan. A number of national salvation workers at the Avia Garage were sent to Gia Lam to transport weapons into the city. On the way back, they crossed over the Long Bien bridge, a Viet Minh flag flying from the roof of their automobile. Japanese soldiers, spotting the flag, stopped and searched the automobile. They were detained when the guards saw that they were transporting many weapons. Workers and people gathered around, demanding that the guards return the flag, the weapons, and the automobile.

When it received that news the Revolutionary Military Committee met to discuss what to do. First of all, it would be necessary to isolate that incident and prevent it from spreading, for it was not necessary to complicate matters at that time, which might ruin everything. Moreover, we would use all struggle forms and measures to recover all of our weapons confiscated by the Japanese. After agreeing on a policy the Committee sent a capable cadre to carry out that task.

When our cadre arrived on the scene he saw that the people who had come to support the struggle were crowded around the Japanese headquarters and the square in front of the Municipal Opera House, and extending all along Trang Tien Street. The subject of the Japanese daring to confiscate weapons and a flag belonging to the Viet Minh was still being vigorously discussed. Some people felt that it was essential to demand that the weapons be returned. Others were hesitant: were we ready to come to grips with the Japanese?

But then there was another provocative opinion: "Why be afraid of the defeated dwarfs? Send them back to their own country!"

That struck a responsive cord in everyone. People immediately started clapping and shouting slogans:

-- "Down with the Japanese fascists!"

-- "Support the Viet Minh!"

Our comrade explained things to the people: "We are determined to demand that the Japanese return our people and weapons. But we should not act hastily. The Viet Minh are the leaders, so we must await their orders."

News of the struggle to demand that the Japanese return our weapons spread all over the city and angered many people. Toward evening the workdres at the Avia and Stai garages, the power plant, the machinery plant, etc., and even ordinary people, arrived in increasingly larger numbers. A strong spirit of struggle arose.

The Revolutionary Military Committee sent a delegation to 33 Pham Ngu Lao to demand that the Japanese General Staff return our people, flag, weapons, and automobile.

The Japanese not only did not reply but stationed soldiers with fixed bayonets to block the streets leading from the Opera House past the Goda Building (now the Department Store) to the Bo Ho electric tramway station. Four tanks clanked and roared along around the Opera House and Pham Ngu Lao Street, in hopes of intimidating the struggle spirit of the popular masses. But the ranks of our workers and people, who had been mobilized by the Revolutionary People's Committee were not shaken, but became larger and larger, with organization and very good order, and formed many rings around the four enemy tanks. Under the command and guidance of the Viet Minh Front, the people living along Trang Tien Street also poured out onto the street and formed barriers by piling up tables, chairs, chests, and other items. The pressure by the masses, who were tightly organized and led, steadily increased. Before long the Japanese General Staff had to send an officer to meet with our delegation. When they saw the Japanese officer the masses shouted, "You must turn over our people, weapons, and flag immediately!"

Before he had a chance to say anything an Assault Youth handed him a leaflet. The leaflet appealed for the Japanese not to intervene in the internal affairs of the Vietnamese people, and to save their lives so that they could return home to their families. After reading the leaflet he looked at the forest of people around him. He saw only eyes that were aflame and fists raised in protest, and the sound of shouts demanding the return of our people, weapons, and flag continued to reverberate. He took out a handkerchief and wiped the sweat from his forehead, then said to our delegation, "We will return the Viet Minh flag."

-- "You must immediately hand over the workers who were arrested. You must return our weapons!"

-- "We will return the people and the vehicle. As for the weapons"

-- "Nothing doing. You must return the weapons!"

Immediately, the sound of thousands of people shouting arose like thunder:

-- "Return the weapons! Return the weapons!"

The Japanese officer was confused:

-- "Return the weapons to the Viet Minh so that they can attack us?"

Our representative calmly replied:

"We will only use the weapons to win independence for our homeland. If the Japanese do not intervene in our affairs we will ensure that their lives will be spared."

The Japanese officer looked around then asked for a delay:

-- "We have taken your weapons away. We will return them to you tomorrow."

-- Before the Japanese officer had finished speaking shouts demanding the immediate return of the weapons again arose.

The tug-of-war struggle lasted 5 or 6 hours. Late at night the Japanese had to send two other officers, who presented two pistols and said:

-- "We propose that you keep these guns as collateral. Take them to the Shell Oil Company tomorrow (now the State Planning Commission office on Hoang Dieu Street) and exchange them for your weapons."

Thus the face-to-face struggle with the Japanese was completely victorious. In the course of the struggle we noted that under certain circumstances the enemy, when they were isolated and had lost their will to resist, like a snake that had been beaten on the head, and were completely paralyzed, the revolutionary masses, although unarmed, if tightly organized and led were capable of rendering the Japanese impotent and reluctant to intervene in the affairs of the Vietnamese revolution. The lesson of the struggle with the Japanese on the night of 18 August made us more confident and bolder in applying our strategy toward the Japanese during the uprising a day later. However, it must be noted that our guidance was in some ways too general and did not yet take into consideration details relevant to the major tasks. It was every necessary that we mobilize the spirit of the masses at that time, but it was also necessary to go all-out to avoid being overconfident, formalistic, or boastful, which would cause a loss of secrecy, easily cause provocations, and lead to misunderstanding on the part of the enemy and force them to respond, which would not be in our interests. The Avia workers who went to Gia Lam to bring weapons into the city should have traveled as usual, to avoid detection by the enemy -- and indeed, we should have used camouflage -- but those comrades attracted attention by flying a flag. The show of strength and the mass agitation were inopportune and further complicated matters, at a time when we had to concentrate our thoughts and efforts on the principal task: making truly meticulous preparations for the general uprising on the following day -- 19 August.

On the night of 18 August, at its headquarters at No 101 Gambetta Street (now Tran Hung Dao Street) the Revolutionary Military Committee went over the plans for a city-wide uprising for the last time.

According to the plan, the rally would begin at 1000 hours and end at 1200 hours. The masses would divide into two groups, each led by a combat self-defense detachment. The first group, commanded by comrades Nguyen Khang and Nguyen Duy Than, would occupy the Palace of the Viceroy, City Hall, the police headquarters, and the treasury. The second group, under my command, would take the militia camp, the Security Service, and the Hoa Lo prison. The two key objectives, which had to be taken as soon as possible, were the Palace of the Viceroy and the militia camp. Then the national salvation associations and the combat self-defense units would occupy the other important places in the city. In addition to the two combat self-defense detachments serving as the hard-core of the group occupying the Palace of the Viceroy and the militia camp there were a number of other self-defense units deployed on the important streets to protect the rally and procession, and to be prepared to cope with the Japanese troops should they perfidiously attack us.

It must be added that on 18 August all members of the Revolutionary Military Committee were present at No 101 Gambetta Street, but we were accustomed to our work style when we were engaged in secret activity, so most of us were more concerned with our own work. Agreement was reached on the major policies and a resolution

was passed. But when the resolution was specifically implemented there was only an exchange of opinions with a few relevant comrades, for it was not possible to meet and discuss matters collectively. Each of us, on the basis of the general line, the general policies, and the resolution of the Municipal Party Committee, manifested a spirit of self-reliance and took the initiative in carrying out our work. The same was true on the part of the cadres, party members, and masses: the fulfillment of many tasks demanded a strong sense of responsibility and spirit of initiative. Today it is hard to imagine the activity preceeding the general uprising. I heard of a few instances of spontaneous struggle and was only afraid that the masses would act without being led by the Party. In fact, under the circumstances of our secret activities in Hanoi at that time the most important matter was a high degree of unanimity regarding the common line, policies, directions, and requirements. As for our locality or base, we would have to take the initiative in finding appropriate implementation measures. Depending or waiting on the upper echelon would ruin everything and cause us to miss the opportunity. Automatic adherence to the common principles by the bases greatly helped guidance by the Revolutionary Military Committee.

At about 2330 hours we paid special attention to the enemy's situation, especially the militia camp, to see if there had been any changes. There were about 1,000 militiamen in the camp. They were the most important, key military force of the Tran Trong Kim puppet administration in Tonkin.* The pro-Japanese members of the "Provisional Political Committee" were still confident that that large military force could suppress and resist the revolution. We sent an ultimatum to the camp commanders appealing for them to surrender, but they had not replied. As for the Japanese troops, had they withdrawn to protect themselves and dared not intervene in the demonstration of the revolutionary masses? Did they, whose time was almost up, have the capability to act recklessly? Taking into consideration that adverse possibility, we deployed another self-defense force at Kim Ma to be prepared to cope with their reckless acts. Once the uprising began, we had to be determined to carry it through to the end. We could win victory only by taking the offensive. "Taking the defensive would mean the death of the armed uprising." I suddenly remembered that admonition by a leadership cadre during the military class held by the Regional Party Committee last year. "The uprising is a major undertaking" and can succeed only if complete preparations are made.

I went to make a final inspection of some combat self-defense units before the uprising began. The Hoang Dieu Assault Youth company, along with the local national salvation associations, had just participated in an uprising in Tu and Tam Villages in the outskirts of the city and were very enthusiastic. At one of their positions the youths were cleaning their weapons and singing the songs "Advancing South" and "Song of the Advancing Troops." The company commander reported that the uprising plan had been explained to all members of the company and that the youths had complete confidence in the leadership of the Revolutionary Military Committee and were prepared to give their lives to liberate the nation.

* During the period of French-Japanese domination our country was divided into three administrative regions: Tonkin [Bac Ky], north of Ninh Binh; Annam [Trung Ky], from Thanh Hoa to Phan Thiet; and Cochinchina [Nam Ky], south of Phan Thiet.

I visited the unit of comrade Minh. That unit was made up of national salvation workers in enterprises which had only recently organized self-defense units, but it took the initiative in drafting a plan to practice day and night. Except for seven rifles and five pistols, the unit was armed only with spears, scimitars, broadswords, sabres, and daggers. All of the unit members were present and were preparing flags and banners and undergoing inspections. I asked Minh about the men's fighting spirit. He replied, "Everyone is prepared to sacrifice for the victory of the revolution."

I also visited a number of other self-defense units. As in the case of the two units mentioned above, the uprising plan had been explained to them and they had prepared their weapons. Everyone knew that a historic moment was about to arrive, that the revolutionary troops, along with the people, would rush forward to win independence for the country, so they had a burning spirit. Everything was ready. I suddenly remembered the words of comrade Khanh. Before going to participate in the Anti-Japanese Military Administration class in Viet Bac he was afraid that he would not return in time to participate in the uprising. Indeed, in Hanoi the time for the uprising to win political power for the people was about to arrive.

I looked at my watch. It was 0100 hours. I returned to the Revolutionary Military Committee and saw that the comrades were still deeply buried in their work. Who could sleep at a time like that? According to information arriving from the outskirts, the revolutionary masses were coming in from the villages via roads and railroads, and cheers and the shouting of slogans could be heard everywhere. In many places, groups of people, bearing weapons, knives, and mattocks, had dug up the roads and cut off communications with the city proper. The sound of drums, gongs, horns, etc., filled the sky. In the city, on all streets and in all houses people were sewing flags and writing slogans. At midnight people began to assemble on all the streets. The combat self-defense unit members who had weapons drilled, while those who were unarmed obtained knives, sabers, or broadswords. The whole city was awake, anxiously awaiting the dawn of a new era. I had intended to take a short nap but could not go to sleep. I was restless and excited and could not sit still. Since I had assumed responsibility for military command in Hanoi I had alternately been pleased and worried, pleased that under the leadership of the Party the revolutionary masses had struggled arduously for years and were now about to enter the decisive period, but worried that at 24 I had little leadership experience and my level of military knowledge was still low, but my responsibility was very great. But that worry was a result of maturation. It served to remind me and stimulate me to make greater progress, and caused me to have confidence in the collective and in the strength of the organized masses. It was certain that tomorrow's uprising would win a complete victory.

On the morning of 19 August all of Hanoi was arising in struggles. Immense forests of red flags with gold stars had sprouted up all over the city. The factories and government offices shut down, the markets were vacant, and stores were closed. The electric tramway and the buses were not running. There were no bicycles or carts on the streets. Pedestrians walked along in solitude.

All of Hanoi was responding to the Revolutionary Military Committee's appeal for them to take to the streets.

Clearly manifesting their vanguard class role, the workers of the Yen Phu power plant, the waterworks, the Gia Lam railroad station, the Avia and Stai garages, the saw mill, etc., formed into neat ranks in front of the factories, held high Viet Minh flags, and singing the "Song of Advancing Troops" marched to the assembly points. Many of them carried sabers, broadswords, pitchforks, and even hammers, shovels, crowbars, coal shovels, marching along very bravely. As they went they shouted slogans:

-- "Overthrow the puppet government!"

-- "Set up a revolutionary people's administration."

-- "Support the Viet Minh!"

From the five gates of the city peasants from the villages on the outskirts poured into Hanoi to join ranks with the workers of Nga Tu So and take the Hoan Long agency before entering the city proper to participate in the rally. The district chief, Dang Vu Niet, had fled. The militiamen stationed at the Hoan Long agency were won over by the Viet Minh cadres and turned their weapons over to the revolution. The streets leading into the city, from the Cay Giay suburb, the Kim Ma bus station, the Cho Dua suburb, the Trung Hien intersection, the Cau Den suburb, the Dong Mao suburb, the Tu Vong intersection, and Kim Lien to the head of the Yen Phu suburb, around Ho Tay, and on to Buoi market and Nghia Do, and from the other side of the Red River and Gia Lam to Long Bien bridge, Ben Nua, etc., were full of groups of revolutionary masses led by self-defense youths. The boys wore brown shirts with rolled-up sleeves, were hatless, and wore white rubber sandals. The girls wore kerchiefs and brown blouses and went barefoot. Bearing a gun, a spear, a broadsword, a dagger, a machete, or a sickle, they proudly marched into Hanoi, flooding the city like a torrent, drawing in people along the way. Even the people in the city of Ha Dong and the districts of Thanh Tri, Thuong Tin, Phu Xuyen, Dan Phuong, Hoai Duc, etc., enthusiastically marched on Hanoi.

The city's people formed into ranks. Workers, youths, women, officials, student, intellectuals, artists, etc., marched in neat, well-groomed groups.

Some people even wore new clothes to the rally. The scene was as happy as a holiday or Tet. When people encountered one another they wanted to converse, even about things that happened only a day or two ago, and sometimes they talked even if they had already heard the news:

-- "I haven't seen such a gathering since I was a child. Everyone on my street -- old and young, men and women -- is here. No one is at home."

-- "I've heard that early this morning the Japanese returned our weapons by truck."

-- "The self-defense unit members are truly bold. Five of them stood shoulder-to-shoulder and stopped four Japanese tanks. The Japanese are so cruel but had to give in to us."

-- "At Buoi market in Gia Lam the people held a rally and a march, then set up a revolutionary administration."

-- "We confiscated all of the weapons of the Hoan Long agency, and all of them were good."

The people smiled and spoke with one another, but their ranks were orderly. Red flags with gold stars were flying everywhere, undulating like waves, undulating in an endless procession, covering the streets and the sidewalks.

"Hurrah for the Hoang Dieu Assault Youth unit!"

-- "Hurrah! Hurrah!"

-- "Stand aside, make way for them to come in."

The Hoang Dieu Assault Youth company was arriving from the direction of Mo market, to the resounding applause of clapping. When they reached the head of Trang Tien Street they formed into ranks three-abreast, shouldering guns and carrying broadswords, bravely marching under large Viet Minh flags made of satin and fringed with glitter, on the bottom which were embroidered in gold thread "Hoang Dieu Assault Youth Unit." The Municipal National Salvation Women's Association had just presented them with the flag.

The members of the Municipal Revolutionary Military Committee accompanying the groups had all arrived. Later I learned that comrade Tran Tu Binh of the Regional Party Committee also participated in that historic rally.

We felt very excited and uneasy. Looking down from the Municipal Opera House, the streets of Hanoi looked strangely grandiose. A sea of humanity was stirring into a tornado, into peerless strength, and advancing to defeating the enemy troops and winning independence and freedom for the homeland.

During the morning of that day the sky above Hanoi suddenly became very sunny. It was sunny but there was a wind. Flags fluttered in the breeze, which kindled in everyone the flames of struggle. Hanoi practically shook from the echoes of shouted slogans:

-- "Down with the Tran Trong Kim puppet government."

-- "Form the Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam!"

-- "Support the Viet Minh."

-- "Vietnam forever!"

-- "Soldiers! Take along your weapons and fight in the ranks of the Viet Minh."

As ordered by the Revolutionary Military Committee, the rally began at 1100 hours, in an excited, seething atmosphere. After a minute of remembrance of the revolutionary warriors who sacrificed for the independence of the homeland, three rounds

signalled the flag saluting ceremony. The refrain of the "Song of Advancing Soldiers" arose majestically. Resplendent red flags with gold stars, shining with the gold of autumn, gradually moved to the middle of the square. From an upper floor of the Opera House thousands of leaflets fluttered down like white birds greeting the revolutionary festival day.

The sound of clapping grew in intensity when comrade Nguyen Huy Khoi stepped before the microphone to read the appeal of the Hanoi Revolutionary Military Committee:

"Dear compatriots!

"On behalf of the Viet Minh, from this rostrum we send our cordial national salvation greetings to all the people who have come in large numbers to participate enthusiastically in today's demonstration. That enthusiastic participation is a very optimistic sign which demonstrates your ardent patriotism and the sincere confidence you have placed in the Viet Minh

"At a time when the Japanese army, following the orders of the Emperor of Japan, have been defeated on all fronts and the French imperialists, who are nurturing the crazy ambition of restoring their rule in Indochina, are beginning to eagerly operate, we must have a clear, truly proper, truly resolute attitude!

"... As regards the French, who harbor the evil intention of restoring their rule in Indochina, we must deal with them resolutely and must, if necessary, be determined to fight them and oppose their acts of aggression as well as those of all the other imperialists.

"But if that is to be accomplished, the most important task at present is that we form the Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, with the participation of the people, so that we can determine our destiny.

"Fellow compatriots!

"Have self-confidence, be self-reliant, and let the world see the rich elan and resolute fighting will of the Vietnamese people, who are always striving for a prosperous life and independence. Join us in shouting the following slogans:

"Overthrow all forces violating the independence of Vietnam!

"Down with the French, who want to restore their sovereignty in Indochina!

-- "Down with the puppet government of Tran Trong Kim!

-- "Form the Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam!

-- "A completely independent Vietnam!

-- "Hurrah for the success of the liberation revolution."

The response of 200,000 people resounded thunderously each time comrade Khoi shouted a slogan.

Then, under the guidance of the Revolutionary Military Committee, the rally became an armed demonstration which went to occupy the various places in the city.

The group that would occupy the Palace of the Viceroy was under the direct command of comrade Nguyen Khang, Chairman of the Revolutionary Military Committee. When the demonstration, led by a combat self-defense detachment, neared the Palace of the Viceroy the leaders of the "Provisional Political Committee" ordered the gates closed and deployed troops within the iron fence, their guns pointed toward the outside, to oppose the revolution. The night before they had deployed two additional militia companies to defend the Palace of the Viceroy. But despite all dangers the masses continued to clamorously advance, in front of the gun barrels of the militia.

A comrade leading the demonstration self-confidently appealed, "Militiamen! The Japanese bandits have surrendered. The entire nation, under the leadership of the Viet Minh is arising to win independence for the homeland. The puppets are taking advantage of you to oppose the revolution. Turn your guns around and stand on the side of the Viet Minh to save the nation and your families!"

The militiamen within the iron fence listened to the appeal, then looked at one another and looked at the spirited demonstrators, who were approaching the Palace of the Viceroy. The militia commander, pale-faced and confused, didn't know what to do. Some combat self-defense unit members quickly jumped over the iron fence and into the courtyard. Meanwhile, some National Salvation Association members circled around to the back and scaled the wall of the palace. Not daring to resist, the militiamen (including a number of our agents) immediately surrendered and stacked their weapons in the middle of the courtyard. In all, there were 200 weapons. The Revolutionary Military Committee immediately armed the self-defense unit members to increase their combat strength and ordered the iron gates opened. The demonstrators poured into the courtyard. An older worker went up to the roof, pulled down the royal flag, and raised the gold-starred red flag. The cheers of the masses grew in intensity.

The gate of the Palace of the Viceroy was opened. Comrades Tran Tu Binh and Nguyen Khang went directly to the offices of the heads of the "Provisional Political Committee." One of them rudely asked, "Who are you? What do you want?"

Comrade Tran Tu Binh, with a serious expression on his face, said sternly, "In the name of the Tonkin Revolutionary Military Committee, we are ordering the arrest of the leaders of the 'Political Committee'!"

The self-defense unit members immediately rushed up, arrested them, and led them away.

Then comrade Tran Tu Binh telephoned the puppet province chiefs in Ha Nam, Nam Dinh, Bac Ninh, etc., and informed them that the Viet Minh had carried out a successful uprising in Hanoi. He also ordered them to surrender. Anyone who resisted would be severely punished.

After firing six rounds to signal the victory the demonstrators advanced to the City Hall. The mayor was waiting to surrender to the revolutionary troops. At

the Security Service the Chief of Police assembled the remaining personnel -- more than 60 in all -- to explain the situation and turn over all documents and dossiers to us.

At the other places, such as the Hoa Lo prison, the Japanese arsenal, the Avia and Han garages, the Bescier bicycle factory, etc., the self-defense units and National Salvation workers disarmed the militia, posted guards, and formed workers' committees to manage the workshops.

Now let us mention the armed demonstrators who were assigned the mission of taking the militia camp at 40 Hang Bai Street. When the militiamen standing guard saw the revolutionary forces coming they became frightened and looked into the camp, in part to await orders from their commanders and in part to look for a way to escape.

Seeing that the camp's gate was locked, we sent a self-defense unit member to go up to the gate and order the guard to "Open the gate so that the revolutionary troops can enter!" The guard replied that he had to await orders from the major.

The situation at that time demanded urgent action, so we ordered that the gate be blown open immediately. The time had come when we had to resolutely attack and could not hesitate for a moment.

Under pressure of the revolution, they had to come out and open the gate. The self-defense forces advanced into the courtyard and immediately surrounded the camp. An officer hurriedly rushed up and told us that his Major wanted to negotiate with the revolutionary commander. I advised the unit commander to deploy a reaction force while a number of our cadres and self-defense unit members went inside to meet with the militia commanders.

The commander of the militia camp was a major named Thu Truoc who had studied at a French officers' school in the "mother country." When the French threw out the Japanese he abandoned his old master and followed a new master. He was one of the people who had actively approved the policy of requesting weapons from the Japanese and relying on them to oppose the revolution. He was about 40 years old, with strange, shifty facial features. Although he tried to remain calm, when we glanced at his face we saw that he was perplexed about the tens of thousands of the masses who were surrounding the militia camp. That was true not only of Thu but of all of his lower-echelon officers and men: all of their faces were terrified and they were waiting to see what their fate would be. The officers sat together; when they were not stealing a glance at us they were turning their heads and looking out at the demonstrators.

Thu stared at us. His eyes narrowed and he suddenly blurted out, "I want to meet your commander." I replied, "I am the commander of the revolutionary forces," and looked directly at him.

Thu opened his eyes wide, as if he were amazed and also if he were looking down at me. He apparently thought that I was young and was surprised that I was the commander. But then regained his composure. He smiled and politely invited me to

be seated. He was the first to speak: "We received your letter yesterday. We discussed matters, but" He stammered for a long time, then continued "...had to submit it to the upper echelon."

We knew all about his plot. His upper echelon was none other than the Japanese. It was certain that last night, after receiving his ultimatum, he had requested the aid of the Japanese. I immediately informed him: "Your upper echelon has already capitulated and turned over the government to the revolution. Now, how about you?"

Thu nodded his head, but he continued to glance out onto the street, as if waiting for something. Then he said, "Yes, I know. The Palace of the Viceroy has ...been lost...."

Not letting him finish, I continued to attack:

"First of all, assemble your troops and turn over your weapons to the revolution." I quickly looked in all directions and saw that the militiamen were waiting anxiously. I continued, deliberately speaking loudly to win over the officers and men under his command, who did not yet know what the revolution's policy toward them would be:

"All officers and enlisted men who want to return to their homes will be assisted by the revolution. Anyone who volunteers to follow the revolution will be accepted."

When he heard me refer to turning over weapons Thu's face reddened. He gave me a spiteful look, then interrupted me: "Yes, our forces are still intact. Yes, we would like to join the revolution. I propose that at first things remain unchanged. We have a professional military force. The officers and men always obey my orders."

From what he was saying I realized that he was worried, but was still obstinately demanding that he retain control of the military forces in order to carry out his cunning plot.

I immediately warned him, "You are mistaken. The revolutionary army has taken nearly all objectives in the city. The strength of hundreds of thousands of people is very great, a hundred or a thousand times greater than yours. If you intend to oppose us you will be resolutely punished by the revolutionary forces."

Thu glanced downward and said hesitantly, "But your forces lack weapons and the people know little of military matters. I think that if the French return you can't stand up to them."

I pointedly replied, "We not only can stand up to them but will throw them out if they dare mess with Vietnam again."

Thu smiled a forced smile and glanced out to the street. Clearly, since the negotiations began Thu had not truly wanted to capitulate to the revolution, and his plot was stalling for time until the Japanese arrived to save him. It was

necessary to take decisive action immediately, and not merely waste words with that cunning major. I signalled with my eyes to the cadres standing beside me. They understood my intention and went out into the courtyard. I remained behind and said to Thu, as if giving him an order, "You must now turn over everything to the revolution."

He continued his delaying tactic: "We have agreed to follow you. But let us keep our weapons."

I was resolute: "There will be no exceptions. All weapons in the militia camp must immediately be turned over to the revolution!"

Thu was forced to get up. He walked out of the room. But his face looked as if it had been drained of blood and his eyes became listless when he looked out into the courtyard and saw that, thanks to guidance provided by our agents, our self-defense personnel had taken nearly all of the important positions in the camp, as well as the weapons.

The revolutionary masses on the outside, under the command of the cadres, were angrily demanding that matters be quickly settled. Under the strong pressure of the revolutionary forces, Thu's face grew even paler and he had to hang down his head and respond: "All right, wait a few minutes."

Within half an hour the revolutionary troops had disarmed all of the militiamen, and after our policies were explained to them nearly all of them applauded and supported the Viet Minh Front. Some of them volunteered to join the ranks of the revolution.

Suddenly, outside the gate, there was unusually strong yelling and slogan shouting. No one knew what was happening there, but everyone was calm, tightened their ranks, and prepared to cope with any eventuality. Then a self-defense unit member ran in and reported that Japanese tanks had arrived to surround the revolutionary troops. Hearing that, Thu intended to escape, but one of our men immediately forced him to sit quietly. The expression in his eyes seemed to say that he regretted that the Japanese had arrived too late.

We immediately changed over to coping with that new situation. We telephoned comrade Nguyen Khang to inform him of the situation while also deploying combat-ready self-defense units and sending cadres to talk with the Japanese. At first the Japanese sternly demanded that the revolutionary troops be disarmed and that the militia camp be returned. When they learned of that, some self-defense cadres and men became angry and said, "They have been defeated but are still insolent. The upper echelon should let us teach them a lesson."

-- "Let's fight the fascists. They want to disarm us? We'll dismember them! Fight!"

The Municipal Party Committee had a general policy toward the Japanese. At that moment it was even more important to firmly grasp and strictly implement that policy. Furthermore, the experience of the struggle on the previous night indicated that if we cleverly used the mass forces we could overwhelm the Japanese.

No one approved the proposal that we fight the Japanese right away. A matter of urgent importance was that we explain to our men the policy of the Municipal Party Committee, while also rapidly bolstering the ranks of the masses in order to surround the enemy. The morale of the revolutionary troops was high and they increasingly closed ranks. We had confidence in that strength, so we prepared to fight while I went to struggle with and over the Japanese. I told them:

"You have been defeated and the Allied troops will soon arrive to disarm and repatriate you. Your parents, wives and children, and brothers and sisters are awaiting you. If you cause trouble for us we are determined to fight and defeat you, and you will needlessly lose your lives. Our revolution has succeeded all over Vietnam. It would be best if you returned to your former positions. You should not intervene in the internal affairs of the Vietnamese people.

When I finished speaking the masses assembled around me shouted in unison:

-- "Support the Viet Minh!"

-- "Independent Vietnam forever!"

-- "The Viet Minh forever!"

The prolonged, earthshaking shouting frightened the Japanese. The Japanese officer, who had been arrogant, became pale-faced and slowly lowered the sword he was holding in his hand.

Meanwhile, news was received that the self-defense forces were arriving from the Palace of the Viceroy to reinforce us, followed by an enormous group of demonstrators. Faced with that situation, the Japanese became even more confused. The masses shouted struggle slogans with increasing intensity, while the encirclement became increasingly thick and tight. In the afternoon the Japanese were forced to withdraw to their former positions. The strength of the revolutionary masses had prevailed. Thus by the afternoon of 19 August the occupation of the key headquarters organs of the puppet government had been completed (except for the Bach Mai radio station and the Bank of Indochina -- which is now the State Bank), and the uprising to win political power in Hanoi had ended in victory.

At the request of the Ha Dong Uprising Committee the Hanoi Municipal Party Committee sent a combat self-defense unit commanded by comrade Mai Hanh that had just participated in the taking of the militia camp to help defeat the very obstinate quisling adjutant Duong, a lackey of the Japanese.

We later learned that news of the victorious uprising in Hanoi, which smashed the enemy's headquarters organs in Tonkin, spread rapidly to the neighboring provinces and caused the enemy to become even more perplexed and in disarray, which decisively affected the success of the August Revolution throughout the nation.

In Hanoi, the night of 19 August was a night of victory celebrations. The lights in the government offices and along the streets, which had been blacked out as a precaution against air raids, were now shining brightly. The whole city was lit up and was no longer in darkness. The enraptured masses, with bright faces, noisily marched along the streets. Everyone felt happy. Many people were so

happy they cried. The yoke of oppression and exploitation imposed by the Japanese fascists and their lackeys the feudal royalists had been smashed by the strength of violence. The revolution had changed the life of the people of Hanoi, and Hanoi could now live with independence and freedom. During those historic, glorious hours the streets were ablaze with red. At the gate of the Tonkin Palace there was always a crowd of people looking over the city's largest flag, which was flying from the flagpole. A self-defense unit member, wearing a cartridge belt, holding a weapon, and with a proud expression on his face, stood guard at the gate. Now and then an automobile of the Revolutionary Military Committee, flying a gold-starred red flag, arrived. The people in the vicinity would rush into the street and run behind it, shouting "Vietnam is completely independent!" "Support the Viet Minh!" The automobile would move along slowly. Thus the event was transformed into a demonstration. All over the city there were dozens of such spontaneous demonstrations.

Everyone was overflowing with happiness over such scenes.

That victory was a victory for our Party's correct line, and especially for the correct, wise leadership of the Party Central Committee and the Tonkin Regional Party Committee of the revolutionary movement in Hanoi. The Party Central Committee had many times pointed out to the Municipal Party Committee that in carrying out the August Revolution in Hanoi, the political and cultural center of the nation, it was necessary to rely principally on the workers' movement and to rely on the workers' and peasants' forces as the main-force troops of the revolution. It was necessary to pay special attention to proselytizing the youths, middle school students, and college students. It was necessary to have a correct policy, achieve solidarity, rally all national forces in a solid, broad bloc, maintain a monopoly in leading the revolution, and know how to divide and isolate the enemy to a high degree and advance to overthrowing them.

The correct, accurate leadership of the Party Central Committee and the Municipal Party Committee was also manifested in the policy of stressing the development of the revolutionary forces in both the city and the rural areas and always combining the revolutionary struggle movement in the city with the revolutionary struggle in the rural areas, in order to prepare for both places when there are conditions for them to arise together, to arise to victoriously win political power. The leadership of the Party Central Committee and the Regional Party Committee set up safety zones adjacent to Hanoi and by means of deploying a special guidance system created many favorable conditions for the Hanoi party organization to operate effectively.

The victory of the Hanoi uprising was also a result of the direct leadership of dozens of cadres of the Municipal Party Committee and of the cadres and members of the Hanoi party organization. The cadres and party members of Hanoi endured hardships and sacrifices; despite the white terror of the French and Japanese, one followed in the footsteps of another, without concern for the extremely difficult conditions, such as imprisonment, torture, and death, remaining close to the masses, enlightening them, and organizing them to participate in the revolution. Although it was often suppressed, the Hanoi Municipal Party Committee continued to be persistent and irrepressible and to nurture the revolutionary movement. When the opportunity arose, on the basis of firmly grasping the line and resolution of the Party and with confidence in the strength of the masses, it was

responsive to the situation, manifested a spirit of taking the initiative in attacking the enemy and, without depending on the forces of the Party Central Committee, bravely and promptly mobilized the masses to use on-the-spot forces to carry out an uprising to win political power.

We profoundly understood that that victory was also a victory for the peerless strength of the masses.

The people in Hanoi and its outskirts had inherited the tradition of brave combat of their forefathers. In 1930 the workers of the Avia company set an example in struggling bravely against the French colonialists. The workers, the poor people, and the peasants outside the city, not fearing danger of imprisonment, readily hid and provided for the revolutionary leaders and fighters. The rallies of the workers in front of the Auction Building in Hanoi, the election of candidates to the Indochinese Democratic Front, led by our Party, in the past, and the resolute uprisings in the historic month of August proved that the people of Hanoi would never give in to the military power of the imperialists, had confidence in our Party, and believed that only it could lead the masses in successfully carrying out a revolution and bringing about a prosperous, happy life.

That victory was also a victory for the policy of promptly building up the local armed forces in Hanoi, with positive, active measures and prudently and boldly paying attention to both quantity and quality, attacking selectively, and combining development with combat. After the political struggle bases and movement of the masses, under the guidance of the Party Central Committee and the Regional Party Committee, combining political struggle with armed struggle to mobilize a high tide of uprising and victoriously carry out the uprising.

Hanoi! During the night of victory celebrations on one wanted to sleep. The streets were crowded with people, who shouted revolutionary slogans as they went.

The Revolutionary Military Committee, the national salvation associations, and the self-defense unit members worked tirelessly, for everyone was overflowing with happiness over the victory of a new era.

The Hanoi uprising had succeeded.

Previously they had been workers, peasants, officials, and students who lived precariously under the harsh ruling yoke of the imperialists and feudalists, but now they had seized political power and created a new life in the largest city in Vietnam with their own hands.

An urgent task facing us was to organize and manage the newly established revolutionary governmental apparatus and to quickly normalize all aspects of life in the city. The Municipal Party Committee especially paid attention to developing and consolidating the armed forces in order to defend the recently won results of the revolution and promptly suppress the reactionaries who were plotting to restore the lackey administration of the imperialists. The combat self-defense unit members who had participated in the uprising and were now stationed at the militia camp were reorganized and fully armed. At the same time, we urgently recruited into the army outstanding youths between the ages of 18 and 40 who were

members of workers', peasants', and national salvation youth associations, thus increasing the Hanoi armed forces to five battalions, not counting tens of thousands of combat self-defense unit members who were maintaining security and defending the base-level revolutionary administrations in the wards, enterprises, and villages. The Municipal Party Committee also directed the building of the Phan Dinh Phung arsenal, the first national defense enterprise in Hanoi, which later participated in the "Advance South" army and fulfilled the mission of transporting weapons to Nam Bo.

It may be said that after the victory of the uprising the Municipal Party Committee, which had many tasks to carry out, knew how to grasp the principal problems, such as building and consolidating the armed forces, continuing to mobilize patriotism and a spirit of revolutionary vigilance, overcoming the aftereffects of the flood, being concerned with the lives of the people, etc. Therefore, all accomplishments of the revolution were maintained and it contributed effectively to the general uprising to win political power rapidly and effectively throughout the nation.

There occurred another important historical event which the Vietnamese people in Hanoi and throughout the nation will always remember: the declaration of independence on 2 September 1945, the birth day of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.

After the uprising the armed forces of Hanoi, the backbone of which were the combat self-defense units, became the National Salvation Army and later the Liberation Army. Comrade Vuong Thua Vu was named commander and I was assigned to be the political officer. The Municipal Party Committee bestowed on the Hanoi armed forces the great honor of protecting the solemn meeting held in Ba Dinh park on 2 September.

Since early morning Hanoi had been aflame with red flags. The people of Hanoi again took to the streets. On 19 August they had taken to the streets to carry out a victorious uprising. Today they were taking to the streets to celebrate independence. Never had so many people of Hanoi taken to the streets. Including some compatriots who had come in from the provinces, there were nearly a million people in all. A torrent of people again surged toward Ba Dinh Square. Old people and young, men and women, workers, peasants, Liberation Army troops, guerrillas, self-defense unit members, intellectuals, etc., everyone in their newest, best clothing and wearing all kinds of bright colors, marched along shouting slogans:

- "Vietnam for the Vietnamese!"
- "Independence or death."
- "Support the Provisional Government!"
- "Support President Ho Chi Minh!"

At 1200 hours delegations of the various circles arrived to participate in the ceremony and stood in the designated areas around Ba Dinh park.

The greatest happiness of my life, my greatest honor, and my greatest source of inspiration, which would inspire me throughout the revolutionary struggle that would follow, was meeting Uncle Ho. During the latter part of August we heard that Uncle Ho and a delegation of the Provisional Government had arrived from the war zone and was staying at Phu Gia village in the township of Phu Thuong outside Hanoi. The members of the Hanoi Uprising Committee who had gone to greet Uncle Ho returned and told a very moving story about his return to Hanoi. On that day, at about 1500, a fishing boat coming from upstream stopped at Phu Gia Village. A small ferry boat went out to meet it. A group of cadres crossed over from the large boat to the ferry. In the group there was an old man wearing brown clothing and an old hat. A blue scarf concealed his sparse black beard. From his shoulder hung a pouch. After the old man crossed over to the ferry he suddenly turned around and told a cadre who was still aboard the boat, "Bring me the palm-leaf fan hanging from the roof of the cabin!"

The old man was our beloved Uncle Ho. The possessions Uncle Ho brought back from the war zone included a small typewriter and a knapsack which contained a suit of dark blue clothing and a palm-leaf fan. A few days later, before he read the historic Declaration of Independence, he took needle and thread from the knapsack and sewed a button the thread of which had unravelled. Although during the years I was engaging in secret activity I had heard many moving stories about Uncle Ho but now, standing in square and awaiting Uncle Ho, I imagined that he, the leader of the revolution and of the enterprise of expelling the French and the Japanese, the person who brought about independence for the homeland, had to be an extraordinary person, from his posture and dress to his manner of speaking. But I was mistaken. The Government convoy entered the square and gradually came to a halt. An old man who was a little thin, with bright eyes, a high forehead, and a spare beard, and wearing faded khaki clothing, an old hat, and white rubber sandals, quickly got out of the automobile and led the delegation of the Provisional Government to the podium.

Uncle Ho appeared for the first time on Independence Day, before about a million people in Hanoi, in such simple dress.

In a clear voice, Uncle Ho read the Declaration of Independence:

"... A people who have fought side by side with the Allies against the fascists during these last years, such a people must be free and independent!

"For these reasons, we, members of the Provisional Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam solemnly declare to the world that:

"Vietnam has the right to be a free and independent country and in fact it is so already. The entire Vietnamese people are determined to mobilize all their physical and mental strength, to sacrifice their lives and property in order to safeguard their independence and liberty."

As he was reading the Declaration, Uncle Ho paused and suddenly asked, "Can you clearly understand when I speak?"

Ever since those immortal phrases and his affectionate question -- "Can you clearly understand when I speak?" -- have rung in my ears. Every sentence and every

word he spoke was full of the great thoughts, of an iron-like will which no enemy could shake.

His words on that day were engraved deeply in the hearts and minds of the Vietnamese people and have become a *raison d'etre*, a life-long struggle goal, of our entire Vietnamese nation.

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