

NGUYỄN PHÚ TRỌNG

**RENEWAL
IN
VIỆT NAM**

THEORY AND REALITY



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CHAPTER ONE:

RENEWAL—THE LAW OF AND DEMAND FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

THE 6TH PARTY CONGRESS OPENS UP A NEW PERIOD OF NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT¹

The 6th National Congress of the Communist Party of Việt Nam² has been successful. It has highlighted the Party's commitment to the renewal process and determination to march forward in unity.

Having gathered up the wisdom of the entire Party, in a spirit of looking straight at the truth, appraising it properly and telling it clearly, and changing its thinking, organization and working style, the Congress conducted straightforward and democratic debates and made a correct assessment of the country's overall situation. It also summed up past experiences and defined the tasks and objectives of the Vietnamese revolution in the time to come.

With its achievements, the Congress marked a significant turn in the country's revolution, lived up to the expectations of the entire Party and people, and opened up about a new period of national development.

While reaffirming the achievements, the Congress pointed out difficulties and deeply analyzed the shortcomings, mistakes, and errors that the Party and people should strive to overcome. The all-embracing shortcoming was that "we have failed to achieve the objective set by the 5th Congress, namely to stabilize basically the socio-economic situation and the people's livelihood."³

1 Article in *Cộng Sản* (The Communist) Review, No. 1, 1987.

2 The National Representative Congress of the Communist Party of Việt Nam convened in Hà Nội from 15 to 18 December 1986.

3 Communist Party of Việt Nam: *Văn kiện Đại hội đại biểu toàn quốc lần thứ VI* (Official Documents of the 6th National Representative Congress), Sự thật (Truth) Publishing House, 1987. p. 19.

The Congress maintained that the shortcomings and mistakes of the Party and the State were serious and prolonged ones related to major directions and policies, mistakes in strategic guidance and implementation of organization. The main ideological trend of those shortcomings, especially the ones in economic policies, was one of subjectivism, voluntarism, simplistic thinking and hasty action following one's own wishes, and failure to grasp objective laws and act according to them. This was a petty bourgeois ideology, both "leftist" and rightist.

In the last analysis, those mistakes and shortcomings in socio-economic management derived from shortcomings in the Party's ideological, organizational and personnel work. This was the cause of all causes. The Party Central Committee, Secretariat and the Council of Ministers conducted a serious self-criticism over the shortcomings of theirs.

With an objective and scientific analysis of realities of the country's revolution in recent years, the Congress drew the following four major lessons: *First*, in all its activities, the Party should be imbued with the idea of "taking the people as the roots," so as to cultivate and promote the working people's as collective masters and tighten the relations between the Party and the masses.

Second, the Party should always proceed from reality and act in keeping with objective laws.

Third, the Party should be able to combine the nation's strength with that of our time in the new circumstances.

Fourth, the Party should make itself equal to the political tasks of a ruling party leading the people in implementing a socialist revolution.

These are invaluable lessons of major importance to the activities in the coming years.

The Congress pointed out that in the remaining years of the first stage of the transition period, effective measures should be taken to stabilize the rapidly changing country's socio-economic situation, put all activities into an orbit of normal development, carry out reforms in organization and management, and set up new production and

management structures. The Congress stressed, "The overriding tasks and overall objectives for the remaining years of the first stage are to stabilize comprehensively the socio-economic situation and to continue creating the necessary premises for stepping up socialist industrialization at the next stage."¹

Stabilization of the socio-economic situation means to stabilize production, distribution, and circulation alike; to stabilize the people's material and cultural life; to enhance the efficiency of the managerial apparatus restore order and discipline and achieve social equity. Stability should neither be separated from nor opposed to development; it should instead be closely linked to development in the forward motion. Stability is to serve development, and development, in its turn, ensures stability.

From the above general task and overall objective, the Congress identified the following concrete socio-economic targets for the remaining years of the first stage:

First, make ends meet and ensure some savings;

Second, initially create a reasonable economic structure conducive to production expansion;

Third, establish new production relations in conformity with the nature and development level of the productive forces;

Fourth, bring about positive social changes.

Finally, satisfy national defense and security enhancement needs.

Achieving these five targets, Việt Nam will be able to end up the first stage of the transition period creating the necessary premises for carrying out industrialization on a larger scale in the following years.

The most positive and important measure to fulfil these tasks and achieve these targets is to revise economic and social policies with a view to promoting the working people's role as masters and their enthusiasm to motivate the masses to apply themselves to fulfilling revolutionary tasks, thus "unleashing all available production potentials, tapping all of the country's underlying resources and

¹ Communist Party of Việt Nam: Op. cit., p. 42.

making efficient use of international assistance for the vigorous development of the productive forces along with establishment and consolidation of socialist production relations.”¹

More specifically, it is imperative in the coming time to restructure production and effect a major investment restructuring, establish and strengthen socialist production relations, use and reform properly the economic sectors, revise the economic management mechanism; vigorously promote science and technology as a driving force; broaden and raise the efficiency of external economic relations; and carry out well social policies, ensuring forceful promotion of the human factor and serving human beings. Human and material resources should really be focused on realizing the three major economic programs: for food and foodstuffs, consumer goods and exports.

While giving top priority to the task of building socialism, the Communist Party and people of Việt Nam should constantly strengthen national defense and security to safeguard the Homeland and foil all hostile forces' sabotage plots.

With regard to foreign relations, the Party advocates combining the nation's strength with that of our time, striving to maintain peace in Indochina, contributing to preserving peace in Southeast Asia and the rest of the world, and taking advantage of favorable international conditions for the country's socialist construction and national defense, while contributing actively to the world peoples' common struggle for peace, national independence, democracy and socialism.

The 6th Party Congress's major decisions have concretized the general guideline and those on economic construction in our country. They originated from a review of the rich realities of the Vietnamese revolution in the recent years and matched the fundamental theses of Marxism-Leninism on the period of transition to socialism in an underdeveloped agricultural country. The decisions reflected an initial renewal in the Party's thinking and proved a new step forward in its leadership over the socialist revolution and socio-economic construction.

¹ Communist Party of Việt Nam: Op. cit., p. 47.

... Enhancing the Party's leadership capacity and combativeness, thus making it equal to the revolutionary tasks at the new stage serves as an urgent requirement of decisive significance. The extensiveness and complexity of the revolutionary tasks at the new stage requires that the Party should mature continuously in political leadership, develop and concretize guidelines, and map out sound solutions to newly arising issues related to socialist construction and national defense. The Party should raise its combativeness and practical organizational ability along with improving the State's socio-economic management efficiency. The Party should undertake renewal in many fields: thinking, in the first place economic thinking, organization, personnel work, leadership style and working method. Only when it is consolidated and strengthened politically, ideologically and organizationally can the Party be strong enough to lead the Việt Nameese people to fulfill revolutionary tasks in the new stage.

... In order to improve the State's governance efficiency, it is necessary to carry out a major reform of the State apparatus towards ensuring compactness, quality, and a contingent of politically qualified personnel with State, economic and social management skills. This apparatus should be able to institutionalize the Party's guidelines and directions into laws and specific policies; to design socio-economic strategies and concretize them into socio-economic development plans; to carry out socio-administrative and economic-administrative management; to run economic and social activities according to plans; to maintain law, State discipline and social order; and to strengthen national defense and security.

On the other hand, it is imperative to enhance the socialist legal system and use its strength to govern the country and society. Attention should be paid to the elaboration, education, dissemination and interpretation of laws. Violations of the law should be severely punished. No one should be allowed to abuse his/her position to act in contravention of the law. Only when legislation is strictly assured can Party and State decisions be realized and social order maintained.

In order to successfully implement the 6th Party Congress Resolution, it is of utmost importance to promote strongly the

people's right as masters and generate enthusiastic movements for revolutionary actions among the masses. Revolution is an undertaking of the masses. Past achievements show that only by promoting the active and innovative role of the masses and giving rise to revolutionary movements of theirs can sound Party and State policies be turned into lively realities. Failure to motivate the masses will never bring about any genuine people's revolution. All the targets set by the 6th Congress can only be achieved through the creative revolutionary actions of tens of millions of people all over the country...

THE COMMUNIST MANIFESTO AND THE RENOVATION MISSION IN VIỆT NAM¹

The Communist Manifesto is an immortal theoretical work, a political credo full of the vitality of scientific communism, written by K. Marx and F. Engels and first published on February 24th, 1848 in London. Since then, despite the many ups and downs of the world, the *Manifesto* is still the scientific theoretical foundation, an ideological flag and a lodestar for the actions of the communist movement and the international working class. And surely, it will live forever in the history of development of humankind's thinking.

The *Manifesto's* long-lasting vitality and great value lie in its profound scientific and revolutionary content. K. Marx and F. Engels used the dialectical and historical materialist method to scientifically explain the objective development of society; the position and the significance of material production as well as of the superstructure; the birth, development, and the inevitable demise of capitalism; the role, the historical mission, and the course of action of the working class to construct a civilized socialist society. According to V. I. Lenin, *The Communist Manifesto* is a work that "states clearly the new worldview, the absolute materialism that covers social activities, the dialectics of the most complete theory about the development, class struggle, and the revolutionary role in the world's history of the proletariat – the class that created a new society – the socialist society."²

Since the birth of the *Manifesto*, the world has witnessed a lot of changes. The success of the October Revolution of the former Soviet

1 Article in *Cộng sản* (The Communist) Review, March 2008.

2 V. I. Lenin, *Complete Works*, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1980, p.26, p.57.

Union, the birth of socialism, and its existence for nearly a century is not chance but inevitability. After all, it is the result of the movement and the development of the conflict rife inside capitalism. At the moment, more than one billion people are still building socialism. The collapse of socialism in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe does not mean that scientific socialism has collapsed, or that socialism is untimely, but is due to many objective and subjective reasons, including the erroneous perception and the implementation of socialist construction, and the over-maintenance of an out-of-date model. Socialism would not collapse if the communist parties subscribed to sound renovation policies. The setback of socialism in this period is only temporary because worldwide socialism with its ups and downs is able to create new developments. Despite its potential for development, capitalism cannot overcome its deeper inner conflicts, especially the ones between the modern, socialized production forces and the private possession of the means of production. Despite its great power and modern media, capitalism cannot solve the problems of injustice, social and ethnic oppression, the difference between the rich and the poor, and environmental pollution. Worldwide capitalism is creating factors to negate itself and forming the premises for the development of socialism. Just as K. Marx and F. Engels stated in the *Manifesto*: “The fall of the bourgeoisie and the victory of the proletariat are equally inevitable.”¹

In reality, since the October 1917 Revolution of the Soviet Union, mankind has moved into a new development period – the transitional period from capitalism to socialism all over the world. This is a long and complicated period during which socialism can be developing at some times and falling into decline at some other times, while capitalism does the same. At some points, capitalism falls into serious crisis and nearly collapses, but sometimes it can regain strength and develop at magical speeds. This is the natural, dialectical movement of the transitional period predicted in the *Manifesto*. It can be said that after hundred of years, the *Manifesto* still keeps its humanitarian communist value but also the most common truths and laws of historical development. “Its morale still

¹ K. Marx and F. Engels, *Complete Works*, National Political Publishing House, Hà Nội, 1995, Vol. 4, p.613.

encourages the whole organized proletarian class who are struggling in the civilized world.”¹

Enlightened by the ideas of the *Manifesto* in particular, and Marxism-Leninism in general, during the past 80 years the Vietnamese Communist Party, founded and trained by President Hồ Chí Minh, has led the Vietnamese revolution to overcome numerous challenges, mobilizing all the resources and combining the strength of the nation with that of the era to gain a glorious victory in the national democratic revolution and step by step carry out the socialist revolution. The lofty goal of the Vietnamese Communist Party agrees with the fundamental ideology of the *Manifesto*; that is, to emancipate the whole society from oppression and exploitation and build a country in which the people are wealthy, the nation is strong, and the society is equitable, democratic and civilized.

For more than 20 years of renovation, Việt Nam has gained great, historic successes. The renovation guideline is the reflection of the creative application and development of Marxism-Leninism to the reality of Việt Nam in the new historical background. The 6th Party Congress (December, 1986) set forth the guideline to completely renovate the whole country, from the way of thinking to the organization of cadres, from the mode of leadership to the working style, from economics to politics, ideology and culture. Renovation is a pressing demand and a life-and-death matter. However, this is not a change in the goal of constructing socialism, but of making this goal more effective by sound conception, suitable forms, steps, and methods.

This renovation of thinking is intended to eliminate the false conceptions and backward ideas of Marxism-Leninism and socialism to creatively apply and develop the principles of Marxism-Leninism in the new situation. Renovating the organization and operational style of the political system will help to improve the quality of the leadership of the Party, the effectiveness of the State’s management, to prove the mastership of the people, as well as to intensify the strength, and the validity of the whole political system to ensure victory of the political missions. All the achievements of the renovation process in

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Complete Works*, *op. cit.*, Vol 2, p.10.

Việt Nam and the happenings in the world in the past have proved that opportunities and challenges appear in a time of change, and without a consistent viewpoint and principles collapse is inevitable. On the other hand, if people are satisfied with the available, rigid, and dogmatic theory without deeper research and a review of reality, they cannot timely change and utilize the opportunities or overcome the difficulties to develop their country. The vitality of *The Communist Manifesto* does not only lie in the general theory and principle but also in the supplementary and creative application in each specific historical background.

The success of the renovation process was first reflected in the economy. During its leadership in the socialist construction process, the Vietnamese Communist Party has always thoroughly grasped the basic ideology of the *Manifesto*, that is, “economic production, and the structure of society of every historical epoch necessarily arising therefrom, constitute the foundation for the political and intellectual history of that epoch.”¹ With that opinion in mind, we know that the construction of socialism in Việt Nam is firstly and centrally the development of the economy. For the past 20 years, the economic policies of the Vietnamese Communist Party have been developed, changing the theoretical thinking, namely from the centralized, subsidized economic theory to socialist-oriented market economic theory, from a single ownership regime to a multi-ownership regime for equal development in which State ownership is the basis, and the State economic sector plays the leading roles. The role of the State has also changed from solely managing and directly interfering with the economy to managing through policies, laws, plans, material sources and other means. The distribution system has been changed from a level and egalitarian distribution to a distribution system based on the working result combined with other ways to contribute to the economy and society. The concept of equality has changed from the equality of distribution and income to an equality of opportunity in which everyone has a chance to succeed. The closed economic idea has changed to the open one to encourage cooperation and integration. The afore-mentioned changes in our economic thinking originated

1 K. Marx and F. Engels, *Complete Works, op. cit.*, Vol. 21, p.11.

from the reality of Việt Nam as a poor and underdeveloped country with out-of-date production forces. Therefore, it is necessary to begin by developing production forces in order to complete the goal of having a wealthy people and a strong and modern country in which the people are the masters and together can enjoy a comfortable and happy life. The basic feature of the socialist-oriented market economy is the multi-ownership regime with many economic sectors co-existing and co-developing under the market mechanism with State management. This economic system requires effective solution of the relationship between economic growth with social progress and equality, which are the two basic goals, steadfast and stable, in all periods of developing the market economy in Việt Nam. Economic growth should go concurrently with the development of society, culture, and education rich in Vietnamese national identity. The State plays the role of the organizer, guide and creator of conditions for the development of the economy.

Along with the renovation of the economy, the Vietnamese political system is also gradually and steadily being renovated. Starting from the ideas about the state and laws in the *Manifesto* and the general ideas of mankind about the construction of the law-governed state, the Vietnamese Communist Party continues to construct and gradually perfect the legally constituted socialist State of the people, for the people and by the people, in which all aspects of life are regulated by laws. This is an objective requirement originating from the intention to build socialism. The Vietnamese Communist Party is deeply aware that the socialist orientation can only be ensured if there is a strong law-governed State under the leadership of the Communist Party based on the theory of Marxism-Leninism and Hồ Chí Minh Thought. This objectivity also originates from the trend of globalization all over the world. The need for economic integration and cooperation requires the renovation of the State and the laws to ensure that it is a continuously growing, effective and efficient State. Although the term “law-governed State” was not officially used, but its basic ideas were mentioned, in the classic works of Marxism-Leninism. These are the ideas of building a new type of State to operate under laws with a democratic legal system to ensure the rights of its citizens. In *The Communist Manifesto*, K. Marx and F.

Engels raised the issue of building a new society in which the State is responsible for organizing the life of the people and ensuring their maximum and complete development. The concept of Freedom in the *Manifesto* was defined as “changing the State as an organization higher than society into one that complies with society”, which is truly the idea of building the law-governed State in the new situation of socialist democracy.

The matter of building a law-governed socialist State in Việt Nam includes building a National Assembly as the highest representative body of the people and the most powerful body of the Socialist Republic of Việt Nam. As a result, the National Assembly is the only organization to make laws, to decide important issues of the country, and supervise the activities of the government. The National Assembly operates based on two main pillars, that is, the National Assembly’s agencies and its deputies who are elected by the people, work for the people and bear responsibility before the people.

The government is the executive body subjective to the highest body of State power; it must observe the Constitution, the laws and the resolutions passed by the National Assembly and reports the activities to the National Assembly. All the activities of the government are supervised by the National Assembly. The government must be pure, reliable, and trusted by the people. It is also the highest administrative body and the highest executive agency, with the responsibility to organize the implementation of the Constitution, the laws, and the resolutions of the National Assembly, to manage socio-economic activities at State level, macroscopically manage the whole economy, and create favorable conditions for all economic sectors to operate. The government’s organizational structure is compact, versatile, and effective and the government does not directly interfere with production and business activities. It does not intervene with the ruling of the courts, not even in administrative cases.

The judicial agencies of Việt Nam are responsible for protecting the laws by correctly applying them and other by-laws. They can be considered to be the intermediaries to translate the power of the State expressed in laws into reality by applying the laws to solving specific cases. If the “power” is reflected fully and correctly through

legislative activities but the “transmission system of power” through judicial activities is not effective, that government is still ineffective. Among the judicial agencies, the courts play the central role; all the other agencies such as investigation agencies, the prosecution, and other subsidiaries (lawyers, notaries, forensic examiners, etc) all serve the trial of the courts. The courts are places where democracy and openness in protecting the laws are centralized. There, people can discover justice, humanity, goodness or cruelty directly and specifically through specific cases. Therefore, building a strong court system is a main part of building a legally-constituted socialist State in Việt Nam. The courts should renovate their organization and operation to ensure the principle: “in trial, the judges and the jury are independent and only abide by laws.” The jurisdiction of the courts should be extended to solving almost all the conflicts in social life.

As the key factor in leading the whole political system and also as a member of that system, for more than 20 years the Vietnamese Communist Party has incessantly been renovating itself to improve its leadership capacity and combativeness. Party building is considered to be a key task, which focuses on improving the political mettle and intellectual ability of the Party, persevering in Marxism-Leninism and Hồ Chí Minh Thought, national independence and socialism. The Vietnamese Communist Party also attaches importance to constructing and strengthening its organization, consolidating the staff and renovating the mode of leadership and working style.

In *The Communist Manifesto*, K. Marx and F. Engels believed that communists were different from the general public in two aspects: exemplification in practice and theoretical capability. They wrote: “The Communists, therefore, are on the one hand, practically, the most advanced and resolute section of the working-class parties of every country, that section which pushes forward all others; on the other hand, theoretically, they have over the great mass of the proletariat the advantage of clearly understanding the line of march, the conditions, and the ultimate general results of the proletarian movement.”¹ Therefore, improving theoretical knowledge and exemplification in practice constitute important requirements for a

1 K. Marx and F. Engels, *Complete Works, op. cit.*, Vol. 4, pp. 614-615.

party member and an important matter in party building, especially in this current context.

On the birthday of *The Communist Manifesto* and looking back on the last 20 years of renovation in Việt Nam, the Vietnamese people are deeply aware and firmly believe in the values mentioned in the *Manifesto* about the fundamental principles of the revolutionary world-view and scientific methodology in examining and solving real problems. These are the theoretical basis and methodology that the Vietnamese Communist Party used to organize and lead the revolution to victory. In any circumstances, Marxism-Leninism in general, and *The Communist Manifesto* in particular are always vivid and ever developing. *The Communist Manifesto* is the declaration of an era when people are struggling against oppression and injustice to build a better society.

RENOVATION OF THEORETICAL THINKING FOR THE CAUSE OF SOCIALIST CONSTRUCTION¹

Since the 6th National Congress (1986), the theoretical thinking of the Communist Party of Việt Nam (CPV) has experienced step-by-step renovations and achieved obvious progress. The CPV's fundamental viewpoints directing the renovation cause represent its firm position and creative application and development of Marxism-Leninism and Hồ Chí Minh Thought in accordance with the specific conditions of Việt Nam in the new period. The achievements in theoretical study, which are closely associated with practical summarization, provide the basis for defining the Party's guidelines and strengthening unity within the Party and consensus within society, contributing to the great successes of the renovation cause. Nevertheless, the theoretical work has not kept pace with the development and requirements of the revolution or elucidated some problems raised by the cause of renovation.

At the Plenum on the 1st March 2003, the Politburo decided to summarize some theoretical-practical issues after 20 years of renovation, in order to confirm the achievements and pinpoint the limitations of the CPV in its development of theoretical thinking, analyze the causes, and draw lessons from it; to detect new theoretical factors and issues and further clarify some issues related to socialism and the road to socialism in Việt Nam; and to explain and conclude some controversial issues to make contributions to the development and supplementation of the Party's renovation line and provide the scientific ground for the preparation of the 10th Party Congress's documents.

¹ Article in *Cộng sản* (The Communist) Review, Issue 3, February 2005.

After a year and a half of the implementation of renovation, the Politburo held a discussion and delivered this assessment: "This is the first time our Party has had the necessary conditions to have a comprehensive review of the past renovation stage. This summation is great in size, significant, and rich in content, related to most of the issues on our revolution's viewpoints, policy, and strategies, etc. The Politburo commends and highly values the Steering Committee's and involved forces' efforts, serious, democratic, and scientific working spirit, and achieved results in this summation." At the 11th Plenum of the 9th Party Central Committee (January 2005), Party General Secretary Nông Đức Mạnh said, "With the objective and honest review and the sound assessment of both achievements and limitations, the summation of the 20-year renovation not only brings us a firm belief in the road forward but also lay the theoretical and practical foundations for the formation of our Party's development strategy."

One of the most significant and outstanding results of this summation is that the analysis and synthesis of the formation of the Party's renovation policy line and theoretical thinking development, as well as the country's comprehensive renovation situation, has further clarified some fundamental theoretical issues related to socialism and the road to socialism in Việt Nam. The 11th Plenum of the 9th Party Central Committee firmly stated that after 20 years of renovation, with the entire Party and people's efforts, Việt Nam had gained great, comprehensive, and historic achievements both in practical operation and theoretical awareness.

Despite many difficulties and limitations, Việt Nam has made many radical and comprehensive changes. The economy has overcome its crisis and has grown quite fast; the socialist-oriented market economy has been formed, creating an important basis for the promotion of industrialization and modernization; the economy's internal accumulation has increased from zero to approximately 30 percent of GDP. From a country which imported food every year due to the shortage of food and famine, and which was lacking in consumer goods, Việt Nam has become the second or third top rice exporter in the world. From a country suffering from inflation at a three-digit rate, Việt Nam has basically escaped it entirely. From a country restrained by blockades and embargoes, Việt Nam has established diplomatic

relations with most of the countries and territories and many international organizations and forums in the world. In spite of the collapse of socialism in the Soviet Union and other Eastern European countries, as well as the economic and financial crises in the region and in the world, Việt Nam has not only stood firm on its feet but also step by step overcome difficulties to rise. The people's material and spiritual life has been considerably improved. National unity has gradually been enhanced and strengthened. The political system has been renovated little by little. The people's defense and security, with the people's armed forces as the nucleus, has been increasingly consolidated. The socio-political situation has been stabilized. The standing of Việt Nam on the international arena has been incessantly heightened. The concerted strength has gained important steps of development, creating a new position and power for the country to keep rising with good prospects. The Party and State of Việt Nam have gained more and more experience in leadership and management.

These great achievements prove that the renovation policy line of the Communist Party of Việt Nam is sound and creative, and that Việt Nam's road to socialism is in accord with reality. With regards to the theoretical aspect, after 20 years of renovation, the Party's awareness of socialism and the road to socialism has become increasingly clear. After many years of research, experimentation, ideological struggle, and practical summation in association with theoretical application, the Communist Party of Việt Nam has initially and basically formed a system of theoretical viewpoints on the renovation cause and the road to socialism in Việt Nam, upon which lie the scientific foundations of the Party's guidelines and contribute to the supplementation and development of the viewpoints of Marxism-Leninism and Hồ Chí Minh Thought on socialism.

Focus is put on some fundamental issues as follows:

1. The Goal and Nature of Socialism

During its revolutionary struggle since its birth, the Communist Party of Việt Nam has always asserted that socialism is the ideal goal of the Party and people of Việt Nam, and that the advance to socialism is the objective requirement and inevitable road of the Vietnamese revolution. Recently, socialism in the world has fallen into a period

of crisis and decline and encountered a lot of difficulties, but the Communist Party of Việt Nam still firmly states, "The Party and people of Việt Nam are determined to build the country according to the socialist path based on Marxism-Leninism and Hồ Chí Minh Thought."¹ This is absolutely in conformity with the tendencies of evolution and development of history. Many communist and Marxist leftist parties in the world have asserted that mankind would unavoidably reach socialism. The Fourth Plenum of the 16th Party Central Committee (September 2004) of the Communist Party of China stressed, "It is necessary to persistently promote socialism... only socialism can save China."² A political program was approved by the Communist Party of Japan at its 23rd congress (January 2004). It read, "In the 21st century, the movement towards a new society beyond capitalism will definitely grow stronger and develop... It is an indispensable and objective requirement to build socialism. Despite difficulties, socialism will ultimately win."

How can a country reach or build socialism? Each country or nation should think carefully, study, and select the best way to socialism so that it is not only conformable to the common law, but also suitable with their own conditions and features. It will be a long cause and will definitely encounter a lot of difficulties. Việt Nam is not only a poor and underdeveloped agricultural country, but it was also stricken by war. Therefore, it will certainly undergo many stages on the road to socialism. Việt Nam is presently passing through a transitional period towards socialism. Many issues should be perceived and applied correctly, in accordance with reality and the objective law. Hastiness and dogmatism should be avoided.

Thanks to its practical summarization and theoretical study during its years of renovation, Việt Nam has gained a more correct and profound understanding of socialism and the transitional period towards socialism. It has also gradually overcome its former simple, infantile, and wrong viewpoints such as: the one-way emphasis

1 Communist Party of Việt Nam: *Văn kiện Đại hội đại biểu toàn quốc lần thứ IX (The 9th National Party Congress's Documents)*, National Political Publishing House, Hà Nội, 2001, p. 86.

2 *The Decision by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on the Consolidation of the Party's Leadership*, translation by the Việt Nam Academy of Social Sciences, Hà Nội, 2004.

on the role of production relations, public ownership, and average distribution; the partial awareness of the need to develop production forces in the transitional period; the identification of the market economy with capitalism and the underestimation of mankind's values and achievements gained in capitalism; and the desire to quickly eliminate commodity production, private ownership, and the private economy in the process of socialist construction.

The Political Program (1991) introduces new conceptions of socialism and the direction for socialist construction in Việt Nam. It is a great step forwards in the theoretical thinking of the Communist Party of Việt Nam, reflecting its full awareness of the fundamental spirit of Marxism-Leninism on socialism and the creative application of this theory in the specific conditions of Việt Nam in the new era. Although reality has developed, requiring our further research and summation for continuous supplements to the Political Program, its fundamental ideas are still proved right in the present context. The Political Program is still a flag that leads the people of Việt Nam forwards on the way of socialist construction for turning Việt Nam into a rich people, a strong country, and an equitable, democratic, and civilized society.

2. The Development of the Socialist-oriented Market Economy

The most important task for a country in the transitional period to reach the goal of socialism is to build the material and technical facilities of socialism, which require the development of production forces, the complete unleashing of production power, and the building of production relations that are in accordance with the nature and level of production forces. For Việt Nam in the present period, the unleashing and development of production power to guarantee the fast growth and sustainable development of its economy is the focal and most significant political task. Without it, it is impossible to achieve the goal of "a rich people and a strong country", which means that it is impossible to reach socialism.

Practical experience shows that it is impossible to develop production forces by applying the model of a planned, centralized, bureaucratic, and State-subsidized economy. Instead, it is necessary to develop the socialist-oriented market economy and promote industrialization and modernization.

The introduction of the concept of the development of the socialist-oriented market economy is a fundamental and creative theoretical breakthrough of the Communist Party of Việt Nam. It originated from Việt Nam's reality and selective reception of the world's experience. After a time of research, experiment, and practical summation, at its 6th Congress, the Communist Party of Việt Nam decided to abandon the model of a non-commodity, non-market, and centralized and State-subsidized economy and advocate the development of a multi-sector commodity economy. The Political Program (1991) stresses the development of a socialist-oriented multi-sector commodity economy which operates in accordance with the market mechanism and under State management.¹ The 8th Party Congress introduced a new, important viewpoint on commodity economy and socialism. It stated, "Commodity production is not contrary to socialism, but it is a developmental achievement of human civilization the existence of which is objective and necessary for socialist construction and even when socialism has been constructed already."² However, the "market economy" had not been named officially yet at the 8th Party Congress. It was not until the 9th Party Congress that this concept was officially mentioned in the Party's documents. However, the market economy of Việt Nam is not either capitalist (for its goal of socialist construction) or socialist yet (since Việt Nam is still in the transitional period). The 9th Party Congress introduced the concept of "socialist-oriented market economy" and considered it as the general economic model during the transitional period towards socialism in Việt Nam.

The socialist-oriented market economy is based on the combination of the advantages of a dynamic economic system and an advanced political regime; the combination of the positive aspects of the market mechanism and the State's macro regulations to limit and overcome the negative aspects (such as recklessness and blindness) of the market mechanism; and the harmonious combination of economic growth and the implementation of social progress and justice. All the sectors of socialist-oriented market economy develop

1 Communist Party of Việt Nam: *Cương lĩnh xây dựng đất nước trong thời kỳ quá độ lên chủ nghĩa xã hội (Political Program on National Construction in the Transitional Period towards Socialism)*, op. cit., pp. 9-10.

2 Communist Party of Việt Nam: *Văn kiện Đại hội đại biểu toàn quốc lần thứ VIII (Documents of the 8th National Party Congress)*, op. cit., p. 97.

together. Among them, the State-owned economic sector plays the decisive role. The State-owned and collective economic sectors gradually become the foundations; the private economic sector, including private capitalist enterprises, is an important component of the socialist-oriented market economy.

Thus, the socialist orientation is manifested right in the operation of the components of the market economy, reflecting the indispensable developmental tendency of the economy in the present era, but not any exterior imposition. For the interests of the country and socialism, the Party and State of Việt Nam advocate policies and measures that create conditions for all the economic sectors to develop together, promote the positive aspects, and limit the negative ones. This not only maintains the motivations for development but also proactively controls the gap between the rich and the poor and holds fast to socialist principles.

Việt Nam is profoundly aware that to reach the target of a rich people, a strong country, and an equitable, democratic, and civilized society, it should promote national industrialization and modernization, and should try to turn itself into a modernity-oriented industrial country through the next several decades. This is the most fundamental issue for Việt Nam in the present era. From the implementation of the closed, internal-oriented industrialization which is not associated with modernization, is inclined to the development of heavy industry, and is mostly based on the advantages in labor and natural resources, Việt Nam has changed to the implementation of the open industrialization, the transformation of economic structure in the direction of strong development of industries and services, and the combination of industrialization and modernization and step-by-step development of a knowledge economy.

Reality over the past few years has shown that thanks to the sound policies on industrialization, modernization, and the application of the socialist-oriented market economic model, the economy of Việt Nam has gained relatively quick growth rates and brought about obvious efficiency. Although these are just initial achievements and there are still many limitations, it can be firmly stated that the development of the socialist-oriented market economy is a sound policy for Việt Nam in the transitional period, which has been

acknowledged by international friends. As it is stated in the Political Program of the Communist Party of Japan approved by the 23rd Party Congress (January 2004), “The new process of search for the way to advance socialism via the market economy in Việt Nam and China has become an important direction for the world in the 21st century.”

3. Economic Development together with the Implementation of Social Progress and Justice

One of the significant achievements in the renovation of theoretical thinking of the Communist Party of Việt Nam is its clear awareness of the dialectical unity between economic policies and social ones. For the first time, the Communist Party of Việt Nam made a sound assessment of the role of social issues in the relation with the economy at its 6th Congress. Since then, the Party has become increasingly aware of the necessity of combining economic issues with social ones, promoting the unity between economic and social policies, and combining economic development with the implementation of social progress and justice. This is considered as a fundamental specific characteristic and a regularity-patterned attribute of the socialist orientation in the market economy, reflecting the advantage of the social regime in Việt Nam. Social development on the principle of progress and justice requires a fast-growing, highly efficient, and sustainable economy. Only such an economy can mobilize all material sources for the implementation of social progress and justice. On the contrary, it is impossible to achieve a fast-growing, highly efficient, and sustainable economy in a country where there is a lack of social justice, the majority of population lives in poverty, and suffers low intellectual standards and poor health, and a considerable part of labor is driven into unemployment and poverty and socially marginalized.

Social development according to the principle of justice should not be understood as leveling, egalitarianism, or the equal distribution of resources and wealth, regardless of the quality and efficiency of production and business, and individual contributions to the common development of the community. Moreover, if all resources are devoted to social development at a level that is beyond

the acceptable capacity of the economy, the necessary conditions for the promotion of economic growth will be reduced, resulting in economic stagnation or crisis and ultimately the failure to accomplish the plans for social development. Therefore, it is necessary to find the right level of compatibility between the promotion of economic growth and social development for each move or stage, so that these two aspects can assist each other for development, instead of obstructing each other or being mutually exclusive.

In the context of a socialist-oriented market economy, the implementation of social justice should not be dependent only on the policy of regulating and redistributing all the social classes' incomes. Inheriting and promoting the revolutionary achievements over the past half of a century, Việt Nam has the necessary premises and conditions to guarantee that its people, including those in difficult circumstances, have equal chances to access basic social services in education, health care, employment, credit, information, and social security networks, so that they can manage and improve the living standard of their own and their family and make contributions to national construction. To achieve high efficiency in the management of social development, Việt Nam should use and promote the strength of the State, the community, and every individual. The State should institutionalize the Party's guidelines and policies into laws, strategies, and plans for social development; propose appropriate organization and management methods; and simultaneously have satisfactory investment policies and value the mobilization of resources among the population according to Hồ Chí Minh's teaching, “Bring into play the people's talent, strength, and wealth to benefit the people themselves.”

4. The Development of a Progressive Culture Imbued with National Identity, Making Culture Really Being the Spiritual Foundation of Society

The simultaneous promotion of cultural development with economic growth, social development, and political progress is a fundamental orientation of the socialist construction process in Việt Nam. It reflects a new point in the theoretical thinking of the

Communist Party of Việt Nam, as well as its development. It is stated in many of the Party's resolutions that cultural development and human fostering are the goal and motivation of the renovation cause, the development of education and training is the leading national policy, and science-technology is the motivation for socio-economic development and the condition for successful socialist construction and national defense. Việt Nam is striving for a culture which is progressive, imbued with national identity, and features unity in diversity.

To make its progressive culture imbued with national identity really the spiritual foundation of society, Việt Nam should maintain the decisive role of Marxism-Leninism and Hồ Chí Minh Thought in the spiritual life of society; inherit and promote the fine cultural traditions of its ethnic groups; accept the cultural quintessence of mankind; and build a society for the people's true interests and dignity, with the increasingly high levels of knowledge, morality, physical fitness, and aesthetic perception. Việt Nam should also fight against cultural ideas which are against progress and contrary to the fine traditions of the nation, the noble values of mankind, and the orientation towards socialism. Simultaneously, Việt Nam should protect its national culture from cultural invasion.

Beside the positive and progressive sides, there have recently appeared many worrying manifestations of degraded cultural and moral values, as well as eroded tradition, order, discipline, and fine human relationships in each family and community. Therefore, the general and leading task of the cultural cause of Việt Nam is to build, by all means, the Vietnamese people who are imbued with new cultural values and standards matching the national characteristics and the country's developmental requirement in this new revolutionary stage.

5. The Conservation of an Environment of Peace and Friendship for National Development

Over the past years of renovation, the issues on the content and nature of the era, as well as the foreign policy of the Party and State of Việt Nam have been perceived to be more and more profound. Although socialism has shown a temporary setback, this has not changed the nature of the era (mankind is still in the transitional period from

capitalism to socialism). While continuously asserting this, Việt Nam is simultaneously clarifying some main components of the present period, such as the role of the modern scientific and technological revolution, economic globalization, the knowledge-based economy, the new characteristics of modern capitalism, the complicatedness and severity of the national and class struggles in the new context, the tendency of peace and cooperation and the war risks, and the new face of the world and the region. Based on this clarification, Việt Nam highlights that one of its Party and people's tasks is to consolidate and maintain peace to focus on socio-economic building and development, as well as the promotion of socialist-oriented industrialization and modernization. Việt Nam has renovated its perception of the situation of the world and the region: changing from the way of looking at the world as an arena of struggle to a comprehensive one; regarding the world as an environment for the existence and development of Việt Nam, renewing its thought of foreign affairs in the spirit of "acquiring more friends and fewer enemies", and "Việt Nam is willing to become a reliable friend and partner of all the countries in the international community, for peace, independence, and development"; proactively integrating and considering the guarantee of national interests as the supreme principle of integration. Thenceforth Việt Nam has persistently followed the foreign policy of independence and self-reliance, for peace, cooperation, and development; implemented the open foreign policy; and promoted the multi-lateralization and diversification of international relations.

Foreign relations always remain dynamic. They change every day, quickly, and with varied developments. They exert effects on every aspect of life in all countries in the world, including Việt Nam. Therefore, Việt Nam should remain steadfast in regard to strategic and principle issues, have flexible tactics, and quickly grasp opportunities and have appropriate solutions to any situation. It is advisable for Việt Nam to learn from the thoughts and diplomatic style of Hồ Chí Minh: "taking the invariable to deal with the variable" and "having both feet on the ground" (widening knowledge of itself and others), cultivating modesty and self-respect, preventing itself from adopting extremism and dogmatism, and preserving its interests and simultaneously

respecting the legitimate interests and characters of other nations. This will help Việt Nam establish its diplomacy and heighten its values in the eyes of international friends.

It is also advisable for Việt Nam to take advantage of its socio-political stability and many countries' affection for its people; promote the international relations in the fields of the Party, State, and people; and bring these external resources into play. Besides, Việt Nam should combine the summarization of theory and practice on foreign work in the period of renovation with the research and study of our forefathers' historical experience in foreign affairs.

6. The Building of Socialism together with the Defense of the Socialist Country of Việt Nam

Together with the process of renovation, Việt Nam has gained more profound and specific knowledge of the relationship between the building of socialism and the defense of the socialist country, as well as that between the economy and national defense, security, and diplomacy. It has also gained a more comprehensive understanding of the concepts of "national security" and "national defense." "National security" does not only refer to political security, but it also implies economic security, cultural security, ideological security, and social security. "National defense" should not be understood as the protection of the territory, borders, islands, and airspace of the country; its connotation should be extended to the protection of the socialist regime, Party, State, people, national economy and culture, and the development of the country. Việt Nam has been more clearly aware of the risks towards its security and factors that may cause socio-political insecurity and undermine national security. Việt Nam has initially established a new system of viewpoints of the people's war and the rear in the context of high-tech war, and clarified the new contents of the all-people national defense strategy.

Based on the awareness of the afore-mentioned issues, during the process of economic building and national development, Việt Nam unceasingly pays attention to the task of resisting the scheme of "peace evolution" and violent disturbances to overthrow the government. Besides, Việt Nam also attaches importance to both

strengthening its potential and consolidating firmly its national defense; furthers the building of the national defensive position on the basis of promoting the building of local defense areas; builds the people's armed forces which are really the key forces of the national defense and security power; and focuses on the building of the people's army and police which are revolutionary, regular, elite, and gradually modernized. Moreover, Việt Nam also promotes the combination of the nationwide rear with the rear in each locality and strategic area; brings into play the tradition of building on-site rears and that among the population; and proactively build and soon implement the plans for preventing and dealing with complicated situations to solidly safeguard national security.

7. The Building of Socialist Democracy and the Guaranteed Implementation of the People's Mastership

Socialist democracy is the nature of the political regime of Việt Nam. The building of socialist democracy and the guarantee of the people's mastership are the key and long-term task of Việt Nam, as well as the goal and motivation of socialism.

To achieve this goal, Việt Nam should have a scientific and effective structure of organization and operation, together with raising awareness and unity of views. The organizational structure and operational mechanism in Việt Nam means the political system. The concept of "political system" was officially used for the first time at the 6th Plenum of the 6th Party Central Committee (March 1989) in place of the concept of "proletarian dictatorship". The political system of Việt Nam includes the Party, State, Fatherland Front, and socio-political organizations. Among them, the Party plays the leading role; the State plays the management role; and the Fatherland Front and other socio-political organizations play an important role in the promotion of the people's mastership and the building of the all-people great unity. The Political Program (1991) firmly states, "All the organization and operation of our political system in the new period is to build and gradually perfect socialist democracy and ensure that all the power belongs to the people."¹ It is also clearly stated in the

¹ Communist Party of Việt Nam: op. cit., p. 19.

political report at the 7th Congress of the Communist Party of Việt Nam that the nature of the renovation and perfection of our political system is to build a socialist democracy, and that democracy is both the goal and motivation of the renovation cause.

As an institution which is established to guarantee the people's mastership, the socialist law-governed State of Việt Nam should really be one of the people, by the people, and for the people. It should be a State which is for the people's interests and whose power is held and authorized by the people.

The State's model of organization and operation should ensure its compliance with the principle that the State's power is united. However, it is necessary to have a clear assignment and close cooperation among State power bodies regarding the realization of the three powers: legislation, execution, and judiciary. It is also necessary to improve the efficiency and unity of this realization at central and local levels. There should also be a mechanism of assignment and cooperation among State power bodies, as well as an institution to supervise the State power. Moreover, it is essential to renovate the State machinery and make it really be an institution which is for the people and operates according to the principle: trying its best to do what is beneficial to the people and avoid what is harmful to them.

The Fatherland and other socio-political organizations are representatives of the people's mastership. They are not only typical bodies of the all-people great unity but also the executors of social supervision and criticism. The promotion of the power of all-people great unity on the basis of the alliance between the working class, the peasantry, and the intelligentsia under the Party's leadership is a major source of power and motivation and a decisive factor that guarantees the sustainable victory of the cause of national construction and defense, for the common goal of national independence, unity, a wealthy people, a strong country, and an equitable, democratic, and civilized society.

8. The Improvement of the Party's Leadership Role and Capacity

Reality over the past twenty years once again asserts that the Party's leadership is the determinant of all the successes of the renovation

cause and the whole revolutionary cause of the Vietnamese people. In the context of the development of the market economy and the promotion of the open-door policy and integration, the Vietnamese people should be steadfast to the Party's leadership, regarding it as a matter of principle, or that of death and life, which ensures the socialist-oriented development of the country. Without the Party's leadership, it is impossible to talk about the building of socialism. Therefore, it is not accidental that the hostile forces who want to eliminate socialism make their first assault on the Communist Party to abolish its leading role.

As a matter of course, to have enough capacity and conditions to lead the people soundly and effectively, the Communist Party of Việt Nam, as a ruling party, should incessantly carry out self-renovation and self-rectification and consider this as the law of its existence and development. In the present complicated context of the world and the country, the Communist Party of Việt Nam should attach special importance to the promotion of its revolutionary and scientific tradition; hold fast to its working-class nature and vanguard character; make itself strong in politics, ideology, and organization; establish close relations with the people; cultivate its pure revolutionary morality, improve its understanding, and have a scientific method of leadership so that it is capable of uniting and leading the people in the overcoming of all difficulties and challenges and in the successful implementation of its renovation policy. In summary, the Party should be built truly into that of President Hồ Chí Minh, the vanguard of the working class, and a loyal representative of the interests of the working class, the peasantry, and the whole nation.

To achieve the afore-mentioned goals, the Party should continuously renovate its theoretical thinking, do well its political and theoretical work, improve its intellectual standard and its leading and political capacity, renew its content and method of leadership; promote democracy, firmly maintain discipline, enhance solidarity and unity; purify and improve the quality of Party members; effectively overcome negative phenomena, especially bureaucracy and corruption, improve and heighten the people's belief in it; reorganize its machinery and staff so that it is well equipped with

political mettle, knowledge, capability, and fighting power to manage itself in the context of the development of the market economy and the promotion of the open-door policy and integration, as well as in the complicated international environment with many new risks and challenges.

Through the summarization of reality, the Communist Party of Việt Nam has clearly stated that the greatest risks that face a leading party are its deviation in policy, bureaucracy, divergence from the people, degeneracy, retrogression, and political disorientation. In the context of market economy and globalization, the Party should heighten vigilance over, and have solutions to overcome the aforementioned risks. The Party should hold fast to its ideological foundations—Marxism-Leninism and Hồ Chí Minh Thought; strictly comply with its organizational principle of democratic centralization, closely combine the promotion of democracy and the observation of discipline, and advocate the existence of only one ruling party and oppose a multi-party system. It is also essential for Việt Nam to build specific regulations for the effective implementation of the principle of democratic centralization within the Party; incessantly perfect the organizational system of the Party; attach much importance to the enhancement of the fighting capacity of Party organizations at the grassroots level so that they become the Party's political nuclei that are capable of leading and gathering the local strength to satisfactorily accomplish all the assigned tasks; implement effectively the education, training, and management of cadres and Party members in terms of capability, virtue, morality, and working style; and establish close relationships between the Party and the people and heighten the Party's spirit of devotedly serving the people.

The Party leads the State and society with its political programs, guidelines, policies, and principles. It deals with great issues on national welfare and the people's livelihood, specific issues which are of political significance and related to many social classes, and complicated issues related to international relations. It plays the leading role in policy planning and personnel-related decision making. It also directs the State's institutionalization and concretization of its guidelines, viewpoints, and policies. It also organizes the coordination

and promotion of the combined strength of the whole political system, creating conditions for the State to successfully accomplish all tasks and ensuring that its resolutions are realized.

Despite achieved results, many issues on theoretical awareness have not been clarified or reached consensus; many newly-raised issues have not been investigated or solved conclusively. They include issues on measures for the development of the socialist-oriented market economy; the role and relationship between the plan and the market; the perception of ownership, economic sectors, labor, and exploitation; the role of the State-owned, collective, and private sectors; the relationship between growth rate and development quality, between economic growth and cultural development and guaranteed social progress and justice, between economic renovation and the renovation of the political system, and between independence, self-reliance, and proactive integration in the international economy; how to preserve the Party's working-class nature in the context of the market economy, open-door policy, and integration; how to appropriately organize the political system; and how to effectively prevent bureaucratic corruption.

The afore-mentioned issues need further researching, summarizing, and clarifying in order to perfect and deepen the Party's system of viewpoints on socialism and the road to socialism, shedding light on the practical activities in a timely and effective manner. As a matter of course, it is not a simple task because the renovation cause for socialism is extremely difficult, novel, unprecedented, and therefore subject to different opinions. Only by continuing the renovation of thought and theory, truly pursuing progress, promoting ideological freedom, holding fast to and creatively applying and developing Marxism-Leninism and Hồ Chí Minh Thought, and going deep into the summarization of reality can Việt Nam step by step solve the emerging issues and raise the theoretical work to a new height.

SUMMING UP EXPERIENCE TO FURTHER PROMOTE THE CAUSE OF RENOVATION¹

Up to now, the Resolution of the 6th Party Congress has been implemented for over two years. This span of time is too short, against the whole process of renovation of a country and a nation. For Việt Nam, however, it is very important because during these two years, the country has been seeking and experimenting or “designing and at the same time conducting renovation projects” outlined by the 6th Party Congress. This was the period of complexities and difficulties, some efforts were fruitful, others not yet. Many people felt anxious, even testy, and tossed about the cropping-up issues. Right within the Party and in many State institutions, there were different ideas about not only specific but fundamental issues of a principle character as well. Some wanted to carry out the work as rapidly as possible; others required a cautious realization. However, rapidity was criticized as overhasty while cautiousness as half-hearted. Those who wanted to rectify deviations were labelled as conservative. In a range of issues, there were no clear definitions of renovation and conservatism; some fundamental issues were pending.

Under the decision of the Secretariat of the Party Central Committee, all Party echelons and branches are summing up the realities to assess what they have done or failed to do in the cause of renovation over the past two years. Then, we will analyze the causes to learn relevant lessons and experience and put forth solutions for the years to come. From whence, we can create a high consensus of viewpoints and actions to strengthen our confidence in the cause and path we are marching on. Obviously, this work is a very important necessity.

¹ Article in *Cộng sản Review*, No. 2, 1989.

1. To have an exact summary and assessment of the realities, first of all, we should have a specific historical standpoint, a dialectical and dispassionate consideration. For some time, when analyzing and assessing the situation, we used to lay the blame on the objective context and ignore our subjective mistakes and shortcomings. Recently, some have tended to overemphasize subjective faults but failed to fully analyze the context. These two tendencies are not correct nor scientific, leading to inaccurate assessment of the situation, and difficulty in overcoming shortcomings.

While strictly criticizing subjective shortcomings and mistakes, it is necessary to understand objective factors, especially difficulties and negative effects on our cause of renovation, to avoid anxiety for slow changes. For the past two years, in what context have we launched renovation? Is it a situation of national and international advantages as well as difficulties, especially socio-economic depression (or serious crisis)? It is not easy to eradicate the central planning bureaucratic subsidy regime which has stuck deep roots in the administration system. The shortcomings and mistakes in the former social and economic policies, together with irrational application of the policy “price-salary-money” in the late 1985 have created a series of disastrous consequences. Foreign loans increase rapidly and are due already. The population boom causes pressures on employment and living quality. The effects of the decades-long wars are still very severe. A lot of “postwar” social issues need to be tackled. Only the social allowances for some millions of the “preferential policy” beneficiaries constitutes a huge expenditure in Việt Nam’s national finance.

Meanwhile, the international hostile and reactionary forces never stop their plots and actions to sabotage, blockade and isolate Việt Nam, causing many difficulties to block its economic development and the restoration of peace and stability in the Indochinese peninsula. In fact, Việt Nam has not yet fully enjoyed peace because it must still maintain too large an army and reserve a sizable allocation for national defense.

In the world, socialism is facing critical challenges to its economic, scientific and technical development. It needs to re-perceive itself to

change policies accordingly. The cause of perestroika and reform in the socialist countries, though bringing about initial achievements, has not yet created drastic changes. A number of fresh issues emerging during the process should be carefully considered.

With the great desire for renovation to quickly improve the socio-economic situation, the entire Party and people, from the top leading institutions to the common people, have made great efforts. However, Việt Nam still lacks in knowledge and experience; the level of thinking is still limited both intensively and extensively. Some important theoretical and practical issues are far from clear, indeed.

2. In such a context, Việt Nam started its renovation with a lot of difficulties and challenges. It is necessary to respect and nurture the initial fruits. Over the past two years, the people have recorded some achievements as follows:

Firstly, we have completely reoriented our economic structure, renovated the administration regime, initially unleashed the productive forces and developed production, trading and services. According to statistics in the Report of the Ministerial Council to the 4th session of the 8th National Assembly¹, obviously throughout the country, a multi-sectoral economic structure starts to be established in line with the laws of development during the transitional period in Việt Nam, facilitating a dynamic economic development.

Sector and investment structures have been readjusted with focus on three economic programs. Capital construction has been conducted more centrally, definitely and effectively; quite a few major works that do not match the economy's capacity have been cancelled or postponed. Agriculture, industry and handicrafts have fairly developed.

For the administration regime, in the complicated conditions of inflation, the system of retail prices and part of prices of capital goods have been converted into the system of trading prices. Market access is carried out flexibly under an active mechanism. At the same time, some renovation in organization and administration of the production, circulation and distribution and the planning mechanism

¹ The 4th session of the National Assembly (8th Legislature) held in Hà Nội in November and December 1988.

have been realized. The renovation, though limited, has provided favorable conditions for the market mechanism to bring into play its proactive effects, especially in the State-run sector, and boost the latter's operation. In the collective sector, the renovated administration fabric, the improved contract mechanism¹, the development of joint-ventures and collaborative forms, together with the reduction of the direct State intervention and the gradual abolition of imposed plans, purchases and prices, have created a fresh impulse of life for merchandise production, especially in agriculture. The sense of accounting and the trading atmosphere are quite obvious in society². Models of profitable and dynamic business are increasingly revealed.

¹ Improved contracting in agriculture: The farmers in Phú Thọ, the suburbs of Hải Phòng, and Nghệ An province practiced some unofficial mechanisms for improved contracting, because the old model and management mechanism of agricultural coops did not attach the farmers to their rice paddies nor protected their interests, thus creating some hindrance to agricultural development. Their experiment brought about positive results. In the face of this reality, the Secretariat of the Việt Nam Communist Party Central Committee on 13 January 1981 issued Directive No. 100 CT/TU on revising the contracting method and expanding product contracting to groups of workers and individual farmers in agricultural coops. The Directive breathed new life into the agricultural sector. The average annual growth rate of the sector in that period was 4.9 percent while it had been only 1.9 percent previously, and the rice yield soared up by 23.8 percent. On 5 April 1988, the Politburo of the Party Central Committee issued Resolution No. 10-NQ/TU on renovating management in the agricultural sector. Under the resolution, the household of a coop member became a self-reliant economic unit. Apart from receiving a plot of land under a land use contract and implementing the contracts with the coop, it could expand its production and trading on its own initiative and in different ways, which had not existed or had not been allowed previously. The Resolution created a major breakthrough in the mechanism for managing the agricultural economy. The food yield increased remarkably. In 1987, it reached 17.5 million tons. The figure rose to 19.5 million tons and 20.5 million tons in 1988 and 1989 respectively. In 1989, Việt Nam exported 1.5 million tons of rice, becoming a big rice exporter. Just a year before, Việt Nam still had to import 450,000 tons of rice.

² The Party's 6th National Representative Congress analyzed the mistakes and shortcomings in economic and social administration. It pointed out that the biggest mistake was that of a subjective, voluntarist, simple-minded, hasty way of thinking. The Congress put forward the line of *đổi mới* (renewal). *Đổi mới* was, first of all, aimed at renewing the economic mindset, introducing a multi-sectoral economy, renovating the economic administration mechanism, abolishing the system of subsidized bureaucratic central planning (i.e. every economic action was done on a State command and did not need to take care of its efficiency because the State was responsible for the losses and the profits), building a new mechanism in compliance with the objective law and the development level of the economy, and making complete and proper use of the commodity-money relation. It also called for production to be closely linked to the market and ensure the legitimate interests of the working people.

Secondly, socialist democracy has been broadened, becoming an important element for the people to implement the cause of renovation. The democratic atmosphere formed during the 6th Party Congress has been continuously enhanced. Society starts to get acquainted with democratic way of living, open criticism and self-criticism, straightforward judgment of shortcomings and mistakes, broad discussion and open comments to the Party and the State on national affairs.

The process of democratization has just been started. It is still a long way towards a perfect democracy. Violations of democracy remain rampant in society, especially in the rural areas. In the expansion of democracy, there appear some deviations. However, the impetus of democratization has, over the past two years, grown into a motive force behind the promotion of an all-sided social renovation, laying foundations for intensive and extensive political reforms in Việt Nam.

Thirdly, while further strengthening national defense and political security, we have accomplished a big workload to change the strategy for national defense, enhance the disposition of the people's war and safeguard political security in line with the national situation.

Fourthly, the foreign relations have created the possibility to gradually break down the blockade by the international hostile forces against Việt Nam, bringing about opportunities to restore, develop and expand peaceful, friendly and cooperative relations with the countries in the region and in the world as a whole.

The above-mentioned advances and the new elements have become clearer and clearer. Since the second half of 1988, the socio-economic situation has been improved to a certain extent: commodities in the markets increased, social order and safety in the urban areas strengthened, and the atmosphere of exchange and cooperation with foreign partners improved.

3. While asserting and respecting these achievements, we straightforwardly acknowledge our mistakes and shortcomings and point out constraints and weaknesses. Relying on the realities of the country, we can conclude that the achievements of the past two years

are not radical and cannot yet bring about significant effects and change the grave socio-economic situation.

The pace of economic development is still slow while the annual population growth rate remains over two percent. The GDP in 1987 was approximately that in 1986, and in 1988, it increased by 5.8 percent against 1987. Production, especially foods, remains unsteady; the distribution and circulation still confused. The State budget deficits are big and the inflation rate very high. Price fluctuations happen every week. The national reserve diminishes. Foreign loans increase so fast that we cannot afford to settle due loans. Material and technical foundations in many economic sectors and social welfare continue to deteriorate. The hard life of the wage earners in the administrative and non-profit sector, army and police forces is far from improved. Social evils and malpractices are still popular. From the angle of the entire economy, production cannot yet meet consumption; the economic structure has not radically been shifted from the bureaucratic central planning and subsidy one.

4. Summing up experience does not stop at relating stories or describing the situation, but what's most important is the correct assessment of the realities of the work and the real state of affairs of the country to bring up issues of a law character and affirm fundamental viewpoints to direct practical activities. To carry on the promotion of the cause of renovation in accordance with the lines set by the 6th Party Congress, we should achieve consensus in our views about some basic issues as follows:

a. Commodity production is an attribute of socialism; developing it is the inevitable way to the large-scale socialist production. In the transitional period to socialism, it is necessary to accelerate the commodity production. This is an objective necessity. Commodities include not only consumer goods but all elements participating in the reproduction processes (i.e. capital goods, scientific and technical products, money...). A major characteristic of the commodity production is the free exchanges between producers and between economic sectors in a single social market. The market always operates in line with its own rules and laws, notably those of value, supply-demand, competition and monetary circulation. The

market is neither contrary to nor divorced from the State plans. By contrast, it supplements the plans, as the foundation and the object of the planning.

It is the vivid reality for the past two years, through many convincing examples of profitable business and successful and unsuccessful experience that helps us avoid hesitance and confusion at the start, and have a better insight into the nature of the commodity production in the country.

b. The production structure should be further retooled and the investment structure readjusted in conformity with the three economic programs. The 6th Party Congress laid down basic targets of the three economic programs and considered them as the main contents of socialist industrialization in the initial stage of the transitional period. The reality during the past two years shows that, to fulfill these targets, it is necessary to form a comprehensive strategy for socio-economic development. Then, we should clearly identify the balance and structure of each sector and each economic region, arrange and enhance the infrastructure, and boost services as an important component of the economy.

We should renovate the investment fabric in the direction of allocating State capital to some major projects, mobilizing capital among the people and realizing the principle of self-reliant borrowing and self-reliant payment.

In general, social production should be self-arranged and self-regulated through cooperation and competition, in line with the laws of the commodity production. The State is to provide mainly orientation and take economic measures to boost this process.

c. Developing a multi-sectoral economy is a long-term strategy of a law character, highlighting the sense of democracy in the economic field. On the basis of strengthening the State economic sector and facilitating its sustainable development and its leading role in the national economy, we should concurrently develop other sectors in diversified forms both in production, trade and services. We should allow the private sector to develop freely and legally regardless of its scale. We should eradicate the fixed and simple bias that all the other

economic sectors, aside from the State and the collective ones, are "non-socialist," because in the current situation of Việt Nam, those economic sectors are operating lawfully under the leadership and direction of the State. So they bear, to some extent, the State capitalist characteristics (or "three-fourth of socialist" as V. I. Lenin put it).

In building the State economy, we should focus only on major key branches and facilities of the national economy. They require technical advances and large investment capital (i.e. heavy industries, communication and transportation, posts, bank, etc.). The leading role of the State sector is not necessarily represented in the high percentage in all economic sectors but, first and foremost, in its guidance and control of the whole economy.

The contents of socialist reform of the economic sectors lie not only in change of the ownership and eradication of the private and individual economies, but also in the administration and direction of these sectors' operation in the socialist orbit. Paying attention to economic efficiency, any State-run enterprises that do not belong to the key branches and fail in business should be put out to tender to other State-run enterprises, or sold out or hired to collectives or individuals. Any cooperatives which are too weak to be strengthened should be converted into other proper production forms. This work never weakens the State and the collective economic sector but raise their quality and credibility.

d. Resolutely abolishing the bureaucratic central planning subsidy mechanism to shift to the system of business accounting in order to ensure that all business and production units can get out of the bureaucratic administration and develop their self-control and self-accountability.

The State institutions from the central to grassroots levels should refrain from exercising their direct intervention in the operation of economic establishments. They will enforce laws and economic incentives to direct these units' operation under the State lines and plans.

In other words, the State should focus on performing its function as a macro-level administrator: studying and promulgating policies

and laws; taking measures to form an integrated market throughout the country; building a system of economic legislation and institutions to enforce it; renovating the work of planning; organizing the system of economic, scientific and technical information, services and communication; and training and fostering business-doing personnel.

Especially, efforts should be focused on combating inflation through an integrated system of synchronic measures. This work must be closely linked to the renovation of the administration mechanism and stabilization of the national finance. The price and capital subsidization through budget and credits should be quickly abolished.

e. Broadening and raising the efficiency of foreign economic relations and executing the "open-door" economic strategy to help the national economy integrate into the world's markets and take part in the international division of labor. Reality shows that it is impossible to rely only on domestic accumulation to stabilize socio-economic situation and develop. We should renovate policies to promote foreign economic relations in the orientation of economic, social, scientific and technical efficiency. We should provide good conditions for an open business environment, immigration and communication for foreigners and overseas Vietnamese to make investment and do business in Việt Nam. We should shift import and export activities to the business accounting system and stop all subsidies from the State budget. The State will exercise its homogenous administration of all foreign economic activities through its policies and laws.

f. Developing scientific and technical motive forces. The abolishment of subsidies and the shift to an accounting system require production and business units to renovate their techniques and make full use of the scientific advances to develop production, raise competitiveness and carve a niche in the markets. The business accounting system should be applied even to most of the scientific activities. The policies and the administration of scientists and technicians should also be innovated to encourage and highlight the talents in research and application.

From the business viewpoint, scientific and technical research, the institutions should actively determine their themes and topics and sign contracts to collaborate, compete and recommend their products to generate their own capital for their operation. When a research is successfully applied, it will be traded on the basis of agreements and negotiations. No maximum limitation will be imposed on the profit from application. In other words, the demands of producers and consumption markets also orient scientific and technical researches and the acceptance of their results and, at the same time, create capital and environment for scientific and technical activities.

g. Effectively implementing social policies, paying attention to the human factor as both the target and the motive force of socio-economic development. We should take a series of active and specific measures to improve the people's living standards, especially in the administrative and non-profit sector, police and armed forces. We should quickly overcome the situation of insufficient salary and irrational incomes among the different regions and sectors. We should generate more jobs for the working people and drastically reduce the population growth rate. We should readjust the educational renovation, stabilize and raise the teaching and learning quality, and permit the establishment of people-founded and private schools. We should strengthen health care, create positive changes in social order and security, and ensure social equity.

The State should pay attention to social policies and encourage the localities and units to raise their responsibilities, obligations and sentiments for the individuals and families who have contributed their merited services to the revolution, the helpless, the disabled and the disadvantaged people. In developing a commodity production, we acknowledge and stimulate people to engage in legal enrichment. At the same time, we should well execute the policy for social welfare to ensure social equity.

h. Continuing to shift foreign relations, national defense and security to maintain peace and make use of advantageous conditions for economic development, socialist construction and defense of the national independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity. By doing so, we will contribute to the common struggle of the peoples in the

world for the sake of peace, national independence, democracy and social progress.

We should initiate mass movements to safeguard national security, social order and safety at the grassroots level. We should strengthen the all-people national defense, the people's armed forces and the disposition of people's war.

i. Renovating the organization and operation of the political system, building and developing socialist democracy, strengthening the Party's leadership, raising the real efficiency of the State, and bringing into play the people's active role and creativity. If we do not broaden democracy and renovate the system of administration and leadership, we are likely to fail in economic renovation.

The contents of political renovation include: correctly defining the positions and functions of the institutions forming the political system; restructuring the apparatus; renovating the methods and ways of working; building and perfecting the system of policies and laws; and perfecting the contingent of functionaries. All this must be carried out in the sense of broadening democracy to help the State better represent the people's will, interests and aspirations and strongly promote the people's mastership.

We should continue to broaden and develop democracy in all fields of society. However, it must be socialist democracy in compliance with the laws and discipline in close combination with the citizen's responsibilities and obligations under the Party's leadership.

MARKET ECONOMY AND STABLE DEMOCRATIC POLITICS¹

Realities in Việt Nam's renewal process in recent years are conducive to an important conclusion: if the process is to succeed and the country to advance properly and effectively towards socialism, it is inevitable to develop a market economy under the State's governance and practice stable and democratic politics. This is in fact not only a content and requirement of the renewal process but also the path and pattern towards socialism in Việt Nam.

Generally speaking, a market economy is one that is oriented towards the market and operates under market mechanisms. In other words, it is a commodity economy closely linked to the market and uses the market as a condition for its survival and operation.

As the meeting place of sellers and buyers, the market dominates every production and business activity, and is the most encompassing characteristic of a commodity economy. The more developed a commodity economy is, the larger the market becomes and the more important it is as an incentive to production development. Some maintain that a market economy is actually a highly developed commodity economy.

In other words, a market economy is a social form of economic organization and operation in which men-to-men economic relations are reflected through the market, i.e. through selling and buying, money-based exchanges, or commodity-money relations.

Emerging and operating objectively in given historical conditions, the market economy reflects a society's level of civilization and

¹ Article in *Cộng sản Review*, No. 8, 1991.

development. It is a factor for productive forces development, economic growth and social advancement. At the same time, it has inherent defects which it cannot overcome by itself, particularly spontaneity and brutal competition, leading to bankruptcy, unemployment and cyclical crises driving a large number of people into misfortune.

For a long time, socialist countries including Việt Nam failed to understand commodity production and the market economy. They considered commodity production as an exclusive form of production organization of capitalism. They equated ownership forms on the one hand and economic organization forms and economic sectors on the other. They made light of the laws of value, of competition, and of demand and supply. They saw only the negative side of the market, and negated market relations. As a result, no stimulus to production development was created, the application of scientific and technological advances was limited, labor productivity could not be raised. Disorder and bottlenecks occurred in goods distribution and circulation, and made the whole economy become stiffened and slackened off.

The 6th Party Congress, held in December 1986, acknowledged that the mistake was caused by subjectivism, voluntarism and the failure to grasp objective laws. It therefore took the decision to develop a multi-sector economy, abandon the bureaucratic centralized management mechanism with State subsidies, and make proper use of commodity-money relations, considering these measures as a strategic solution that would help unleash productive forces and tap all potentialities for their development. This was a major step forward in the Party's economic thinking.

Yet, the Congress did not in any case use the "market economy" or "market mechanism" concepts. It talked of developing commodity production only hesitantly and failed to cover all of its aspects.

It was only at the 6th Plenum of its Central Committee (6th tenure)¹ held in March 1989 that, after summing up realities of the two years of

1 The 6th Plenum of the Party Central Committee (6th Tenure) met on 20 March 1989, reviewing the years of implementing the 6th Party Congress Resolution and elaborating orientations and tasks for the next three years.

renewal, the Party had the conditions to further clarify and emphasize: "Developing a planned multi-sector commodity economy towards socialism is an issue of long-term strategic significance and follows the law of advancing to socialism from small-scale production". This also "manifests economics democracy". The market mechanism should be applied consistently in economic planning and policies," it stressed.

Those decisions won broad consent from the population and were promptly turned into practice, helping mobilize a great deal of the people's potentialities and creativeness, invigorate the economy, enliven businesses and services, and activate the market.

Perhaps one of the most striking economic achievements recorded over the past four years or so is that Việt Nam has managed to shift initially its economy from a heavily in-kind self-subsistent one under bureaucratic centralized planning with State subsidies to a multi-sectoral commodity economy operating under the market mechanism and State governance. Everyone, including foreigners, could observe the switch easily.

With more realities, the 7th Party Congress held in 1991 reaffirmed, even more strongly and definitely, the need for a market economy. It maintained that developing a commodity multi-sector economy operating under the market mechanism and State governance is absolutely necessary to make the most of production potentials in society.

In the *Strategy and Political Report* adopted by the Congress, the Party clearly pointed out that the market in Việt Nam included markets for consumer goods, services and production elements (such as capital, money and foreign exchange) production means labor, domestic and foreign markets alike. It is "to give direct guidance to enterprises in selecting field of activity, kinds of product, scope, technology and forms of production, or business organization with a view to achieving the highest efficiency in the context of cooperation and competition." The Party also called for early "establishment of a complete market... through market", "linking the domestic market with the world market," and "thorough abolishment of all forms of market partitioning."

Obviously, that reaffirmation was extremely important. It showed a vigorous change in the Party's economic thinking and a new step forward in theoretical perception compared with the 6th Congress.

However, the Party never sees the market economy as an elixir the development of which is to be encouraged at all costs. It would be a terrible mistake to consider the market economy flawless, for it has inherent limits and defects. It gives rise to stubborn spontaneity and brutal competition. It also breeds malpractices and social vices. Even in modern capitalist countries, the State also has to interfere in certain stages of production and regulate the market, of course for the sake of capitalism.

Realities of the past years show that, having just been applied to Việt Nam, the market mechanism has revealed, along with positive impacts, quite a few negative aspects, such as the practice of running after profits alone, leading to fraud, bribery, tax evasion, bad debts, and misappropriation of funds. Other adverse effects include uncontrolled commercialization of the cultural, health care, educational and internal affairs sectors, causing moral values to be turned upside down and rapidly downgraded. Brotherhood, friendship and comradeship are overlooked. Money holds sway over social and family ties. Order and law are not strictly observed. The gap between the rich and the poor is becoming widened and social inequity, on the rise. A lifestyle impregnated with egoism, vulgar pragmatism and baseness tends to develop.

By its nature, the current regime in Việt Nam does not tolerate such malpractices. The market economy we are following should be one that operates under State governance, guidance and regulation and along the socialist line. This is to ensure right-track development of the market economy, which cares for the people's interests and social equity, while facilitating production and business and closely controlling breaches of law. Of course, State governance should be exercised in respect for and conformity to the objective laws of a commodity economy, particularly those related to value, competition, and demand and supply, instead of proceeding from subjective wishes or rigid administrative measures and orders.

The State's governance over the economy does not mean direct interference in business. On the contrary, it is to help economic entities promote their properly oriented initiative. It is effected mainly through economic measures, i.e. planning, policy incentives (financial and monetary), laws, material reserves, and also the influence of key State economic sectors.

In summary, developing a market economy under State governance constitutes an important component of Việt Nam's socialist-oriented economic pattern, where the orientating and balancing role of planning is harmoniously combined with the dynamism and sensitiveness of the market. The use of the market mechanism does not mean an end to planning, but in fact a better planning in accordance with objective laws and with greater efficiency.

Though advocating a market economy, the Communist Party of Việt Nam continues to follow the one-party system where the Party's leadership and the State's governance function on the principle of democratic centralization. This may sound contradictory, and some have even capitalized on this stance to require us for extreme "renewal" towards political pluralism and a multi-party system. In fact, there is neither contradiction nor obstruction whatsoever between a market economy and a Party's leadership, for they belong to totally different categories and operate according to different laws. A multi-sector economy does not necessarily imply political pluralism. Experience in many countries has clearly proved that.

Yet, that should not be an excuse for us not to reform the political system. The Party has reiterated the need gradually to reform and perfect the political system along with economic renewal.

Economic renewal lays the foundation for political renewal, while political renewal is the requisite for economic renewal. It would be impossible to develop a multi-sector commodity economy, and ensure business accountancy, economic exchanges throughout the country and relations with foreign countries if the administrative apparatus and its working style were not reformed. A dynamic market economy is incompatible with a bureaucratic and rigid management mechanism, a stiff working style and a cumbersome, overlapping apparatus. The issue is how to carry out

political renewal efficiently so as to facilitate economic development instead of hindering it.

As clearly pointed out in the Political Platform and other official documents of the Party, renewal of the political system in Việt Nam is in essence the establishment and gradual execution of socialist democracy, promoting the people's right as masters, their creativeness and dynamism, and ensure that real power belongs to them under the Party's leadership.

Democracy constitutes the heart and soul of the new social system, and a requirement and an aspiration of the population. The political institution in Việt Nam is one of socialist democracy. Socialist democracy differs from bourgeois democracy in various ways. It is the democracy of the overwhelming majority of the population, in the first place the working people, and is closely linked with social equity and against oppression and injustice. It is practiced in all fields of society, either directly or indirectly, and it is ensured by the law. Promoting democracy is both a target and a driving force of the renewal process and socialist construction in Việt Nam as a whole.

In recent years, despite quite a few limitations and shortcomings, the Party and people have recorded progress in democracy practice. Newly issued mechanisms and policies have extended the autonomy of economic entities, tapped the potentialities of various economic sectors. Freedom to do business in accordance with the law has been initially ensured.

Cultural, art, information, press and publication activities have experienced positive changes in contents, dissemination methods, research and creation. They have enabled straight talks about controversial issues and open criticism of negative practices.

Many important policies and laws have been issued with prior consultation with the population. Typical have been meetings for people's comments on Party's Congress documents.

Various organizations in the political system have renovated their work in the direction of promoting internal democracy, and the right of the people to be masters, higher responsibility and more authority

of elected bodies, and greater efficiency of administrative echelons. The apparatuses of certain agencies have been streamlined with many intermediary departments abandoned and many cadre replacements. The Party's high-level institutions have also experienced remarkable changes since its recent congresses.

So, with regards to politics, it is not true that Việt Nam remains unchanged over recent years and that the Party and State are conservative in this matter. Yet, a lesson we have learnt is that political renewal should take such steps as commensurate with reality, and be prepared seriously and prudently, for politics is a very sensitive area which is likely to touch many complicated relations in society. It would be unacceptable if such renewal caused political instability or disorder.

During meetings to collect comments on documents of local and national Party congresses, most participants agreed that being able to carry out radical economic reform while ensuring political stability was Việt Nam's major success and precious lesson.

Experience shows that there could never be national construction or development if the country faced political instability or social disorder continually. If we were not sober enough, the situation was likely conducive to unwise reaction, which might lead to unforeseeable consequences.

The reasons why we have managed to go ahead with the renewal process while maintaining political stability are as follows:

- During the renewal process, we have always stuck to fundamental principles, and neither strayed from set targets nor flatly negated past achievements just because of renewal. We have also defined in advance steps to be taken, made careful preparations, and avoided overhasty or extreme actions.

- While promoting democracy, we have always tried to prevent both formalistic and extremist practices, being fully aware that democracy should go in company with authority centralization, discipline, law, and the sense of citizenship. While democracy is practiced, it is necessary to ensure proper leadership which, in its turn, will further promote democracy. While democracy is assured

for the people, severe punishment should be meted out to those who deliberately sabotage the achievements of the revolution as well as social security, order and safety.

- While effecting personnel assignment or reassignment, we have paid due attention to reconciling the use of elder and younger officials putting together officials "of three different generations", thus ensuring continuity and succession in each leading body. This is a good lesson drawn from the Party's personnel work.

SOCIALIST ORIENTATION AND THE PATH TO SOCIALISM IN VIỆT NAM¹

Socialist orientation and the path to socialism in Việt Nam is a fundamental issue in terms of both theory and practice, impacting our ideological and theoretical activities at present. It is linked not only to revolutionary awareness and willpower, but also to guidelines, policies and solutions. It represents not only the ideal and objective of communists and the direction to be followed by the nation, but also the respect for the past, for the achievements of the forerunning generations, and for the sacrifices of millions of people who have fought relentlessly over the past half century. It poses us numerous problems to be studied, explained, interpreted, and solved in both the general orientation and specific directions for concrete fields.

As a broad and complicated issue that could be approached in various ways, it requires a thorough study and an in-depth review of reality, particularly concerning concrete models and solutions. Certain matters may allow a conclusion, while others may not, as reality is still unfolding. Some work is on the way; we are doing and learning at the same time.

As we know, socialism is often viewed from three different angles: as a doctrine, a movement, and a regime. As a regime, socialism also has different types, forms, and manifestations. The socialism referred herein is scientific socialism one based on Marxism-Leninism and Hồ Chí Minh Thought. Before the fall of the USSR and the socialist system, as the three revolutionary currents were on the offensive, the issue of Việt Nam advancing to socialism seemed indisputable.

¹ Article in *Cộng sản Review*, Issue No. 5, 1996.

But now that the Soviet Union has disintegrated, the socialist system in many countries collapsed, and the world revolution fallen into regression, while capitalism has properly conducted self-readjustment and re-adaptation, and “economic dragons” have emerged around us, the issue of advancing to socialism in Việt Nam has become a focus of discussions, even fierce disputes. Certain people have wavered genuinely about the path to follow. Although the Party’s Political Platform and the State Constitution have affirmed the socialist goal and mapped out the path to socialism in Việt Nam, but not few people remain hesitant and uncertain.

Some say that, “It’s not necessary to follow socialism. As long as our living is secured, any ‘isms’ are O.K.” “It’s like preparing a name for an unborn child.” “Powerful as it was, the Soviet Union still failed to advance to socialism. So can we do anything better than her?” “What is socialist orientation? Is there a socialist orientation in Việt Nam?” Others say, “The socialist orientation is not clear now. You just worry that we will derail the socialist orientation while you have not embarked on it.”

On the contrary, some people think that Việt Nam has already turned to capitalism though it is mentioning socialism as a destination: the market mechanism has been applied, the private capitalist sector allowed, the rich-poor gap widened, morality degraded, social vices rampant, and labor exploitation and inequity recurred.

Those who wholeheartedly support socialism worry whether Việt Nam can achieve it. Since the Soviet Union and the socialist system collapsed, their support for Việt Nam, both spiritual and material, has been cut short. The confidence in socialism has dramatically declined while the reactionary forces are frenziedly carrying out their sabotage schemes to eliminate socialism. At the same time, the revolutionary veterans are growing older. Some died. Will the younger generations be as steadfast as their predecessors?

Obviously, it is true that those concerns do exist. Therefore, it is necessary to hold discussions to clarify the scientific grounds, thus making clear the Party’s theoretical viewpoints, developing and supplementing the existing conclusions. At this juncture, it is of great consequence that we should come to unanimous awareness and stick

to our standpoint. In the current context, any single wavering or wrong calculation might lead to national recession and the collapse of the regime. History will never forgive such a mistake.

Why do we steadfastly embark on the path to socialism?

Pessimistic and wavering after the fall of the socialist system in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, and dazzled by the development of modern capitalism, some people started to doubt about the scientific correctness of socialism and blame the nature of socialism for the collapse. Therefore, they concluded that we chose the wrong path and should turn to capitalism or choose a “third path” — democratic socialism. Others chimed in with hostile allegations, publicly disparaging socialism and one-sidedly complimenting capitalism. They claimed the Việt Nam Communist Party was conservative and conducted a halfway reform¹—the market economy in the orientation of socialism. In their views, the right socialism must be non-Marxist. Some even repented having, for some time, believed in Marxism-Leninism and socialism.

The Việt Nam Communist Party has repeatedly asserted that the goal and ideal of the Vietnamese revolution is to successfully build socialism in the country. In fact, over the past decades, the Party has led the Vietnamese people to strive for this goal. In the face of the collapse of realistic socialism in some countries, the Party has still persevered with this standpoint. Annoyed by this steadfastness, the hostile forces are seeking ways to drive the Vietnamese standpoint into the orbit of capitalism.

We understand that the choice of the country’s goal and orientation is not a casual matter based on subjective emotions and wills. On the contrary, it is a serious scientific matter and a sacred mission to the nation and the fatherland. Having foreseen the hardships and difficulties ahead, especially when socialism is on its decline, Việt Nam still marches on the path to socialism because this process agrees with objective laws of development. After capitalism, there must be a better society so far popularly known as communism, the initial stage of which is socialism.

¹ See *A Chronology of Chinese History*, Thế Giới Publishers, Hà Nội, 2001, p. 33.

Humankind has always dreamt of a better society — Buddhism's Nirvana, Christianity's Heaven, and Fourier's,¹ Saint Simon's,² and Robert Owen's³ models of socialism. However, those are just dreams, which are based on emotions, so they cannot be materialized. Not until Marxism came into existence were the scientific basis and the objective rules of socialism mapped out, paving the way for scientific socialism, which was based on the radical liberation of the working class, society, and man himself.

The reality over the past 70 years has shown that, despite subjective shortcomings and mistakes, the realistic socialism in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe clearly showed its vitality and superiority in its nature. It focused on building good relations between man and man, caring the people, and creating a collective strength to defeat fascism and make the country more equitable and wealthier. Nowadays, many people in the former USSR and Eastern Europe still feel some nostalgia for those good old days. It is also the reason why the communist and left-wing forces in those countries have recently reclaimed the popular confidence in the elections.

In Việt Nam, in the Brief Political Platform made at its birth, the Việt Nam Communist Party clearly proclaimed that it would “launch civil-rights bourgeois revolution and land revolution to advance to communism.”⁴ The Party's 1930 Political Platform

1 Charles Fourier (1772-1837), French philosopher and socialist. His first full-length book *Theorie des quatre mouvements et des destinees generates* (Theory of the Four Movements and of General Destinies, 1808) expounded his social system and his plans for the cooperative organization of society. The system, known as Fourierism, is based on his belief in a universal principle of harmony, displayed in four departments: the material universe, organic life, animal life, and human society. This harmony can flourish only when the restraints that conventional social behavior places upon the full gratification of desire have been abolished, allowing people to live free and complete lives.

2 Saint-Simon (1760-1825), French socialist. He is considered one of the founders of modern socialism. He supported a social organization directed by people of science and industry for the benefit of the whole society. His principles became known as the philosophy of Saint-Simonianism.

3 Robert Owen (1771-1858), British Utopian socialist, generally considered the father of the cooperative movement.

4 Communist Party of Việt Nam: *Complete Party Documents*, National Political Publishing House, Hà Nội, 1998, vol. 2, p. 2.

asserted it would launch the national people's democratic revolution led by the working class to advance to socialism, bypassing capitalism. It may be said that, right at the start, the close link between national independence and socialism was highlighted, serving as a thread running through the Party's politics and the rules of the Vietnamese revolution. The 1991 Political Platform concluded: “We should firmly grasp the banner of national independence and socialism. This is the lesson running through the Vietnamese revolution. National independence is the pre-condition for socialism and socialism is a solid basis for national independence”¹. Without linking national independence to socialist goal, it is impossible to mobilize the biggest forces from the various strata and walks of life into the struggle for national independence. Furthermore, when national independence is won, a failure to pursue the path to socialism means an ingratitude to those who fought and died for this ideal. It is like handing the fruits of the revolution over to another force whose interests run counter to those of the people; and more important, national independence cannot be secured. For us, national independence means the real independence in politics, economy, culture, and foreign relations, with no oppression and labor exploitation. National independence must be closely associated with freedom, equality, and equity with no foreign intervention nor enslavement. Only socialism can satisfy the conditions mentioned above. Only socialism can strike at the roots of the exploitation of man by man. Socialism means liberation and development — liberation for development, and development for more radical liberation.

Why didn't we choose to embark on capitalism?

To begin with, it should be acknowledged that capitalism is a stage of marvelous development, an achievement of human civilization. In Việt Nam, any Vietnamese returning from a capitalist country showed his admiration for its developed labor force, civilized society, and advanced technologies. Capitalism offers a great deal of

1 Communist Party of Việt Nam: *Cương lĩnh xây dựng đất nước trong thời kỳ quá độ lên chủ nghĩa xã hội* (The Political Program for National Construction in the Transition to Socialism), Sự Thật (Truth) Publishing House, Hà Nội, 1991, p. 4.

temptations and superficial attractions. However, we refuse to choose to embark on capitalism for three reasons as follows:

First, the current era is not the one of capitalism. It is even not “the transition from socialism to capitalism,” as someone ironically remarks. Instead, it is the transition from capitalism to socialism on a global scale. According to the law of social development, the negation of capitalism is a matter of course, an objective trend, and a natural flow of history. Stopping midway would mean our recession. Is it reasonable that we need to build primitive capitalism to displace people, rob their lands, and conduct massive appropriation for primitive accumulations like what capitalism did? That’s impossible in our modern life. Besides, capitalism itself is creating material and technical premises to advance to socialism. We should not seize the pretext of the collapse of the Soviet Union and the socialist countries in Eastern Europe to say that the modern era is not the transition to socialism. The failure of socialism, though painful, is temporary.

Second, it is not necessary that any development should follow a certain order, or the “natural process of history” like someone has simplified one of Karl Marx’s viewpoints. Marx just mentioned the process in general terms; he did not exclude great leaps and mutations in revolutions.

Some people said that the Russian October Revolution was an immature birth — it was carried out by voluntarists and went against the law of history. In their views, it was a mistake for Russia to advance to socialism when its production forces were weak — this was the cause of the Soviet failure. They were wrong. Lenin refuted their views and arguments, saying: “In order to build socialism, we must advance to a certain level of culture. However, nobody knows for sure how high that level should be as it varies in each Western European country. So why don’t we start with seizing the prerequisites for that level by means of a revolution so that later on, thanks to the government of the workers and peasants and the Soviet regime, we can advance and catch up with the other nations?”

“You may very well say that we must be civilized if we want to build socialism. But why aren’t we able to create those prerequisites

for civilization by driving the landlords and the capitalists away from Russia and start to advance to socialism? Is there any book telling you that those changes in the normal progress of history are unacceptable or impossible?”¹

Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels even said that it was possible to combine a peasants’ revolution in Russia with the revolutionary movements in Western Europe: “Nowadays, the only answer to that question is: If the Russian revolution serves as a signal for a proletarian revolution in the West and the two revolutions can support each other, the public ownership of land in Russia now can be the starting point for communism.”²

It is true that Việt Nam’s production forces are far weaker than the developed capitalist countries. However, we have built an advanced power led by the Communist Party. Furthermore, we are in the transition to socialism. So why should we stop at capitalism? Though our advance to socialism is hindered by untold difficulties and hardships as we have started from a backward agriculture and less developed economy and technology, we have favorable conditions to bypass the capitalist exploitation. We don’t bypass the development of the production forces. Internally, we have the inherent premises of politics, economy, and culture; externally, science and technology are recording rapid developments, and the world is in the trend of multilateralization and internationalization, thus many friends are willing to share with us and support us.

We should make full use of all opportunities and seek ways to develop the production force just as we are doing at present. If necessary, we may learn from capitalism, utilize capitalist forms, inherit the achievements of capitalism, and even use capitalism to build the production forces for socialism. However, we don’t follow capitalism, or develop our production forces at all costs, or allow the capitalists to barbarously exploit and torture the workers. On the contrary, we should take care of and protect the working people, limit the capitalist exploitation, and step by step realize social

1 V.I. Lenin. *Complete Works*, Progress Publishing House, Moscow, 1978, vol. 45, p. 433.

2 K. Marx - F. Engels. *Selected Works*, Sự thật (Truth) Publishing House, Hà Nội, 1980, vol. I, p. 522.

equity. At the initial stage of socialism, we should pay attention to securing social equity and caring for the workers' livelihood right in the process of creating the production force. That makes an utter difference from capitalism.

Third, despite the fact that capitalism has recently readjusted itself and made use of new scientific and technological achievements to reconcile contradictions, and further develop, it cannot basically solve its innate contradictions, inherent in its nature. The contradictions between the increasing production socialization (at the multinational and supranational, regional and international levels) and the private ownership of the capital goods are getting deeper and more severe than ever before. The unequal competition and rich-poor gap are becoming more acute while negative phenomena, social vices, inequity, and moral erosion are rampant.

Social vices are the most rampant in the United States, which proclaims itself the wealthiest and most civilized country in the world. According to a survey conducted by the US Department of Justice, 65 people are killed everyday in America. In 1996, 124 out of 10,000 Americans aged 12 and up committed in violence-related crimes and over the past 60 years, the number of juvenile delinquents has increased by 600 percent. From 1984 to 1994, the number of murders committed by juveniles doubled. At present, 250 million pistols are in circulation in the US. According to a report by the US Department of Justice, every year there are over one million cases of shootings, killing some 20,000 people. The mortality caused by American youths' guns is 12 times higher than that in 25 other industrialized countries. The harsh regime of prisons is popular in the US. Also according to the report by the US Department of Justice, 125 workers were beaten to death by US cops from 1980 to 1995, but only one cop was punished; in 1996, 500,000 persons were beaten and threatened by cops using dogs or guns. At the same time, the rich-poor gap is widening: the 10 percent richest Americans own more property than the remaining 90 percent. According to official statistics in 1997, 20 percent richest families possessed 49 percent of the US total incomes. The US administration had to admit that racial discrimination was rampant. In 1997, the number of racial discrimination organizations increased by 20 percent; at present, there are 474 such organizations

in operation; from January 1995 to May 1997, 162 churches and temples owned by the black were burnt, mostly by the white. Every year, 130,000 children are sexually abused, 2,000 persecuted to death, and 250,000 beaten to injury.¹

Over recent years, Japan's economic growth, which used to develop at a miraculously rapid speed, has witnessed a halt, even a downturn. In 1993, its GDP growth rate was -0.5%. In 1995, the rate stood at just 0.5%. With its policy of "hollowing the economy" and the tough competitions, thousands of Japan's factories went bankrupt, hundreds of company directors committed suicide, dozens of thousands of workers were sacked, and thousands of other workers died because of overwork. Besides, Japan's politics was found to be unstable with four premiers within three years. In his speech made on 22 January 1996 at the Diet, Japanese Prime Minister Hashimoto then admitted: "Japan's economy is really gloomy." (RFI, BBC radios, 22 January 1996).

On a global scale, due to the inequity in property possession and allocation, the rich-poor gap is widening. Twenty percent richest countries own 82 percent of the world's incomes while the 20 percent poorest countries own only 1.4 percent of the incomes. At present, around 1.3 billion people are living in abject poverty and 1.5 billion never enjoy basic healthcare. Many African countries are faced with horrible famine and huge amassing debts. Even among nearly 200 capitalist countries, just a few scores have a high level of development. Having 170,000 branches in the continents, 37,000 multinational companies are controlling the world and waxing wealthier by exploiting the developing countries. The late French President François Mitterrand admitted: "The free market economy cannot solve social issues."²

Obviously, capitalism does not merely contain good things as has been lauded. It is not an indispensable trend of development for the era, so it's not a prototype for us to follow.

1 *Nước Mỹ đằng sau tấm bình phong* (The US behind the Screen), in *Cộng Sản* (The Communist) Review, No. 11, 2000, pp. 59-60.

2 Speech made at the Conference of Heads of State on Social Issues in Copenhagen, Denmark, in March 1995.

So, is there any other way?

The answer is: No. There is not any other way. It's either socialism or capitalism. There is not a third way. Refusing to follow socialism means a turn to capitalism.

Some say why we don't combine good things of capitalism to those of socialism to make a third way? It sounds reasonable and interesting at first; however, this idea aims at upholding capitalism and encouraging other countries to follow a camouflaged capitalism. When embarking on socialism, a nation must inherit and develop the achievements of capitalism because socialism is born on the basis of humankind's developed civilization. In Karl Marx's view, socialism was born from capitalism.¹

Others ask, "Why don't we choose a democratic society?" At present, some parties have shifted their standpoints to social democratic ones and some countries have followed this trend. It must have certain good things. As is well known, the social democratic parties contain in themselves positive and negative aspects at the same time.

Some social democratic countries have recently re-adjusted their social policies, paying more attention to the workers' livelihood, and easing social contradictions. All of those changes, however, are aimed at consolidating and safeguarding capitalism. Those reforms were carried out within the framework of capitalism and were far from touching the foundations of capitalism. Basic contradictions of society were not solved.

Besides, the model of democratic society is based on the capitalist private ownership, mechanism of free market, and political pluralism. The capitalists still control society and mercilessly exploit surplus values to serve the interests of their minority class.

In conclusion, nothing but socialism is Việt Nam's only choice, which is correct and scientific, in compliance with the laws. The country decided on this choice in the 1920s. Now, we just reaffirm the matter on firmer grounds and in new and better understanding.

1 K. Marx - F. Engels. *Selected Works*, Sự thật (Truth) Publishing House, Hà Nội, 1983.

In the 1920s, President Hồ Chí Minh, through revolutionary struggles and reality, concluded: "No way other than the proletarian revolution can help us save the country and liberate the nation,"¹ and "only socialism and communism can liberate the oppressed nations and the laborers in the world from slavery."² It was Marxism-Leninism that helped him find the way. It helps us understand why he was so happy and moved when he chanced upon Leninism. Like a thirsty person finding water, he regarded Marxism-Leninism as the magical handbook, the compass, and the "wisdom" of the Communist Party. Those who distorted socialism, Marxism-Leninism, and Hồ Chí Minh Thought have purposefully ignored this fact.

Naturally, the problem for us is not merely to choose ideals and to be persistent in pursuing those goals. Most importantly, we should know how to work out the right, scientific, and creative ways to achieve the goals set. The model of socialism Việt Nam chose is not the one mistaken and wrongly undertaken as previously, but the right scientific and renovated socialism

1 Hồ Chí Minh. *Complete Works*, National Political Publishing House, Hà Nội, 1995, p. 314.

2 Hồ Chí Minh. *Complete Works*, National Political Publishing House, Hà Nội, 1996, vol. 10, p. 128.

SOCIALIST-ORIENTED MARKET ECONOMY¹

1. Why did Việt Nam Choose the Model of Socialist-oriented Market Economy?

1. A market economy is a type of economic organization that reflects a certain level of development in human civilization. It has existed and developed mainly under capitalism, and is a determinant of the existence and development of capitalism. Capitalism has made the best use of a market economy for its goal of developing business potential and seeking profits, resulting in the strong development of production forces. The capitalist market economy has reached a period of high development and prosperity in developed capitalist countries.

However, the capitalist market economy is not the key to all doors. Beside positive sides, it also has negative sides and defects by nature, since it is controlled by capitalist private ownership. Together with the development of production forces, the contradictions of capitalism have become more and more profound. An inability to deal with social issues has increased social injustice and insecurity, and widened the gap between the rich and the poor. Moreover, in the present context of globalization, the capitalist market economy keeps underdeveloped countries within the orbit of dependence and exploitation, according to the center-periphery relation. It can be said that the present global capitalist market economy exists as a few larger countries or transnational corporations' domination over the majority of poor countries, increasing the contradiction between the rich and poor countries.

Therefore, as it was analyzed and forecasted by Karl Marx, capitalism should be indispensably replaced by a new production

¹ Article in *Cộng sản* (The Communist) Review, Issue 31, November 2003.

mode or regime that is more civilized and humane. Capitalism has tried all means for self-regulation and self-adaptation. It has, for example, developed the models of “modern market economy” and “social market economy”; created the regimes of “social capitalism”, the “people’s capitalism”, and the “general welfare state”, which involves the participation of the state; and paid more attention to social issues. However, since the contradictions are rooted in the nature of capitalism, they cannot be solved completely by capitalism itself. The modern capitalist market economy is showing more and more clearly its tendency of self-denial and self-evolution to prepare for its transition to the post-industrial stage in socialist tendency. It is definitely impossible to achieve human progress and social development with the capitalist market economy.

2. The Soviet socialist model is a type of socio-economic organization that aims to quickly overcome the defects of capitalism and to build a better social regime and a more civilized and modern production mode than that of capitalism. It is a good idea. In reality, throughout its over-70-year existence, the practice of socialism in the Soviet Union had gained many great achievements that completely changed the face of the country and the life of the people. However, it finally failed. It had been overhasty to have actions against the law (to immediately eliminate the commodity economy and apply the non-market economic mechanism). It was also not very dynamic and slow in making timely adjustments when needed.

Actually, in the early days of the application of the Marxist theory to the building of socialism in Russia after the October 1917 Revolution, V.I. Lenin once advocated the application of the “wartime communist policy” instead of the market economy model. After a short time, however, he detected mistakes and overcame his hastiness by introducing the “new economic policy”, which encouraged the development of the commodity economy and accepted the market mechanism at a certain level. According to him, in order to build socialism in an economically underdeveloped country like Russia, it was necessary to take advantage of the commodity-currency relation, develop the multi-sector commodity economy, and especially use state capitalism to develop production forces. After only a short time of application, the new economic policy brought many positive results

to Russia: the war-ruined economy was restored and developed and many economic industries started to operate more dynamically and buoyantly. Unfortunately, his thought of socialist construction with the new economic policy was not continued after his death. The Soviet Union's success and strong development for quite a long time in the cause of national industrialization, with an economic model based on public ownership of production materials and highly centralized planning, averaged distribution of income, and the abolition of a commodity economy and market economy, became a great attraction to mankind. As a result, the economic theorists in socialist and developing countries at that time absolutized and formulated this economic model for application by any country wishing to follow the socialist road.

It should be added that during the building of socialism, theorists in some countries found something wrong and proposed some recommendations and suggestions, regarding "market socialism", but they were not accepted.

In the late 1970s, the Soviet economic model revealed clearly its limitations and defects. This, together with weakness in leadership and management, made the socialist construction of the Soviet Union and other Eastern European countries fall into stagnation and crisis. Some key leaders in the Party and State of the Soviet Union wanted to change the situation with renovations and reforms, but they committed extreme and unilateral errors with their "new political thought" (not to mention their betrayal of socialist ideals and the malicious sabotage of hostile forces), resulting in the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the collapse of the world's socialist system. The collapse of the Soviet Union and other socialist countries in Eastern Europe in the late 1980s and early 1990s exposed the weaknesses of the rigid non-market economic model, though they were not central causes of the collapse.

3. Việt Nam is a poor, economically and technically late, socially underdeveloped, and seriously war-devastated country. Advances in socialism are the ideal goals of the communists and Vietnamese people. It is also the eternally sacred aspiration of the whole Vietnamese nation. How can Việt Nam advance to socialism? It is a

great and extremely important question that is not simple to answer. Like many other countries, Việt Nam applied the Soviet socialist model with its planned, centralized, and State-subsided economic model for a long time. This model brought about many important results; most importantly it met all the requirements of the country in wartime. Later, though, it revealed weaknesses. These weaknesses were accompanied by errors in the guidance, which were deeply rooted in dogmatism, subjectivism, voluntarism, simple ways of thinking and acting, hastiness, disrespect of objective laws, and wrong perception of socialism in comparison with the reality of Việt Nam.

Based on the better and fuller awareness of socialism and the road to socialism in Việt Nam, the 6th Congress of the Communist Party of Việt Nam (December 1986) proposed a policy on the comprehensive renovation of the country for a more effective implementation of the socialism-building cause. The Congress introduced new concepts for the road to socialism and the method for building it. They especially included concepts of socialist industrialization and economic structure in the transitional period; the recognition of the objective existence of commodity production and the market; the absolute criticism of the centralized, bureaucratic, and State-subsided mechanism; and the confirmation of a complete change in the accounting mechanism. The Congress also advocated the development of a multi-sector economy with suitable forms of business; attached importance to the combination of individual, collective, and social interests; and cared more about the perfection and promotion of human factors and new perceptions of social policies. The 6th Congress of the Communist Party of Việt Nam marked an important change in its awareness of socialism and the road to socialism in Việt Nam. It was the result of an arduous process of investigation, experiment, meditation, and ideological struggle. It was also the crystallization of the intelligence and effort of the entire Party and people for many years.

The 6th Plenum of the 6th Party Central Committee (March 1989) furthered the development of the 6th Party Congress. It introduced the concept of development towards the socialist-oriented, multi-sector, planned commodity economy. It regarded a multi-sector economic policy as one of long-term strategic significance and in

accordance with the law of development from small-scale production to socialism.

At the 7th Congress (June 1991), the Communist Party of Việt Nam further highlighted this policy and firmly stated that it was a strategic policy and the road to socialism for Việt Nam. It was asserted in the Party's *Political Program on National Construction in the Transitional Period towards Socialism* that Việt Nam would develop a socialist-oriented multi-sector commodity economy that operates in accordance with the market mechanism and under State management. The 8th Congress of the Communist Party of Việt Nam (June 1996) came to a new significant conclusion that, "Commodity production is not contrary to socialism, but it is the developmental achievement of human civilization which exists objectively and is essential to the building of socialism and even when socialism has been built." However, at that time, it had just mentioned the concepts of a "commodity economy" and "market mechanism" and had not touched upon the concept of a "market economy." It was not until the 9th Congress of the Party that the concept of "socialist-oriented market economy" was officially confirmed. Accordingly, the development of the socialist-oriented market economy was a consistent and strategic policy and a general economic model during the transitional period toward socialism in Việt Nam. It was the result of many years of investigation, research, and a summarization of reality, as well as the Party's new step of development in thought and theory.

2. The Nature and Characteristics of the Socialist-oriented Market Economy in Việt Nam

The selection of the model of a socialist-oriented market economy is not the objective combination of a market economy and socialism, but it is the grasp and application of the objective tendency of operation in the market economy during the present era. Based on the awareness of the law of development of the era, and the generalization of experiences in the development of market economies in the world and the reality of socialist construction in Việt Nam and China, the Communist Party of Việt Nam proposed the policy of developing the socialist-oriented market economy, using it to reach the goal of step-

by-step transition to socialism. The socialist-oriented market economy is the economic model in the transitional period towards socialism. It is a new type of market economy in its history of development. It can be said that the market economy is the "popular", while the socialist-oriented market economy is the "particular" of Việt Nam, which is suitable to the specific conditions and characteristics of Việt Nam.

The socialist-oriented market economy does not equate to a free market economy as in capitalism or the State-subsided economy managed in a centralized and bureaucratic manner. It is not completely a socialist market economy yet, since as mentioned earlier, Việt Nam is currently in the transitional period towards socialism and has not gathered all the factors of socialism.

The policy of developing a socialist-oriented market economy is the selective reception of mankind's achievements. It is the promotion of the active role of market economy in the enhancement of production power, the socialization of labor, the improvement of technology and product quality, and the production of more and more wealth, contributing to enrich society and raise the people's living standards. However, there should be effective measures to limit the negative sides of a market economy, such as the pursuit of pure profits, the severe competition, the excessive exploitation and division between the rich and the poor, and the lack of care for the settlement of social issues. The policy of developing a socialist-oriented market economy is also the self-conscious selection of the road and model of development based on the full awareness of Marxism-Leninism, the sound grasp of the objective law, and the creative application of this model in the specific context of Việt Nam.

The 9th Congress of the Communist Party of Việt Nam (April 2001) clearly stated that the socialist-oriented market economy in Việt Nam was a type of economic organization which complied with the laws of a market economy, based itself on foundations, and was controlled and led by the principles and nature of socialism in three aspects: ownership, the organization of management, and distribution. In other words, the socialist-oriented market economy was a multi-sector commodity economy that operated in accordance with the market mechanism and under State management for the

purpose of making Việt Nam a rich people, a powerful country, and an equitable, democratic, and civilized society.

The socialist-oriented market economy is targeted to develop production forces and the economy for building socialism's material and technical facilities and improving the people's living standards. The development of modern production forces is closely related to the establishment of new and progressive production relations.

The socialist-oriented market economy has many different forms of ownership and economic sectors. Among them, the State-owned sector plays the decisive role; the State-owned and collective sectors are becoming increasingly solid foundations.

The socialist-oriented market economy is under State management. The socialist State manages the economy with strategies, plans, policies, laws, and the material strength of the State-owned economic force. It also applies the market mechanism, as well as the economic forms and management methods of the market economy to stimulate production, unleash production power, promote the positive sides, limit restrictions and negative sides of the market mechanism, and protect the interests of laborers and the entire population.

The socialist-oriented market economy carries out distribution according to labor results and economic efficiency, the contribution of capital and other resources to production and business, and via social welfare. Economic growth is closely associated with the guarantee of social progress and justice in each step of development. Economic growth goes hand in hand with the development of culture and education, the building of Vietnamese culture which is progressive and imbued with national identity, the improvement of the people's intellectual standards and education and training, and the construction and development of human resources for the country.

It can also be said that the socialist-oriented market economy is an economic organization in a society passing from a low-level economy to a higher-level one alongside a new social regime—socialist society. It is an organized market economy which is led by a communist party and managed by a socialist state, and is highly socially oriented to

greatly limit the defects of spontaneity in the market and best serve the interests of the majority of the population and the sustainable development of the country.

The policy of building and developing the socialist-oriented market economy shows the thought and conception of the Communist Party of Việt Nam of the harmony between production relations and the nature and standard of the production forces in the transitional period towards socialism in Việt Nam.

There is an opinion that the socialist-oriented market economy is impossible, and that socialism and a market economy cannot go together. According to this view, the combination of socialist orientation and a market economy is like the mixture of oil and water, resulting in an odd product. It is not true for two reasons. On one hand, this view implies the confinement of Việt Nam in the development orbit of capitalism, the denial of a socialist orientation, and the resistance to Việt Nam's advance towards socialism. It is against the objective law, so it is unacceptable. On the other, it shows its failure to escape from the old thought, by consequently identifying a market economy with capitalism, recognizing a market economy as a unique feature of capitalism, and growing allergic to this kind of economy. As a result, people who hold this opinion are unable to recognize new factors and tendencies of a market economy in the new conditions of the era, thus they can repeat the former mistake.

Besides, some people unilaterally emphasize the general and universal features of a market economy, and fail to fully see or suspect the particular and typical features of the socialist-oriented market economy. Consequently, they do not believe that a market economy can develop on the foundation of public ownership with the State-owned economic sector playing the decisive role. According to them, it is impossible for a market economy to have plans, achieve social justice, or overcome the negative sides of the market mechanism. Some other people are worried that the adoption of the socialist-oriented market economy is just a return to capitalism, and the addition of "socialist-oriented" is just to calm one's nerves and show the seeming "steadfastness to the standpoint." According to them, the socialist-oriented market economy will sooner or later slip to the capitalist road.

Such doubts and worries are understandable, as the concept of socialist-oriented market economy is still new and unprecedented. If the content of socialist orientation is not clearly defined and the management role of the socialist State towards the market economy is not held fast to, then the afore-mentioned worries will unavoidably become true. Therefore, it is recommended that Việt Nam should simultaneously implement the socialist-oriented market economy in which to draw and generalize experience. It should be firmly stated that in the new conditions of the present era, it is certainly impossible to maintain the model of a capitalist market economy or identify a market economy with capitalism. Karl Marx once criticized the vulgar economic school's identification of a commodity economy with a capitalist economy. He also firmly stated that, "...The production and circulation of goods are the phenomena of greatly different production modes, despite their different scales and levels of importance ... We know nothing about the characteristics of those production modes, and we cannot say anything about those production modes when we only know the abstract categories of goods circulation and other general categories common to all those modes."¹ Is it true that Karl Marx entrusted the present generation with the responsibility of finding the particular features of the production mode of the socialist-oriented market economy?

The selection of a model of the socialist-oriented market economy is not simply a return to the transformation of an agricultural economy into an industrial one. What is of decisive significance is that it should be a change to a modern and civilized economy with step-by-step advancement towards socialism. This model satisfies the law of development and the specific historical conditions of the era and the behindhand countries, allowing them to minimize hardships and shorten their road to socialism on the basis of using advantages and limiting weaknesses of the two mechanisms: planning and market. In other words, the socialist-oriented market economy is a special type of economic organization that complies with the principles and laws of the market economic system and guarantees the socialist orientation. This basic characteristic is the controller and determinant of the means, tools, and motivations of the economy, as well as the road

1 K. Marl & F. Engels: *Toàn tập* (Complete Works), op. cit., vol. 23, p. 175.

to its goal. This road involves the utilization of a market economy, the improvement in efficiency of the socialist state's regulation, the enhancement of science and technology, the development of human resources, and the promotion of the open-door policy and integration to boost industrialization and modernization and shorten the time Việt Nam needs to overcome backwardness and become a modern-oriented industrial country.

3. How can Việt Nam Develop the Socialist-oriented Market Economy?

This is a big question. To find a complete and accurate answer, Việt Nam should undergo the three following steps: carry out experiments; organize implementation in practice; and draw experience and make gradual complements and perfections.

Since Việt Nam started to implement the model of socialist-oriented market economy, the Vietnamese economy has gained many satisfactory results and achievements, leading to many obvious changes in the country. The economy has escaped crisis and operated increasingly dynamically and effectively. Society's wealth has become more and more abundant and commodities have become even more bountiful. People's living standards have been gradually improved. The country has not only maintained its political stability during the world's great stirrings, but also made steps forwards. The GDP growth rate is 7 percent per year on average. The agriculture has developed continuously, especially in food production and aquaculture. The value of industrial production has increased by 13.5 percent annually. The system of infrastructure has been consolidated. The service, export, and import sectors have developed incessantly. Foreign relations and international economic integration have been unceasingly widened. However, many new issues have emerged and should be continuously studied and solved.

From the reality of developing its socialist-oriented market economy over the past time and pursuant to the requirements for development in the coming time, Việt Nam can determine its directions and basic tasks for furthering the development of the socialist-oriented market economy as follows:

3.1. Continue to Consistently Implement the Policy of Developing a Multi-Sector Economy

It is necessary to consider the economic sectors that comply with the law in their business activities as important components of the socialist-oriented market economy, which together develop in the long term and healthily cooperate and compete with each other. There should be no prejudices or discriminations against any of them.

The State-owned economic sector should promote its decisive role in the national economy. It prepares the way for economic development, and is an important material force and tool for the State to macroscopically orient and regulate the economy. State-owned enterprises should play a key position in the national economy; pioneer the application of scientific and technological advances; and set examples in socio-economic productivity, quality, and efficiency, as well as in law observance.

It is recommended that Việt Nam should accelerate the reinforcement and restructuring of State-owned enterprises. Simultaneously, it should continuously renovate its mechanisms and policies to create motivations for development and improve the efficiency of State-owned enterprises in the direction of eliminating State subsidization. Accordingly, the enterprises should equally compete with each other in the market, take responsibility for their production and business, pay taxes fully, and strictly comply with democratic regulations in business.

The collective economic sector includes varied forms of cooperation, among which co-operatives are the key force. Based on member and collective ownership, co-operatives widely unite laborers, production and business households, and small- and medium-scale enterprises with no limits to the scale, area, and scope of operation. They also unite industry with agriculture and State-owned enterprises with the household sector. The State helps co-operatives in personnel training, scientific and technological application, information provision, market expansion, and in the establishment of co-operative development assistance funds.

The individual and small-entrepreneurship sectors, in both rural and urban areas, play an important and long-term role in the national economy. The State creates favorable conditions for their development by organizing voluntary cooperative forms, developing them into enterprises' satellites, and encouraging them to widen their production and business.

The private sector is encouraged to widely develop in production and business trades that are not prohibited by law. The State creates a favorable business environment in terms of policies and laws for the development of the capitalist private sector on the basis of the State's priority orientation, including overseas investment; turning these enterprises into joint stock or semi-joint stock ventures; and encouraging them to unite together with those in the collective and State-owned sectors. It is vital to build good relations between the business owner and the laborer.

It is also necessary for Việt Nam to create conditions for foreign-invested enterprises to develop favorably, direct them to production for export, build a socio-economic infrastructure in association with the attraction of modern technologies and the creation of more jobs, and improve the economic and legal environments to strongly attract foreign investment.

It is advisable for Việt Nam to diversify the State-owned sector by developing joint ventures between the State-owned sector and the capitalist private sector, both at home and overseas, for practical interests to all economic investors. As well as, attach importance to forms of business organizations that involve the mixture of different forms of ownership, the participation of different economic sectors, and the combination of both domestic and foreign enterprises. Việt Nam should also strongly promote the development of joint-stock enterprises for the wide mobilization and utilization of social investment sources.

3.2. Continue to Synchronously Set up Market Factors and Renovate and Improve the State's Economic Management

In general, the socialist-oriented market economy in Việt Nam is still in its initial stage, so its level of quality, efficiency, and competitive capacity are still low. Many of its markets are still primitive and asynchronous. Therefore, on one hand, Việt Nam should further

its renovation of thought and its establishment of different market types. Particularly, Việt Nam should pay attention to important markets which have not yet been established or are still primitive in the country, such as the labor market, the stock market, the real estate market, and the science and technology market; satisfy the varied needs and improve the purchasing power of the domestic markets, both in urban and rural areas; pay attention to markets in difficulty-stricken areas; proactively integrate into the international market; and limit and control economic monopoly.

On the other hand, Việt Nam should intensively and extensively renovate its mechanism of economic management; promote the positive factors of the market mechanism; absolutely eliminate State subsidization in business; strengthen the State's role in macro management and regulation; and effectively struggle against acts of corruption, waste, and harassment. The State should create a favorable and just legal environment for enterprises to compete and cooperate with each other for mutual development; use strategies, plans, and policies, in combination with its material forces to orient socio-economic development, reasonably exploit its resources, and to guarantee the macro balance of the economy and the regulation of income; and frequently carry out the examination and inspection of all business activities according to the law to fight against trafficking, counterfeit production, and commercial frauds.

Việt Nam should continue to renovate the State's macro instruments for economic management. It should attach special importance to building and perfecting the system of mechanisms, policies, and laws; renovating planning work and improving the quality of working out strategies, projects, and plans for socio-economic development; improving domestic and international socio-economic information, accounting, and statistics work; widely applying scientific and technological achievements in forecast; and inspecting implementation at the macro level and in enterprises.

3.3. Effectively Deal with Social Issues for Social Development and Wholesomeness and for the Implementation of Social Justice

This is an important issue for the socialist orientation in order to guarantee the preeminence of socialism. It creates a strong motivation

not only for the development of production and the improvement of labor productivity, but also for the implementation of justice in social relations, the encouragement of people to enrich themselves legitimately and legally, and the regulation of social relations.

In its present context, Việt Nam should use different remedies for job creation, improving the working conditions, guaranteeing working security and hygiene, and preventing occupational accidents and diseases for the working people. Moreover, it should gradually widen the system of social insurance and welfare, soon build and implement the insurance policy for jobless workers, essentially renovate the salary system for cadres' and civil servants, encourage talented and skillful laborers, overcome unreasonable pay and welfare situations, and respect businessmen's legitimate incomes.

In addition, Việt Nam should continue to implement hunger elimination and poverty reduction programs and care for people who deserve assistance from the country: wounded soldiers, sick soldiers, revolutionary martyrs' family members, and beneficiaries of the privileged treatment policy. This is a great need in Việt Nam, as it is still suffering the consequences from the thirty years of war. Simultaneously, it should strongly fight crime; incessantly maintain social order and discipline; and prevent and eradicate social evils, especially drug addiction and prostitution, unhealthy lifestyles, and acts against law and morality. In addition, it should consistently fight against corruption, bribery, illegal enrichment, illegal business, commercial frauds, and many other negative practices as the reverse side of the market mechanism. Specific results of this struggle are a measure of the mettle, competence and management capacity of the law-governed socialist State of the people, by the people, and for the people.

3.4. Maintain and Enhance the Communist Party's Leadership

This is a matter of principle, as well as the most decisive factor, that guarantees the socialist orientation of a market economy and the entire development cause of the country. It is also one of the greatest lessons drawn from the years of renovation.

The more Việt Nam implements a market economy, social democratization, and international cooperation, the further it

should enhance and renovate the Communist Party's leadership. The experience in some countries shows that if Việt Nam feels slightly ambiguous or relaxed in Party leadership, it will immediately create conditions for hostile forces to undermine Party leadership, seize power, and steer the country towards a different direction.

There is an opinion that once the country has changed to a market economy—an economy that complies with different laws such as those of value, supply and demand, and competition, it no longer needs Party leadership. Accordingly, Party leadership may deter or block operations of the economy. This opinion is not true. It is because Việt Nam, as mentioned earlier, advocates the development of a market economy without letting it operate spontaneously or blindly. Instead, this economy is put under leadership, direction, and regulation so its positive aspects can be promoted and its negative aspects limited for the interests of the majority of the population and for a just and civilized society. This task cannot be assumed by anyone else but the Communist Party of Việt Nam, which incessantly strives for the ideal goal of socialism and communism, and truly represents and protects the interests of the working class and the laboring people.

The leadership of the Party is working in its working out guidelines and strategies for the development of the country in general, and the economy in particular. As a result, on the one hand, this will ensure the sound political character and orientation in economic development. On the other, not only will the economy achieve a high growth rate, labor productivity, and unceasingly developing production forces, but it will also strictly comply with the socialist orientation—limiting social injustice and exploitation, and caring for and protecting the interest of the majority of the laboring people. Based on those policies and strategies, the Party leads the entire political system and social machinery, first and foremost the State, and organizes the effective implementation of set directions and tasks.

Naturally, to be qualified for leadership, the Party should be transparent and strong politically, ideologically, and organizationally. It should be closely attached to the people and have their trust and support. Particularly in the present context, Party cadres and members should have firm political mettle, hold fast to set ideal goals, have

intelligence and knowledge, maintain revolutionary morality and healthy lifestyles, and effectively struggle and overcome corruption and other corrupt practices in the Party and State machinery.

In summary, the formation of thought regarding the socialist-oriented market economy does not simply mean the theoretical finding and discovery of socialism, but also the selection and confirmation of the road and model of development in the revolutionary and creative reality of Việt Nam. The development of the socialist-oriented market economy is an indispensable process that complies with the era's law of development and meets the country's requirement for development.

However, it is an extremely difficult, complicated, and long cause since it is unprecedented and involves both practical actions and follow-up. There are still many theoretical issues that need further researching, summarizing, and clarifying. They include, for example, issues on ownership and economic sectors, how to manage State-owned enterprises so that they can play the decisive role in the national economy, how to realize social justice in the context of an underdeveloped economy, the Party's working-class nature in the development of a multi-sector economy, and measures for increasing the strength and efficiency of the socialist State and fighting against bureaucracy and corruption.

As the motto says, "Take actions and practice will give the answer", hopefully reality will step by step clarify the afore-mentioned issues and thereby contribute to enriching the theory of socialism and the road to socialism suitable with the conditions of Việt Nam in the present era.

RURAL AREAS, PEASANTRY AND SOCIALISM¹

The 5th Plenum² of the Party Central Committee (7th tenure) endorsed directions, objectives and specific solutions for a strong development of agriculture and the rural areas along the socialist line. This is the specification of the views expressed in the *Platform and Strategy for Socio-economic Development until 2000*. The main theme of the resolution of this plenum is further emancipation of the production forces, improvement of physical-technical infrastructure, intensification of the application of scientific and technological advances, gradual industrialization-modernization of agriculture and rural economy; attraction of redundant labour force, improvement of the labour productivity of the entire society; increase of the peasants' incomes to improve their material and cultural life, especially those in the ethnic and highland areas; building of new and developed rural areas with a rich cultural life, strong political system, enhancement of democracy and maintenance of equity and socio-political stability.

Decisions made by the Central Committee conform to the current realities, meet the people's aspirations and show a continued renovation in the way of our Party's sound economic thinking.

In implementing those decisions, it is vital to fully understand the following viewpoints:

- Attaching prime importance to agricultural and rural economic commodity-based development and considering it a top strategic task.

¹ Article in *Cộng sản Review*, Issue No. 8, 1993

² The 5th Plenum of the Party Central Committee (7th Tenure) convened on 3 June 1993, discussing the continuation of *đổi mới* and rural socio-economic development.

- Consistently embarking on the policy of a multi-sectoral economy, in which the State and the reformed cooperative sectors play the key role in strengthening the worker-peasant-intellectual alliance and bringing into play the potential of household and other economic sectors.
- Building a close relationship between production and the market, coupling production expansion with market expansion while devising a scientific and technological strategy as well as a rational policy for business protection as the country opens the door to foreign investment.
- Developing a close relationship between economic and socio-cultural development, improving the people's educational background, nurturing human resources, protecting the environment and natural resources, building new rural areas; coupling economic with political renovation.

Thoroughly grasping the above-mentioned viewpoints means sustaining the socialist-oriented value in developing the economic and cultural infrastructures for the rural areas during the transition to socialism in our country. We really need to develop the workforce, unleash all production forces, make use of the rural potential for economic development and improve the material and technical infrastructure in a bid to industrializing and modernizing agriculture and the rural areas. Without a developed workforce based on modern scientific and technical infrastructure and high productivity, there will be no socialism; the scientific socialism is not the one that involves austerity and poverty.

However, socialism cannot be achieved merely with a developed workforce. If this were the only requirement, capitalism would have been at that level long ago. A developed workforce must be coupled with an advanced production relationship in compliance with the nature and qualification of the workforce. A good man-to-man relationship among people must also be built. This may be shown in some fundamental aspects as follows:

Firstly, the land belongs in national ownership and it can't be privatized. Both the Party's Platform and the State's Constitution stipulate that in Việt Nam land is in under common ownership and

the single administration of the State, and that no organizations nor individuals can claim their ownership over land or use any historical reasons as a pretext for land ownership. Nevertheless, to ensure land a specific owner and use it efficiently thus creating some motivation behind the emancipation of production forces and pushing up the re-division of labour, the Vietnamese State and Party advocate provision of land-use rights to the farmers on a long-term basis under the stipulation by the law. Settled land users are granted a land-use right certificate which will allow them to exchange, transfer, inherit, mortgage or rent out the land within the time limits and according to the land-use purposes as stipulated in the certificate¹. The above-mentioned rights are quite broad and will encourage the farmers to use their land effectively for business development. Granting the farmers long-term land-use rights doesn't mean land privatization as the State holds the supreme power to make decisions on the land; in case the land users fail to fulfill their obligations or violate the land law, the State will take back the land. The State strictly forbids all forms of land rent or sales and transfer for the purposes of profit-making. It discourages land for the user's purposes of gaining some fees for his/her drinking or gambling. We also try to avoid land privatization in trying to overcome the ownerlessness of land as it is the fruits of revolutions. It is vital to give long-term land use rights to the farmers so that land can be used effectively. The Party and State should be active in launching this process as well as controlling the process. They should organize the labour force and create jobs so as to prevent parts of the farmers from relapsing into poverty or a new class of poor peasants from emerging in the rural areas (landless peasants who become hired labourers and suffer heavy exploitation). We never accept such a situation because it is against the goal and nature of socialism and detrimental to the peasants' interests.

Secondly, consistently and constantly carry out the policy of a multi-sectoral economy, *of which the State and the cooperative sectors are the corner-stone*. The existence of different economic sectors is an objective necessity during the transition to socialism. We won't

¹ Excerpted from the Land Law passed by Việt Nam's National Assembly on 14 July 1993 (A Selection of Fundamental Laws of Việt Nam, Thế Giới Publishers, 2001, p. 857).

repeat past mistakes of developing rampantly State enterprises, forcing them all to turn into collective organizations, denying the active role of cooperative households and discriminating private and individual sectors. This, however, doesn't mean letting the sectors to run on their own, but put them under rational leadership and management along the socialist line.

Recently, apart from the preference for the old-fashioned state and collective sectors in the subsidization period, there is also another trend that over-appreciates the role of the individual household and private sectors and that underestimates the role played by the State and cooperative sectors. We are aware that a continued role given to independent households has been and will be the decisive factor in creating motives for big changes in agricultural production. On the other hand, a number of State-owned enterprises and cooperatives are still operating inefficiently but it would be worse to remove these economic sectors. One reason is that however good, the farming household economy is not all-powerful and infinite. What it can do best is to encourage the farmers to increase their working hours and workload. It can't boost labour productivity based on the application of modern science and technology. The goal of large-scale production can't be achieved with rudimentary methods of cultivation like using manual labour or buffalo to plow paddy fields. This decade is not one of individual and private production relations, but definitely a decade of cooperative and joint-venture production relations. The State sector plays a leading role as an important tool of the State in supporting and involving the farmers and the other economic components in the rural areas in the process of large-scale production. Cooperation (in many forms from low to high levels) is an economic necessity nowadays. Recent realities have shown that a number of State enterprises and cooperatives have been operating effectively, thus being able to take the fundamental part. How can we build an infrastructure and apply irrigation, biological, mechanical and chemical advances to agriculture and the rural areas without the State sector? How can we provide instructions and services for co-op members and farmers for their production and develop traditional handicrafts, protect co-op members' legitimate rights as well as improve social welfare and rural development without the cooperatives?

We can't maintain the old-fashioned State and cooperative sectors. Instead, we must renovate fundamentally the administration of these sectors so that they will operate effectively and play a leading role in the national economy. It is clear, however, that renovation doesn't mean downsizing or eliminating these sectors.

Thirdly, economic growth must be achieved along with the implementation of social policies, ensuring social equity and shrinking the rich-poor gap and labour exploitation in the rural areas. Developing the market economy is thus an objective. The Communist Party of Việt Nam has laid down the policy of encouraging people to enrich themselves legally so that poverty will be eliminated and families will become wealthier. It also encourages the farmers to take production and life insurance in case of natural disasters or other risks; mobilizes people to do charity work and helps those who are in need of capital, experience or production facilities.

Fourthly, ensuring Party leadership and State administration. No country or economy in the world today can develop without the State management. State administration includes making investment measures in infrastructure, developing a number of key sectors of production and services, creating favourable conditions, especially a good legal environment and a stable financial and monetary environment. It also includes the promulgation of laws and policies by the State to orient and provide support for socio-economic activities in agriculture and rural areas. As for Việt Nam, we are determined to develop a socialist-oriented market economy in which the State's role as an administration and regulation body is specially important. The State has to intervene in the market at the right time, in the right place and in an appropriate manner. For the moment, it is necessary for the State to pay special attention to building on policies for investment, mobilization of capital, provision of loans, taxation, pricing and markets for agricultural products. The State should also set up a market forecast organization, strengthen economic information dissemination and devise plans and orientations for production structure to prevent a total control by the market. Any act of abandonment, non-intervention or arbitrary intervention will only hinder development.

THE PATH TO SOCIALISM IN VIỆT NAM: SOME ISSUES¹

I- AN OVERVIEW OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PARTY'S PERCEPTION OF SOCIALISM AND THE PATH TO IT IN VIỆT NAM

Socialism and the path to it in Việt Nam is a crucial issue in both theoretical and practical aspects and is directly related to the Party's political line and the orientation for national development. It constitutes the core of Việt Nam's revolutionary policy and dominates all fields including economics, culture, society, external relations, security, national defense and Party building.

Yet, this is also a broad and complicated issue, which can be approached in different ways. Many of its contents need further research, discussion and clarification with regards to the general orientation and specific ones for each field. A fierce ideological struggle has, for many years now, been centered on this issue. There also remain different viewpoints on it among us.

In its *Platform* issued at its birth in 1930, the Communist Party of Việt Nam already asserted national independence and socialism was the target for our nation's endeavor. Since then, Việt Nam has been striving consistently and determinedly for that target. Our perception of what socialism is and how Việt Nam can achieve it has become deeper and more comprehensive through various stages of our country's revolution.

In 1960, the Party's 3rd Congress designed the fundamental line for building socialism in the North of the country²: "making the

¹ Article in *Cộng sản Review*, Issue No. 15, 2001.

² Under the Geneva Accords in July 1954 on ending the war and restoring peace in Indochina and Việt Nam, Việt Nam was temporarily divided in two parts with the 17th

North advance rapidly and steadily to socialism.” Thereafter, that line was further developed by many subsequent Party plenums and Politburo meetings.

In 1976, the Party’s 4th Congress developed, for a step forward, the line charted by the 3rd Congress: building socialism all over the country. According to it, we must hold firmly to the dictatorship of the proletariat, bring into full play the laboring people’s right to collective mastery; carry out at the same time three revolutions: in production relations, science and technique, and ideology and culture with the scientific and technical revolution being the keystone; intensify socialist industrialization as the central task of the transition to socialism; establish a regime of socialist collective mastery; build a large-scaled socialist production; build new socialist culture and a new socialist man...”¹

However, a number of mistakes and shortcomings were committed by us in designing specific models and their materialization. They concerned the major lines, policies, strategic directions and the organization for implementation. The Party’s 6th Congress held in December 1986 attributed the root causes of such mistakes and shortcomings to subjective, voluntarist, and simplistic modes of thinking, hasty actions disregard for objective laws and inadequate perception of socialism in Việt Nam.

The 6th Congress laid down the line for comprehensive renovation of the country in attempts to perceive socialism better and carry out socialism building more effectively. The Congress introduced new conceptions of economic structure and socialist-oriented industrialization, at the first stage of transition, and acknowledged

parallel (Bến Hải river, Quảng Trị province) being the temporary demarcation line. The North was put under the governance of the Democratic Republic of Việt Nam, and the South temporarily under the French army. The general election for national unification would be held in 1956. In 1956, the United States ousted the French and brought Ngô Đình Diệm from the United States back to replace Bảo Đại (French-backed puppet authority) in order to partition the country for good.

1 Communist Party of Việt Nam: *Báo cáo chính trị của Ban Chấp hành Trung Ương Đảng tại Đại hội đại biểu toàn quốc lần thứ IV* (Political Report of the Party Central Committee to the 4th National Representative Congress), Sự Thật (Truth) Publishing House, Hà Nội, 1977, p. 67.

the objective existence of commodity production and market. It criticized radically the centralized and bureaucratic subsidy mechanism and asserted the switch to a business accounting one. The Congress advocated the development of a multi-sectoral economy with appropriate forms of doing business, attached importance to the reconciliation between individual interests, collective interests and society’s interests. It called for comprehensive care of human factors and acquired new awareness of social policies. The Congress marked a significant change in the Party’s awareness of socialism and the path to achieve it in Việt Nam.

The 7th Congress of the Party convened in June 1991. By that time, the socialist regime in Eastern European countries had collapsed. The Soviet Union had started to deviate from its perestroika policy and was facing the danger of a breakup. Parts of Party cadres, members and the population showed signs of wavering. Some even wanted to “go another path.” Meanwhile the hostile forces kept attacking the remaining socialist countries including Việt Nam. Basing itself on the implementation of the policy issued by the 6th Congress, the 7th Congress approved the *Political Platform for Building the Country in the Transitional Period to Socialism* and the *Strategy for Stabilizing and Developing the Economy and Society to the Year 2000*.

The Platform affirmed that Việt Nam should stick fast to its path to socialism, identifying six characteristics of socialism in Việt Nam and seven major guidelines for construction of socialism in the transitional period. After that, the resolutions of the Central Committee and the Politburo further amended and developed the two documents, and specified the views and fundamental orientations prescribed in them. The mid-term meeting of the Party held in January 1994 adopted actions to speed up the “*đổi mới*” and pointed out four big threats to the country, namely lagging economically further behind other countries, deviating from socialism, corruption and bureaucratic red tape, and the maneuvers for “peaceful evolution” launched by the hostile forces.

After analyzing and assessing the situation, the Party’s 8th Congress, held in June 1996, concluded that the country had pulled itself out of the socio-economic crisis, fulfilled the main targets

of the initial stage of the transition and entered a new period of industrialization-modernization. It asserted, "The path to socialism in Việt Nam has been made clearer. In general, the elaboration of the "đổi mới" line and its implementation have, in recent years, moved to be sound in the main, conforming to the socialist orientation..."¹

So, before the 9th Congress of the Party, the perception of socialism and the path to achieve it in Việt Nam in the spirit of the "đổi mới" had been well established and better improved. That was the outcome of the decades-long strenuous efforts of the entire Party and people to study and testing, thinking and arduous ideological struggle, crystallizing their endeavors and wisdom. Such awareness was drawn from reality and clearly manifested in the resolutions of the Party's congresses and the Party Central Committee plenums.

Notably among them were the resolutions adopted by the Party Central Committee's 6th Plenum, at its 4th tenure in August 1979, which aimed to boost booming in domestic production; Directive No. 100 issued by the Secretariat of the Party Central Committee (4th tenure) dated 13 January 1981 on contracting finished products to the worker and the group of laborers in the farming coops; and Decisions No. 25/CP and 26/CP by the Government in 1982 about various sources of balance and the "three-part plan."²

More should be mentioned: the resolutions of the 5th Party Congress in March 1982 on re-defining the order of the economic priorities and affirming the leading position of agriculture in the national economy; the resolutions of the 8th Plenum (5th tenure) in June 1985 on pricing, salary and currency; the conclusions by the Politburo (5th tenure) in August 1986 on the three major economic

1 Communist Party of Việt Nam: *Văn kiện Đại hội đại biểu toàn quốc lần thứ VIII* (Official Documents of the 8th National Representative Congress), Sự Thật (Truth) Publishing House, Hà Nội, 1996, p. 68.

2 The three-part plan consisted of plan I, plan II, and plan III. On 21 January 1981, the Government issued Decision No. 25-CP on promoting State-run enterprises' right to financial autonomy. The State also allowed enterprises to build their own business plan which would consist of three parts: assignments from the State, their own production and sale plan, and production of by-products which did not belong to their official functions. Then, the Government issued Decision No. 26-CP on expanding the payment system based on the worker's productivity in State-run enterprises.

viewpoints; resolution of the 6th Party Congress in December 1986 on comprehensive reform of the country, the *Political Program* and *Strategy* approved at the 7th Congress in June 1991; and the strategy for boosting industrialization-modernization defined at the 8th Congress in June 1996.

However, some problems remained unsolved while reality kept changing. A lot of things needed to be done and experience to be drawn out. The 9th Congress of the Party was supposed to continue summing up reality, clarifying some issues and further bettering the perception of the path to socialism in Việt Nam.

So what were the issues clarified by the 9th Congress?

II- MAJOR CONTENTS DEVELOPED AND ADDED TO THE PRINCIPAL DOCUMENTS OF THE 9TH PARTY CONGRESS

Socialism and the path to achieve it in Việt Nam are mentioned in all the documents, and especially in the *Political Report* in which they are reflected in the most concise and direct manner in section III. Though it is not a long one, this section contains many crucial contents of great importance, clarifying some issues related to socialism and the path to achieve it in Việt Nam. Such contents are not merely theoretical or academic ones. They serve as the theoretical and political viewpoints, which have laid the foundation for the general guidelines for the Vietnamese revolution.

1. The goals of the revolution and the ideals of the Party

The 9th Congress pointed out that the achievements recorded in the 15 years of the "đổi mới" proved the soundness of the Political Platform approved at the 7th Congress of the Party. They also helped us in becoming better aware of the path to socialism in Việt Nam. The Congress reaffirmed: "The 1991 Political Program serves as the standard-bearer for national construction in the transitional period and signals orientations for all activities of the Party at present and for the decades to come. Our Party and people are determined to embark Việt Nam on the socialist path,

on the basis of Marxism-Leninism and Hồ Chí Minh Thought.”¹ This reaffirmation is of great necessity, especially in the current context as the nation and all human kind are marching on to the 21st century, with fast and complicated developments in the world, and fresh dangers and challenges in the country.

The Communist Party of Việt Nam has many times pointed out that the noble, sacred and immutable goal of the entire Vietnamese nation is to build an independent, unified and socialist Việt Nam. It also maintains that national independence and socialism should be closely inter-related. This is a matter of principle and serves as a consistent thread running through all the line of the Vietnamese revolution. This is because national independence is the prerequisite for the building of socialism, and socialism safeguards national independence. Advancing to socialism is an objective necessity and follows laws of historical development. After many years engaging in revolutionary struggles, President Hồ Chí Minh concluded: “The only way to save the country and liberate the nation is through proletarian revolution,”² and “only socialism and communism can free the oppressed and laborers from the grip of slavery.”³

Building socialism in an underdeveloped country like Việt Nam is a strenuous and unprecedented process. Therefore, it is hard to avoid shortcomings and errors in the process. But it is necessary to realize such mistakes and work out ways to overcome them. It should be confirmed, however, that such shortcomings do not belong in the nature of socialism. It is wrong to deny socialism or abandon the ideals of national independence and socialism just because there are shortcomings in some guidelines for implementation, or the collapse of a practical pattern of socialism.

Socialism being built in Việt Nam aims to put society under the mastership of the working people, with a highly-developed economy on the basis of modern production forces and public ownership of

1 Communist Party of Việt Nam: *Văn kiện Đại hội đại biểu toàn quốc lần thứ IX* (Official Documents of the 9th National Representative Congress), National Political Publishing House, Hà Nội, 2001, p. 83.

2 Hồ Chí Minh. *Complete Works*, *op. cit.*, vol. IX, p. 314.

3 Hồ Chí Minh. *Complete Works*, *op. cit.*, vol. X, p. 128.

the capital goods, and an advanced culture with distinctive national identity. In this regime, people are freed from oppression, exploitation and injustice, working under the principle “from each according to his ability, to each according to his work,” living a happy life free from want and care, with comprehensive development of the individual. The ethnic groups in the country are treated on an equal footing, united and help each other make progress. The nation as a whole is engaged in friendly and cooperative relations with all the countries in the world.

In the current period, Việt Nam’s objective can also be expressed as “making itself a powerful country, its people prosperous, its society equitable, democratic and civilized.” The 9th Congress added the word “democratic” to the goal in order to reflect better the nation’s awareness of democracy and the nature of socialism.

In fact, Việt Nam has never paid little attention to democracy. President Hồ Chí Minh stressed several times: “Việt Nam is a democratic nation” and “[It’s necessary to] build Việt Nam into a peaceful, unified, independent, democratic and strong country.” Việt Nam’s official name used to be the “Democratic Republic of Việt Nam” for decades.

The Party has been working hard to build a system of socialist collective mastership in Việt Nam. Its Political Platform for building the country in the transitional period to socialism in 1991 points out: “The socialist society Việt Nam is trying to achieve is the one in which the working people hold the mastership...” “a democratic and civilized society for the people’s legitimate interests and human dignity,” and “the organization and operation of Vietnamese political system aims to establish socialist democracy and improve it.”¹

The Party’s Statute says, “The Party’s objective is to build Việt Nam into an independent, democratic, and prosperous country and an equitable and civilized society.” Its 7th Congress said, “[Let’s] make the people prosperous, the nation powerful, and the society equitable

1 Communist Party of Việt Nam: *Cương lĩnh xây dựng đất nước trong thời kỳ quá độ lên chủ nghĩa xã hội* (The Political Program for National Construction in the Transition to Socialism), Sự Thật (Truth) Publishing House, Hà Nội, 1991, pp. 18-19.

and civilized." It omitted the word "democratic" because it thought the words "equitable" and "civilized" were supposed to mean it.

At the 8th Congress, some asked to add the word "democratic" to the objective but their request was not approved. The Congress explained that the motto had become so familiar to the population and it was not necessary to revise it. If so, it would be long and might cause misunderstanding that the country was under the influence of bourgeois democracy or was suffering some external pressure to do it.

When the 9th Congress decided to add the word "democratic" to the objective, it won broad support from a majority of people and Party members and cadres.

2. The transitional period to socialism

The *Political Report* reasserted the objective and ideals of the revolution and stressed that the country was in the transitional period to socialism. It showed in what stage of development the country was so as to design proper policy decisions. Việt Nam remains poor and its production forces weak. It is faced with the danger of lagging behind other countries economically. Therefore, it is necessary to focus on developing its production forces, promoting the strength of all its economic sectors and mobilizing all its available resources to build physical and technical foundation of socialism. It is not advisable to tailor practice to long-term objectives when the country has not got enough conditions.

The report also points out that Việt Nam is in transition to socialism bypassing the capitalist regime, i.e. bypassing the establishment of the dominating role of the capitalist production relations and superstructure. But in the meantime, the country needs to learn from the achievements humankind has recorded in the capitalist regimes, especially the scientific and technological ones, so as to develop rapidly production forces and build a modern economy. At the same time, it is necessary to set up production relations in conformity with the socialist orientation and avoid the tendency to hold production forces in the extreme and technocracy.

Building socialism bypassing the capitalist regime and creating substantial changes in all fields of society are difficult and complicated tasks, which involve bitter struggles between the new and the old, and between "the socialist" and "the non-socialist." Some intermediate forms should be used, and for this reason, the country should undergo a protracted transitional period with numerous stages and various forms of transitional social and economic organization. For instance, Việt Nam has to accept the various forms of ownership of capital goods, various economic sectors and various social classes and strata.

3. General economic model

At its 6th Congress, the Party advocated using various economic forms and bringing into full play their potentialities. It called for the State sector to play the leading role in the national economy. This was considered a strategic measure which would use all resources to develop production forces.

The 6th Party Central Committee Plenum (6th tenure) held in March 1989 advocated a multi-sectoral planned commodity economy under the socialist orientation, considering the policy of a multi-sectoral economy as of long-term strategic significance and a law character, advancing to socialism from a small-scale production.

At its 7th Congress, the Party further defined this line as a strategy and the path to socialism in Việt Nam. Its Political Platform says, "[It's necessary to] develop a multi-sectoral socialist-oriented commodity economy under market mechanism and State administration." Yet, the term "market economy" was not mentioned officially at the time.

In China, the issue of a socialist market economy was not raised until the 14th Congress of the China Communist Party in 1992.

At its 9th Congress, the Communist Party of Việt Nam introduced the term "socialist-oriented market economy." The term actually means developing a multi-sectoral commodity economy, which operates under the market mechanism and State administration and follows the socialist orientation.

The Vietnamese economy is not a centrally-planned subsidized nor a free market one. So it is not a capitalist market economy. It is not a totally socialist market economy either. This is because Việt Nam is now in its transition to socialism, in which the old and the new values are still struggling with each other and there are not enough socialist elements.

So, what are the characteristics of a socialist-oriented market economy? The *Political Report* highlights a few very essential characteristics. According to researchers, the socialist-oriented market economy in Việt Nam is a form of economic organization that complies with the laws of a market economy and is regulated by the principles and nature of socialism in respect of ownership, administration, and distribution.

A socialist-oriented market economy is different from a capitalist market one in the following aspects.

Firstly, the capitalist market economy serves the capitalists' interests. It builds economic foundations for capitalism and protects and strengthens it. Though it has been adjusted recently, its ultimate goal is still to protect capitalism. In Việt Nam the development of the socialist-oriented market economy aims to develop production forces, to build the material-technical foundations for socialism, improve the people's living standards and ensure successful development of socialism. Việt Nam employs the market mechanism and management tools of a market economy in an attempt to stimulate production, encourage labourers' dynamism and creativeness, accelerate industrialization-modernization, and above all, to achieve socialism and prevent the market from spontaneously turning into a capitalist one.

Secondly, under capitalism, capitalist private ownership is the most important of all forms of ownership. Việt Nam is also trying to diversify forms of ownership on the basis of public ownership of major capital goods.

Thirdly, under capitalism, the multi-sectoral economy is administered by a bourgeois government and controlled by private capitalists, with the private economy playing the leading role. The Vietnamese economy consists of different sectors including a private

one. Yet, it is administered by the socialist state. The State sector plays the dominant role and the collective sector is developing rapidly into a solid foundation.

Fourthly, in the context of the present-day world, both capitalist market and socialist-oriented market economies need to be put under State administration and should not be dominated by the invisible hands of the market. The capitalist countries actually do the same, with some interfering in their economies quite dramatically. The difference lies in the nature of the states. Their states are bourgeois democratic ones, which protect the interests of the bourgeois minority and wealthy people. The Vietnamese State is a socialist one, of the people, by the people and for the people, and led by the Communist Party. The capitalist market economy advocates free competition, which may be extremely fierce and unhealthy. It encourages the establishment of transnational and multinational corporations. In Việt Nam, the State reconciles the orientation and balance of planning with the dynamism and sensitivity of the market to regulate the economy. The Resolutions of the 7th and 8th Party Congresses all say that market is both the object of, and the ground for planning. The introduction of the market mechanism does not mean to put an end to planning, but to carry out planning in a more comprehensive and efficient way. State administration aims to promote positive impacts of the market mechanism and restrict its negative ones. The market mechanism is not an elixir for the Vietnamese economy, nor its end, but simply its means. The Vietnamese economy does not aim to bring about maximum profits for a minority of people, but to build socialism.

Fifthly, both capitalist market and socialist-oriented market economies have various forms of distribution. The difference is that in a capitalist market economy distribution mainly caters to the capitalists' interests in line with their capital contributions. In Việt Nam, distribution is carried out mainly according to labour performance and economic efficiency. At the same time, there are other forms of distribution, which encourage the labourer to work hard and ensure basic welfare.

Finally, the capitalist economy in its pristine period took shape along with the malpractices of robbing and appropriating the farmlands

and displacing the populations. Karl Marx said capitalism came into being thanks to primitive accumulation of capital stained with people's blood and tear to its pores. To date, capitalism has been re-adjusted to a certain extent. It has become more modern and paid attention to some social policies. That may be why it is called "people's capitalism" or "social capitalism." But the re-adjustment actually fails to solve a basic contradiction stemming from the origin of capitalist ownership. It was made because the capitalists had to do so in a bid to protect capitalism and prolong its existence. Meanwhile, a vast majority of the working people still live in misery and poverty. It is common knowledge that 20 percent of the richest people own 80 percent of the total wealth of the world and the remaining 80 percent own only 20 percent of the wealth. Rich-making is advocated. But it must be done in accordance with the law and must help to reduce poverty and shrink the excessive gap between the rich and the poor. In a market economy, such a gap is inevitable. But it definitely needs to be held in check. Social advancement and equality must be achieved in parallel with economic development. It is unadvisable to achieve economic development before paying attention to social policies. Some foreign countries are asking their governments to spend 20 percent of the budget on social policies. Việt Nam has achieved a respective rate of 28 percent for a long time and its poverty reduction policy has won appreciation from the international community. Việt Nam needs to protect its moral values and its national cultural identity and build a man-to-man relation of love, which is not conditioned by money whatsoever.

Such are the similarities and differences between a capitalist market economy and a socialist-oriented market one. The advocacy of the Communist Party of Việt Nam expresses the Vietnamese thinking, perception and clear awareness of the harmony between production relations and the nature and qualification of production forces. This is a novelty and it expresses Việt Nam's general economic model in its transition. It is also important in making clearer the path to achieve socialism in Việt Nam.

Basing itself on this model, the 9th Party Congress laid down a policy for developing the national economy in the transitional period. The policy says, "[It's necessary to] push up industrialization-modernization, build an independent economy to make Việt Nam an

industrial country, give priority to developing the production forces, establish the production relations in conformity with the socialist orientation, make full use of domestic resources, take advantage of overseas resources, and actively engage in international economic integration for rapid, efficient and sustainable development. Economic growth should be achieved along with cultural development, the improvement of the people's material and spiritual life, social advancement and equity, and the protection and betterment of the environment. Economic development should be combined with the enhancement of national security and defense."¹

4. Ownership and economic sectors

This is a fundamental and important issue of Marxism-Leninism, Hồ Chí Minh Thought and the Party's revolutionary guidelines. Ownership of capital goods is decisive to production relations and the systems of distribution and administration. As the infrastructure, the production relations, in their turn, are decisive to the superstructure. Therefore, the ownership of capital goods has always been one of the most fundamental issues of all social revolutions.

Ownership is a general concept. Actually it constitutes the foundation of an economic system. Humankind has experienced many systems of ownership of capital goods with various levels of development. But in fact, there are two main ownership systems, public or social ownership and private ownership. Each of them has various levels of development and various forms of expression. Public ownership includes such sub-forms as communal, national, collective ownership... Private ownership comprises individual ownership by workers, farmers, small-scale producers, landlords and capitalists.

At the moment, Việt Nam is step by step building socialism. According to the Party's 1991 Platform, a socialist society is the one with a highly developed economy supported by modern production forces and public ownership of major capital goods.

¹ Communist Party of Việt Nam: *Văn kiện Đại hội đại biểu toàn quốc lần thứ IX* (Official Documents of the 9th National Representative Congress), National Political Publishing House, Hà Nội, 1991, p. 89.

The 7th Party Congress pointed out there were three basic ownership forms (or categories) in the transitional period of the country, namely national, collective and private ownership. These forms may overlap each other. As a result, different economic sectors have been set up with varied ways of doing business.

The 8th Party Congress defined five economic sectors in Việt Nam, namely State-owned, co-operative, State capitalist, individual and small proprietorship, and private capitalist sectors.

Prompted by realities in recent years, the 9th Party Congress decided to add a new sector, foreign-invested one, to the list.

So there are now six economic sectors in Việt Nam. They are highly interdependent. They may cooperate and compete with each other at the same time in a unified national economy. They are integral parts of the socialist-oriented market economy in which the State sector plays the leading role and constitutes a solid foundation of the national economy together with the collective sector.

The reason why the foreign-invested sector is listed as a new economic sector is that foreign investments in recent years has been on the increase and played an important role in the national economy. Between 1991 and 2000, the number of enterprises with foreign investment rose sharply. The sector recorded a 22 percent year-on-year increase. Between 1996 and 2000, US\$10 billion worth of foreign investment was realized, accounting for 23 percent of the total social investment capital. It contributed 34 percent to the total value of the whole industrial sector, 22 percent to the export income, and over 10 percent to the country's GDP.

This sector is not similar to other sectors with regard to objectives and operation systems. There should be policies to attract more investment in this sector. At the same time, it is necessary to keep a close watch on it with analysis and regulation so as to put it on an appropriate footing with the other sectors and ensure national interests. An enterprise of this sector can be set up as either a wholly foreign-invested or a joint venture between a foreign partner with a Vietnamese State-owned or private-owned enterprise. That's why it is impossible to categorize such enterprise under the mixed or State capitalist sectors.

Defining forms of ownership and classifying economic sectors are necessary for the design of economic development policies in general and the development of each sector in particular. It is not meant to apply discrimination but to introduce proper policies for unleashing all production potentialities and promoting socio-economic development in conformity with the socialist orientation.

The 9th Party Congress also maintained that achieving public ownership of capital goods was a "long-term socio-economic development process with various steps and from low to higher levels. Public ownership and new production relations must be established in consultation with reality and in a steady manner. The efficiency of the establishment of socialist-oriented production relations is assessed through how it helps to develop production forces, improve the people's living standards and ensure social equity."¹

5. Class struggle and motivation for national development

In recent years, class struggle and the struggle between the socialist and capitalist paths seem to have been mentioned not much in our daily life. Some Party cadres and members fail to have a clear and unanimous understanding of class struggle. The 9th Party Congress laid down the target of "enhancing the strength of the entire nation, continue the "đổi mới", accelerating industrialization-modernization, and building and safeguarding the socialist Việt Nam." It stressed the major driving force behind national development was the unity of the entire people. So, was class struggle made light of?

As a matter of fact, it is impossible to dodge the issues of class and class struggle when the path to socialism in the transitional period is put to discussion. At present and during the transitional period in Việt Nam, there exist social classes and class struggle. It is impossible to obliterate the boundaries between such classes or deny class struggle. It is not advisable to interpret class struggle as one of reconciling the interests of such classes. The on-going class struggle in Việt Nam needs to be understood correctly as it is unfolding in a new situation, with new contents and under new forms. This is because the structure, content, character, and position of the classes

¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 87.

in Vietnamese society have changed a great deal along with the radical changes in the economy and society. Also, their relations and development do not remain the same in the cause of national construction and defense under the Party's leadership and the State's administration.

Nowadays, the relation between social classes and strata mainly concern the cooperation and struggle among the population, the solidarity and long-term cooperation for the sake of national construction and defense under the Party's leadership. The interests of the working class agree with those of the entire nation, and they cater for the common objectives of maintaining national independence, achieving socialism, and making people prosperous, country strong and society equitable, democratic and civilized. Class struggle and the struggle between the socialist and capitalist paths are closely bound up to the drives to defend national independence, combat oppression, injustice, exploitation, poverty and backwardness and lift the country out of poverty and underdevelopment. Therefore the Political Report affirms, "The main target of the class struggle in the present context is to carry out successfully national industrialization-modernization in the socialist orientation, overcome poverty and underdevelopment, achieve social equity, fight injustice, control negative thoughts and misdeeds, defeat hostile forces' plots of sabotage, safeguard national independence, build Việt Nam into a prosperous socialist country and bring its people happiness."¹

The report also says, "A major driving force behind national development lies in the solidarity of the whole population thanks to the Party-led alliance between workers, farmers and intellectuals. Such unity reconciles the interests of individuals, collectives and society and unleashes all potentialities and resources of the economic sectors and the entire society."²

These two aspects do not contradict each other. Instead, they agree with each other. The Communist Party of Việt Nam always considers national solidarity a valuable tradition of the nation, a strategic line and a considerable impetus to national construction and defense.

1 *Op. cit.*, p. 86.

2 *Op. cit.*, p. 86.

This way of thinking was well reflected in all the official documents of the 9th Party Congress and made the title of the *Political Report* and also the theme of the Congress. The theme of the 9th Congress is "enhancing the strength of the entire nation, continue the "đổi mới", accelerating industrialization-modernization, and building and defending the socialist Việt Nam."

The Congress pointed out the need to unite together the different ethnic groups, religions, social classes and strata, economic sectors, people of both sexes and all ages and from different regions of the country, Party members and non-members, those who are still working or have retired, and all Vietnamese people living inside or outside the country. It called for promoting the strength of the whole population, patriotism, self-reliance and national pride. It reiterated the common objectives of maintaining national independence and making people prosperous, country strong and society equitable, democratic and civilized. It also called for respect of different viewpoints harmless to the common interests of the nation, eradication of inferiority complex, bias and discrimination for the past, class or social backgrounds, establishment of an open and forward-looking atmosphere and mutual confidence.

This is an important content, which was well reflected in the *Political Report* presented at the 9th Congress and has won broad support from the population and Party cadres and members.

6. The ideological foundation of the Party

The *Political Platform* approved at the 7th Congress affirms that Marxism-Leninism and Hồ Chí Minh Thought serve as the Party's ideological foundation and guidelines for its activity. This is a result of the in-depth summing up of the realities of the revolution and a major step forward in the Party's perception and theoretical thinking. Experience has proved the soundness of the affirmation.

Supported by the results of theoretical research and summing up of reality, the 9th Congress made clearer the fundamental contents of Hồ Chí Minh Thought so as to help the whole Party and population apply them to their specific conditions. The Congress says, "Hồ Chí

Minh Thought is a comprehensive and profound system of viewpoints on the fundamental issues of the Vietnamese revolution. It is about the liberation of the nation, social classes and humans; and national independence in close association with socialism and combination of national might with the power of the times; about the strength of the population, the bloc of national unity and people's rights to mastership; the building of a State of the people, by the people and for the people; about the people's national defense, building of the people's armed forces, development of the economy and society, and constant improvement of the people's material and spiritual life. It is about revolutionary moral standards including industriousness, thrift, honesty, righteousness, full dedication to common interests and disinterests. It is concerned with the training of cadres for future generations and building of a strong and transparent Party in which its cadres and members serve as leaders and loyal servants of the people at the same time.

Hồ Chí Minh Thought shines the path of the Vietnamese people's struggle for independence and is a valuable asset of the Party and the nation.¹

Yet, the appreciation of the Hồ Chí Minh Thought does not mean to make light of Marxism-Leninism or separate them from each other. Hồ Chí Minh Thought is actually the creative application and development of Marxism-Leninism in Việt Nam's specific conditions. It inherits the fine traditions of the nation and the world's cultural essence and represents President Hồ Chí Minh's personality and style.

Obviously, Marxism-Leninism and Hồ Chí Minh Thought are closely linked to each other; though they are two separate sets of ideologies, they are united in a single entity. Such are very dialectical relations...

¹ *Op. cit.*, pp. 83-84.

BUILDING AN INDEPENDENT, SELF-RELIANT ECONOMY AND ACTIVELY EMBARKING ON INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC INTEGRATION¹

The 9th Party Congress defined the direction for national development in the current situation. It stressed very important tasks: building an independent and self-reliant economy, fully enhancing the domestic strength, taking advantage of external resources and actively embarking on international economic integration, so as to achieve effective and sustainable economic development and make Việt Nam an industrial country.

In the current situation, it is totally appropriate to raise the issue of building an independent and self-reliant economy in Việt Nam. Independence and self-reliance are found to be interrelated and interacting. Combined together, they will make the country's economy stronger and the economy will develop along the socialist line.

1. About building an independent and self-reliant economy

Some people think that it is insensitive and irrelevant, even conservative and obsolete, to raise the issue of building an independent and self-reliant economy in the current trends of economic globalization and integration. Today the world is a single market where goods can be purchased easily and money borrowed. Why is it necessary to build such an economy?

This argument sounds reasonable at first. However, after it is thoroughly examined, it becomes unscientifically grounded because it is too simplistic and one-sided. It is common knowledge that

¹ Article in *Cộng sản Review*, Issue No. 16, 2001.

independence and self-reliance are a common development trend in the world. In the context of complicated and diversified globalization and joint venturing and partnership, it is even more necessary to maintain independence and self-reliance.

Building an independent and self-reliant economy originates not only from the policies and guidelines of independence and self-reliance, but from the requirements of reality as well. This is to ensure political independence and self-reliance and sustainable and effective development of the economy and facilitate the open-door policy and international economic integration.

Once a country has achieved political independence and self-reliance, its major question is whether it can build an independent and self-reliant economy or not. This is the experience of Việt Nam and many other countries in the region and the world.

Yet, Việt Nam is developing its economy to advance to socialism in a context where the international situation remains complicated and the anti-socialist forces keep hampering and sabotaging its socialist construction. If Việt Nam does not build an independent and self-reliant economy, it will easily be dependent on other economies and the hostile forces will likely take advantage of the economic matters to incite or pressure Việt Nam to change its political regime and deviate from the orbit of socialism.

In other words, once an independent and self-reliant economy is built, the economic, physical and technical facilities of an independent and self-reliant political regime can be created. Economic independence and self-reliance serve as a material foundation for ensuring political independence and self-reliance. Political independence and self-reliance cannot be achieved in case of economic dependence. When economic independence and self-reliance are put in a dialectical relation with independence and self-reliance in other fields, it will generate independence, self-reliance and comprehensive strength for a nation.

So what is an independent and self-reliant economy?

An independent and self-reliant economy is the one that does not depend on any other countries, individuals or economic

institutions in terms of development lines and policies. It is not controlled or pressurized by any economic, financial, trade or assistance conditions detrimental to national sovereignty and the fundamental interests of the nation.

An independent and self-reliant economy is the one that can maintain its stability and develop despite market upheavals or external financial crises. It is the one that can stand firm and won't collapse or fall into disorder because of the hostile forces' blockade, isolation, and sabotage.

Ensuring economic independence and self-reliance also means firmly preserving the socialist orientation and traditional cultural values during the economic development and national industrialization and modernization.

It is unadvisable to raise the issue of maintaining independence and self-reliance when the country is already at a high level of development. Instead, it should be done right now with priority given to independence and self-reliance in the political lines and in the fundamental principles of economic development. Of course, building an independent and self-reliant economy is a long process and must go through various steps from low to high before it can be completed and solidly achieved.

Nowadays, an independent and self-reliant economy is no longer interpreted as a closed and self-sufficient one. Instead, it is put in a dialectical relation with economic openness and international integration including interaction, cooperation and competition on the basis of making the best of a country's internal resources and comparative advantages. In such an economy, there should be a rational productive structure that can meet the people's basic demands and, to a necessary extent, re-equip itself, in service of economic development and national defense and security.

How can economic independence and self-reliance be ensured?

Reality shows if economic independence and self-reliance is to be maintained, there must be two conditions: having independent and self-reliant lines and policies, and attaining strong economic power.

Independence and self-reliance in economic policies mean that Việt Nam must choose by itself a development orientation and an economic line, policy and model. It must not depend on any other countries or be pressurized by their unhealthy goals.

The 9th Party Congress advocated pushing up national industrialization-modernization, building an independent and self-reliant economy and making Việt Nam an industrial country. It called for priority to be given to expanding the productive forces and building the production relations conformable to the socialist orientation. It requested making full use of the internal resources, taking advantage of external assistance and actively joining in the international economic integration for a fast, effective and sustainable development. Economic growth should be combined with cultural development. The people's physical and spiritual life should be gradually improved. Social progress and equity should be practiced. The environment should be protected and improved. Socio-economic development should be combined with the consolidation of national defense and security.

Adequate economic strength should be understood in this way:

- The whole domestic production must manage to meet the people's consumption demands and necessary accumulations should be made from the national economy for reinvestment and expanded production.

- There must be stable economic and social institutions. The economic structure should be a technology-based one. It should promote the country's competitive edges, create competitiveness and efficiency, settle the debts, make accumulations, meet domestic market demands, maintain overseas market shares, and ensure fast, stable and sustainable growth. This economic structure includes substructures of industries and services, geographical regions, economic components, sectors with domestic and foreign investments, import-export, and investment (including short-term and long-term, and direct and indirect).

- There must be a strong endogenous capability in terms of science and technology, which can master imported technologies

and create new technologies of Việt Nam and ensure equitable economic and technological exchanges with foreign countries, especially in the current context where economic competitiveness has become more and more dependent on scientific and technological strength and know-how.

- Macro-economic stability must always be maintained with a healthy financial-monetary system. The balance of trade and payment must be ensured. There must be necessary foreign exchange reserves and a rational strategy for borrowing and debt payment to avoid passivity and dependence.

- There must be certain material elements to ensure safety and fundamental conditions for development, including food security, energy safety, environmental safety, and synchronic and high-quality economic and social infrastructure. At the same time, there must be heavy industries serving as the backbone of the country's industrial sectors, especially in cases where the country has to face critical circumstances such as blockades, embargoes, or wars of invasion.

For a strong economy, it is definitely necessary to boost industrialization-modernization and consider it the country's central task throughout the transition to socialism. Only when industrialization-modernization is achieved, can the physical and technical infrastructure for socialism and the country's real power be created and the people's living conditions be improved.

2. About international economic integration

The Communist Party of Việt Nam affirms that Việt Nam needs to be active in joining in international economic integration. And in fact, the country is doing so in an active and efficient manner.

Stressing the need to build an independent and self-reliant economy does not mean underestimating international economic integration. On the contrary, the Party always sees international economic integration as a big point in the economic policies of its own and the State. Through international economic integration, internal and external resources are well combined to create the comprehensive power of the country. International economic

integration also aims to build an independent and self-reliant economy and satisfy the nation's demands and interests. Through international economic integration, Việt Nam's role can be enhanced and its potentialities brought into full play by means of regional and global cooperation and development. Also through this process, Việt Nam can make use of foreign capital, equipment, technical supplies, scientific and technological achievements, and knowledge and experience in management. It can also expand its markets and promote cooperation for mutual benefit. As a result, Việt Nam can achieve faster and more sustainable development.

Việt Nam cannot agree with the views that criticize one-sidedly the negative effects and downsides of integration, that it would adopt a closed-door line, which runs counter to the Party's and State's political guideline for expanding the nation's international economic cooperation.

Việt Nam should deal with the opening of its trade, investment and service markets as part and parcel of its gradual international economic integration.

Economic integration may be multilateral and bilateral. So, Việt Nam can join the global and regional economic institutions and forums while establishing trade, investment, and science-technology relations with each individual country. No matter how many multilateral regional and international economic institutions Việt Nam joins, it should, at the same time, keep expanding bilateral relations with each country and territory. Experience shows that multilateral economic institutions, particularly global multilateral ones, guide bilateral relations. Therefore, bilateral cooperation is often launched in accordance with multilateral cooperation regulations.

If Việt Nam does not join the multilateral institutions, it will face difficulties in expanding its bilateral economic relations, especially with the members of the international economic institutions. Even if Việt Nam has relations with such members, they will not give Việt Nam preferential treatment as they do to the other partners that join the same multilateral economic institutions as theirs. Perhaps, multilateral economic relations do not just bring about direct and specific economic and trade

benefits. They also facilitate greater alliance among developing countries, joint struggles for protecting their common interests in international forums, and help to fight the developed countries' inequitable imposition.

The basic and overriding principle of Việt Nam's international economic integration is maintaining independence, self-reliance and socialist orientation, ensuring national security, preserving traditional cultural values, and protecting and improving the environment. In any relations, either multilateral or bilateral, the principle of equality, mutual respect and mutual benefit must be maintained. That principle is materialized in every institution and form the parties have been committed to, and is realized through actions. On the one hand, Việt Nam's current benefits must not be harmed. On the other, Việt Nam has to accept to share its benefits, to some extent, with its partners, depending on their contributions to the cooperation.

Việt Nam should carry out its economic line of multilateralization and bilateralization consistently so as to ensure national interests, maintain independence, self-reliance and balance in its relations and avoid passive dependence on one or several partners.

In international economic integration, Việt Nam should act on its own initiative, combine cooperation and competition, and adopt a resolute, but flexible attitude in order to protect its legitimate interests and take advantage of favorable conditions created by the integration process. In any situation, it must always take the initiative in designing lines, roadmaps and scopes for its integration. It must not be incited or pressurized by any other countries.

For effective international economic integration, Việt Nam needs to do a lot of work, especially the following.

- *First*, it should constantly improve the competitiveness of the economy as a whole and each enterprise and product in particular. This is an important factor to ensure successful integration. The competitiveness of a product is reflected in its quality, efficiency, price and marketing. The competitiveness of an enterprise is displayed in the sales of its products and services on the market and its business efficiency and profits, which can be reinvested in its production in face of tough international competition.

- *Second*, it should radically change relevant mechanisms, policies and management style so as to facilitate investment and production and assist investors. It should urgently establish and renovate State-owned enterprises and raise their performance and competitiveness and make them the nuclear force of the integration process. During the international integration, the Vietnamese enterprises should get together in groups so as to protect each enterprise's benefits as well as the national interests and prevent foreign partners from taking advantage of unhealthy competition among Vietnamese enterprises for their own benefits.

- *Third*, it should build an integration roadmap and put it into effect, and act on its own initiative. Việt Nam is engaging in international economic integration at a time when its economy and technology are underdeveloped. Therefore, it should embark on the integration process step by step and with a rational and steady roadmap. Such a roadmap should be worked out and approved after the bilateral and multilateral negotiations in accordance with Vietnamese and international laws.

- *Finally*, it should actively train and retrain its personnel, particularly those directly in charge of external economic issues and corporate management, so that they acquire necessary qualifications for their assigned tasks. This is decisive to Việt Nam's successful integration. The training and retraining should cover issues on the Party's viewpoints and guidelines and the State's policies and laws and pay attention to raising their political acumen, moral standards, professional and technical qualifications, foreign language fluency, and knowledge of laws and international practices. The training can be done both through formal schools and on the job. This is to enable them to get in contact with market mechanisms at home and abroad, foster their determination and enthusiasm to work and develop their sense of initiative, creativeness and responsibility.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PARTY'S THINKING SINCE THE PROMULGATION OF THE 1991 POLITICAL PROGRAM¹

The 7th National Party Congress (June 1991) approved the *Political Program on National Construction in the Transitional Period to Socialism* ("1991 Political Program" for short). The Program analyses the content and nature of the era, summarizes the process of the Vietnamese revolution, and inherits and develops the Party's preceding basic viewpoints to propose new conceptions of socialism, as well as the targets and orientations in the transitional period to socialism in Việt Nam. It is a document of great significance and strategic orientation, the ideological and theoretical foundation and combat flag of the Việt Nam Communist Party and people in the new period.

Thanks to the efforts made by the entire Party, people, and army during the nearly twenty years' implementation of the Political Program, Việt Nam has gained great historic achievements, which have completely changed the face and standing of the country. These achievements assert the great values and vehement vitality of the 1991 Political Program. They also provide Việt Nam with more precious lessons so that it can further advance its revolutionary cause.

However, at the time of issuing the 1991 Political Program, the Party pinpointed, "We haven't had enough foundations to draw completely an overall picture of the future society. However, we can work out great principles and orientations for the transitional period to socialism in our country... Later, when reality reveals its

¹ Article in the *Cộng sản* (The Communist) Review, May 2010.

new issues, the Political Program will be unceasingly complemented and perfected little by little.”¹

In fact, since the birth of the 1991 Political Program, the world in general and Việt Nam in particular have undergone many great and profound changes. Many newly arising issues have been thoroughly grasped and effectively solved by the Party. Fuller and deeper complements, developments and perceptions have been made in many areas of the 1991 Political Program: from the content and nature of the era to the process and lessons of experience of the Vietnamese revolution; from characteristics of the transitional period to typical features of socialism in Việt Nam; from targets and duties to the orientations of, and solutions to the step-by-step transition to socialism; from economics to politics, culture, society, national defense and security, foreign affairs, party building and the political system. The following are some of the key points and contents in brief.

1. Transition to Socialism—a Long, Extremely Difficult and Complicated Cause

Since its birth and during its revolutionary struggle, the Party has always asserted that socialism is its and the Vietnamese people’s target and ideal, and that the advance to socialism is the objective requirement and indispensable path of the Vietnamese revolution. The 1991 Political Program, after analyzing the international and domestic contexts, states, “Socialism is currently facing many difficulties and challenges. World history is experiencing tortuous stages. Nevertheless, mankind will ultimately reach socialism because it is the evolutionary law of history.”² In the late 20th and early 21st centuries, real socialism in the world collapsed; the socialist camp vanished; the socialist movement fell into a crisis and decline and encountered a lot of difficulties. Despite these,

1 Late Party General Secretary Nguyễn Văn Linh’s speech at the 9th Plenum of the 6th Party Central Committee (August 1990).

2 Communist Party of Việt Nam: *Political Program on National Construction in the Transitional Period to Socialism*, p. 8.

the Party still held fast to its statement, “Our Party and people are determined to build Việt Nam, following the socialist path on the foundations of Marxism-Leninism and Hồ Chí Minh Thought.”¹

However, what socialism is and how to advance towards socialism are the Party’s permanent concerns. Accordingly, the Party is always thinking over, searching, and selecting the path to socialism which is in accordance with not only the common laws but also the specific conditions and features of Việt Nam. For years of implementing the renewal cause, from practical summarization to theoretical research, the Party has gradually achieved an increasingly sounder and deeper awareness of socialism and the transitional period to socialism in Việt Nam; and overcome some former simple and infantile conceptions, such as identifying the ultimate goals of socialism with the duties of the imminent period, unilaterally emphasizing production relations and the average distribution mechanism without a full awareness of the need for production force development in the transitional period, identifying the market economy with capitalism, disregarding mankind’s achievements and values obtained in the development of capitalism, desiring to quickly eliminate commodity production and the market economy and private ownership and the private economic sector, and identifying a legitimate state with a bourgeois state.

The 1991 Political Program proposes new conceptions of socialism and orientations for building socialism in the transitional period in Việt Nam. It is a great advance in the Party’s theoretical thinking. It expresses a thorough understanding of the fundamentals of Marxism-Leninism regarding socialism and a creative application of this theory in the specific situation of Việt Nam in the new period. In the implementation of the 1991 Political Program, the Party continues practical summarization and theoretical research, and gradually perfects its awareness of this issue. Although some issues need further researching, it can be generalized that the socialist society built by the Vietnamese people is one featuring a rich people, a powerful country, with a democratic, equitable and civilized society; is mastered by

1 Communist Party of Việt Nam: *Documents of the 9th National Party Congress*, p. 83.

the people; has a highly developed economy based on modern production forces and public ownership of major production materials; has an advanced culture imbued with national identity; where people are liberated from oppression and injustice and enjoy a life of comfort, freedom, happiness and comprehensive development; where all the ethnic groups in the Vietnamese community are equal, stand together and support and help each other for mutual progress; has a legitimate socialist State of the people, by the people, and for the people, under the leadership of the Communist Party; and has friendly and cooperative relationships with other peoples in the world.

To achieve this goal, Việt Nam should develop a socialist-oriented market economy; promote national industrialization and modernization in association with the development of a knowledge economy; build an advanced culture imbued with national identity as the spiritual foundation of society; ensure the solidity of national defense and security; proactively and actively promote international integration; build socialist democracy; enhance the great national united bloc; build a law-governed socialist state of the people, by the people, and for the people; and build the Party as increasingly transparent and powerful.

The deeper the Party goes in a practical direction, the more clearly it becomes aware that the transition to socialism is a long, extremely difficult and complicated course, since it creates profound change in quality for all aspects of social life. From a backward agriculture-based country, Việt Nam advances towards socialism with underdeveloped production forces, bypassing the stage of capitalist development, experiencing several decades of war and suffering its heavy aftermath. Moreover, hostile forces are always trying different ways to sabotage national construction, so Việt Nam's situation is becoming increasingly difficult and complicated. Therefore, it is necessary for Việt Nam to undergo a long transitional period with many steps, many interposing forms of socio-economic organization, and the struggle between the old and the new.

2. Development of the Socialist-oriented Market Economy

The concept of developing the socialist-oriented market economy is the Party's fundamental and creative theoretical breakthrough. It is also an important theoretical fruit of a summarization of the Vietnamese reality and selective reception of the world experience during the nearly twenty years of implementing the 1991 Political Program.

After a period of time spent searching, experiencing, and summarizing realities, at its 6th National Congress, the Party decided to give up the economic model of bureaucratic centralization and State subsidization. Instead, it advocated the development of a socialist-oriented, multi-sector commodity economy and the operation of market mechanisms with State management. This policy is clearly stated in the 1991 Political Program. The 8th National Party Congress (June 1996) introduced a new and very important concept of commodity economy and socialism. It stated, "Commodity production is not contrary to socialism, but it is an achievement of the development of human civilization. Its existence is objective and vital for the cause of socialist construction and even for the period after socialism has been constructed." At that time, however, Việt Nam only stated that, "The application of economic forms and methods of socialist economic management is to take advantage of their positive aspects for the purpose of building socialism and not to follow the path to capitalism. The market economy has some negative aspects that are contrary to the nature of socialism... When developing a market economy, Việt Nam has to resolutely fight to overcome and minimize those negative tendencies."¹ It was not until the 9th National Party Congress (April 2001) that the concept of a socialist-oriented market economy was officially mentioned in the Party's documents and regarded as the general economic model for the transitional period towards socialism in Việt Nam.

The socialist-oriented market economy is a new type in the developmental history of the market economy. It is a type of

¹ Communist Party of Việt Nam: *Văn kiện Đại hội Đảng toàn quốc lần thứ VIII* (The 8th National Party Congress's Documents), p. 72.

economic organization that conforms to the laws of the market mechanism and is based on, and led and controlled by the principles and nature of socialism. It is expressed in three aspects—ownership, management, and distribution—for the goal of “a rich people, a powerful country and an equitable, democratic and civilized society.” It is not a capitalist market economy, because Việt Nam’s goal is to build socialism. It is not yet a socialist market economy, because Việt Nam is still in the transitional period.

There are many ownership forms and economic sectors in the socialist-oriented market economy. These economic sectors operate in conformity with the laws and are important components of the national economy. They are equal before the law, together promoting development, cooperation, and healthy competition. Among them, the State-owned sector plays the decisive role; the collective sector is unceasingly reinforced and widened; the private sector is among the motivations of the economy; the multi-ownership mixed sector, especially including joint-stock enterprises, is increasingly developing; the State-owned and collective sectors are gradually becoming solid foundations in the national economy. The distribution relations ensures justice and creates motivation for development. Distribution is based on labor results, economic efficiency, the contributions of capital and other resources, and is conducted via the system of social security and welfare. The State manages the economy with laws, strategies, plans, policies, and material forces to orient, regulate, and promote socio-economic development.

A typical and important feature of the socialist orientation in Việt Nam’s market economy is that the economy should be associated with society. Economic policies should be united with economic ones and economic growth should be accompanied by the implementation of social progress and justice, in every step and every policy during the process of development. Social development on principles of progress and justice requires an economy having a rapid growth rate, high efficiency, and sustainability, which is capable of mobilizing all material resources for the implementation of social progress and justice. On the contrary, it is impossible to achieve a rapidly growing,

highly efficient, and sustainable economy if society lacks a certain level of justice, the majority of the population suffers misery, poor intellectual standards, physical weakness, and a considerable part of the labor force is driven into unemployment and poverty.

The satisfactory settlement of the relationship between economic growth and the implementation of social progress and justice in every step and every policy during the process of development means that Việt Nam should not wait until its economy has reached a high level of development to implement social progress and justice, or sacrifice social progress and justice to pursue pure economic growth. On the contrary, each economic policy should aim to target social development; each social policy should aim at the creation of motivations for economic growth, whether directly or indirectly, in the short term or long term. Aside from encouraging the population to legally enrich themselves, these policies should aim at eliminating hunger, reducing poverty, and taking care of meritorious people and those who unfortunately live in straitened circumstances. This correctly reflects not only the law of healthy and sustainable development in the present era, but also the purpose and nature of Vietnamese society. If this issue is not dealt with satisfactorily, it would be impossible for Việt Nam to talk of socialist orientation, which means that the Vietnamese economy would be no more than a capitalist market economy, let alone extol the superiority of socialism.

3. Culture—the Spiritual Foundation of Society

The development of culture in sync and commensurate with economic growth and social progress is fundamental to the process of socialist construction in Việt Nam. It reflects a new step forward in the development of the Party’s theoretical thinking. In many resolutions following its 8th National Congress, the Party stated that cultural and human developments are the goals and motivations of renewal; the development of education, training, and science-technology is the leading national policy and motivation of socio-economic development; to invest in education-training and science-technology is to invest in development. Environmental protection is one of mankind’s vital issues, a criterion and content

of sustainable development, and is a guarantee for the people's health and living standards.

The culture that is being built in Việt Nam is one that is advanced, imbued with national identity, and united in diversity. It is vital for culture to deeply penetrate into the social life and activities of every person, family, community, aspect of life and every human relationship. "Culture sheds light on the people's road," said Hồ Chí Minh.

An important new content in our Party's thinking is that the Party has realized the association of the focal task of economic development and the key task of Party building to the development of culture as the spiritual foundation of society. These three tasks are supposed to create the "tripod" of national sustainable development. In order for culture to really become the spiritual foundation of society, Việt Nam should preserve the decisive role of Marxism-Leninism and Hồ Chí Minh Thought in the spiritual life of society; inherit and promote the fine traditional values of all ethnic groups; receive mankind's cultural quintessence; build a civilized and healthy society of ever-increasing knowledge, morality, physical strength, lifestyle, and aesthetics, for people's true interests and dignity; criticize the backward and base; combat ideas and acts of non-culture, counter-culture, uncritical acceptance of foreign things, xenophilia, lack of national identity, worship of money and disregard for morality; protect national culture from cultural subversion in the conditions of a market economy and widened international exchange. Together with an increase in state investment, Việt Nam should carry out the socialization of cultural activities.

4. Maintaining an Environment of Peace, Independence, Self-reliance and Active and Proactive International Integration

For years since the adoption of the 1991 Political Program, Việt Nam has become increasingly aware that one of the fundamental tasks of its revolution is to make every effort to reinforce and maintain peace, focusing on socio-economic construction

and development and promote national industrialization and modernization in its socialist orientation. Việt Nam has renewed its conception of world and regional situations, changing from the perception of the world as a struggle arena to a more comprehensive one and regarding the world as a proper environment for its existence and development. An important change of thinking regarding foreign affairs is reflected in the viewpoint of "openness and diversification and multi-lateralization of international relations"; taking the guarantee of national interests as the supreme principle of integration. Based on this viewpoint, Việt Nam has step by step perfected and implemented a foreign policy of independence, self-reliance, peace, cooperation, and development on principles of respect for each other's independence, sovereignty, unity, and territorial integrity; non-interference in each other's internal affairs; equality and mutual benefit; and settlement of disagreements and disputes by means of peaceful negotiations and the non-use or threat of force.

Facing the objective tendency of economic globalization, Việt Nam advocates the policy of "proactively and actively integrating into the international economy and simultaneously widening cooperation in other fields" in the spirit of maximally promoting its internal strength, effectively improving international cooperation, ensuring independence, self-reliance, and the socialist orientation, safeguarding national interests and security, preserving the identity of national culture, and furthering environmental protection. The Party is also aware of the possibility of both cooperation and struggle in peaceful co-existence between countries with different socio-political regimes. It has renovated its awareness of the "enemy-ally" or "subject-partner" issue in the spirit of "acquiring more friends and fewer enemies," stating that, "those who advocate respect for Việt Nam's independence and sovereignty, and the establishment and widening of friendly and cooperative relationships with it on the principle of equality and mutual benefit are our partners; those who have plots and acts against Việt Nam's goals in its national construction and defense are subjects of our struggle." Việt Nam has declared many times that it wants and is always willing

to become a reliable friend and partner of any country in the international community, and that it is “an active and responsible member of international organizations”, who actively participates in the solution of global issues and strives for peace, independence, and development.

While putting above all the tasks of national construction, the Party always highlights that socialist construction and national defense are two strategic tasks closely related to each other. Việt Nam has become more deeply aware specifically of the relationship among economics, national defense, national security, and foreign affairs, and more comprehensively of the concept of national security, not only security in politics, but also that in economics, culture, ideology, and society. The concept of safeguarding the Fatherland has been understood more fully: it not only refers to the safeguarding of national territory, border areas, islands, airspace, and territorial waters, but also implies the safeguarding of the socialist regime, its revolutionary fruits, the Party and State, the national economy, culture, and the cause of renewal. Việt Nam has also become more clearly aware of the risks to national security and those factors, especially non-traditional ones, which may cause socio-political insecurity and harm national security. Việt Nam initially established a new system of viewpoints of the people’s war and the rear area in the context of high-tech war; clarified new contents of strategies for safeguarding the fatherland and popular national defense; and firmly stated the strength of safeguarding the fatherland as the aggregate strength of the great national united bloc on the basis of the “people-supported combat position” and the combination of the national strength and the era’s strength, the strength of the popular national defense force and combat position, and that of the people’s security equivalents. In addition, it has promoted the close combination of economics and national security in strategies and plans for socio-economic development, as well as the coordination between national defense, security activities, and foreign ones; built the people’s army and public security forces that are revolutionary, regular, elite, and gradually modernized; and improved the concerted quality and combat ability so the armed forces will become political

forces that are really transparent, powerful, and absolutely loyal to the Party, State, and people. It also determined to crush the plot of “peaceful evolution” that is aimed at instigating violent disturbances and overthrowing the revolutionary government, and attached importance to tasks of ensuring internal political security and improving the self-defense ability of each individual, organization, agency, and unit.

5. Promoting Democracy, Building the Law-governed Socialist State, and Enhancing the Strength of Great National Unity

Socialist democracy is the nature of the Vietnamese regime. Building socialist democracy and ensuring that power really belongs to the people is an important and long-term task of the Vietnamese revolution. Throughout the years of renewal, Việt Nam has become more and more clearly aware that democracy is both a target and motivation in the cause of socialist construction. It reflects the relationship between the Party, State, and people. Việt Nam has also asserted the necessity of building a law-governed socialist state that is really of the people, by the people, and for the people; on the basis of the alliance of the working class, peasantry and intelligentsia; and under the leadership of the Party. The State is the representative of the people’s mastership and the organizer of implementing Party lines. All Party lines, policies, and State laws are for the sake of the people’s interests. Specifically, they are aimed at implementing the people’s mastery, strictly preserving the social order, and exercising dictatorship over any violations of the fatherland’s and people’s interests. Party lines create a mechanism for the people to exercise their mastership in all fields of social life, participate in social management, and overcome expressions of formalistic democracy. Aside from this, the State takes care of the people, safeguards their legal rights and interests, and respects and executes international treaties on human rights signed by Việt Nam.

The introduction of the policy of building a law-governed socialist state was a new point in the Party’s thinking in the 1990s, compared to the 1991 Political Program. The power of the law-

governed Socialist State of Việt Nam is united and allocated to its bodies. These bodies closely coordinate with each other to enforce the three powers of the State: legislative, executive, and judiciary. They work effectively, smoothly, and consistently. There should be renovations in the organization and operation of the State, so that it really is an institution for the sake of the people's interests. Besides, the State should operate on the principle of democratic centralization. It should strive to do things that are beneficial and avoid things that are harmful to the people. In addition, there should be some mechanism to supervise its power.

The Party has become more and more deeply aware of the significance and role of the great national united bloc as the source of power and determinant of sustainable victory for the revolutionary cause. It has firmly stated many times that all ethnic groups of the great Vietnamese family are equal to each other; united together and respect and help each other for mutual progress; and successfully implement the industrialization, modernization, building, and safeguarding of the socialist country of Việt Nam. It has also asserted that Việt Nam consistently implements the policy of widely uniting people from all ethnic groups, religions, classes, strata, economic sectors, circles, and age groups of the great Vietnamese family; takes the target of maintaining independence, democracy, and civilization for a rich people, a strong country, and a just, democratic and civilized society as a common point of all members of the great Vietnamese family; and respects different points of view which are not contrary to the common interests of the nation, erases complexes about and prejudices and discriminations against certain social classes or economic sectors for their past actions, and builds the spirit of openness and mutual trust towards the future.

Beliefs and religions are a spiritual need for some of the population. Therefore, it is necessary to respect and ensure the people's right to religious freedom (following or not following a religion); unite religious and non-religious people together; and create conditions for them to fulfill their civil responsibilities, lead a good life, and promote all the fine cultural and moral values of their religions.

The overseas Vietnamese are an inseparable part and human source of the Vietnamese community. They should be encouraged and facilitated to deepen their patriotism, sense of community, self-esteem, national pride, sense of preserving the cultural identity and national tradition, respect for the host countries' laws, desire to make contributions to the country, and strengthen the solidarity and friendship between the Vietnamese and other nations in the world.

The Fatherland Front and socio-political organizations are representatives of the people's mastership and typical of the great national united bloc. They participate in the supervision and social criticism of the Party, State's lines, and policies. To promote the strength of great national unity on the basis of the alliance between the working class, peasantry, and intelligentsia under the Party leadership, is a permanent and important task that ensures the success of national construction, defense, existence, and development.

6. The Communist Party of Việt Nam—the Vanguard of the Working Class, Laboring People, and the Whole Nation

For a long period of time, and even in the 1991 Political Program, the Party clearly stated, "The Communist Party of Việt Nam is the vanguard of the working class, as well as a loyal representative of the interests of the working class, laboring people and the whole nation." In the present stage of the revolution, when the Party is raising high the idea of great national unity, promoting the concerted strength of the whole nation for national construction and defense, and leading the whole nation in the vanguard role (actually its birth, existence, and development are for the interests of not only the working class, but also laboring people and the whole nation), the nature of the Party should be expressed more appropriately. Based on a deeper conception of Hồ Chí Minh Thought, the 10th Party Congress firmly stated, "The Communist Party of Việt Nam is the vanguard of the working class, laboring people and the whole nation of Việt Nam." Together with the definition of the Party as the ruling party, this theoretical point has been a new step forward

in the development of the Party's thinking for the past twenty years. It reflects simultaneously the Party's working-class nature in accordance with Marxism-Leninism and its typical characteristic in conformity with the creative development of Hồ Chí Minh Thought, the real situation of Việt Nam, and the aspirations and sentiments of the people. It requires that the Party should not only be loyal to the working class and improve their stance and ideology; but it should also incessantly study, inherit, and promote the fine tradition of the nation, strengthen national solidarity, and assemble and encourage the people to strive for the interests of the working class, laboring people, and the whole nation.

The Party always holds fast to Marxism-Leninism and Hồ Chí Minh Thought—the ideological foundations of the Party and guidelines of all revolutionary actions. Simultaneously, it always applies them creatively, complements, and develops them in accordance with realities and makes contributions to gradually enriching and perfecting them. Việt Nam has also gained a fuller and more thorough awareness of the great values and comprehensive contents of Hồ Chí Minh Thought. At its 9th National Congress, the Party stated that, “Hồ Chí Minh Thought is a comprehensive and profound system of viewpoints on the fundamental issues of the Vietnamese revolution, as well as a result of the creative application and development of Marxism-Leninism to the specific conditions of Việt Nam, the inheritance and development of the fine values of national tradition and the reception of mankind's cultural quintessence... Hồ Chí Minh Thought sheds light on the people's struggle for victory and is a great spiritual property of the Party and people.”¹

Regarding Party building, Việt Nam has complemented, developed, and gradually clarified the theory of the Party's leadership role in the conditions of a developed market economy, established a law-governed State, and widened international integration. It has also further clarified the ruling Party's responsibilities in the study and search of a model, path, and

¹ Communist Party of Việt Nam: *Văn kiện Đại hội đại biểu toàn quốc lần thứ IX* (The 9th National Party Congress's Documents), pp. 82–83.

step of socialist construction in accordance with objective law. Besides, it has gained a deeper awareness of the importance of Party building in the new conditions, regarding Party building a key and vital mission of the revolutionary cause. Since then, the Party is required to promote self-renewal and self-rectification to become increasingly transparent and powerful in terms of politics, ideology, and organization; enhance the study of theory, the summarization of realities, the improvement of thinking, and the creative application and development of Marxism-Leninism and Hồ Chí Minh Thought; incessantly perfect its renewal line; further the ideological work, the cultivation of moral qualities, and the struggle against degeneration and corruption. It is also required to renovate and perfect its organization, improve the quality of its members, enhance supervision and inspection, renew its leadership method and working style, develop its close relations with the masses, and rely on the people for its building. Particularly, it should prevent itself from making errors in policy lines, degeneration, bureaucracy, and divergence from the masses.

The issue of Party members undertaking private business is a specific, but very important and related to the fundamental viewpoints and lines of the Party. It has been raised for discussion at many national Party congresses and for many years. After a process of theoretical research and practical summarization, at its 10th National Congress, the Party decided to allow its members to do private business (in the individual, small-entrepreneur and private capitalist sectors), providing they exemplarily obey State laws and policies and seriously comply with Party regulations. Việt Nam is fully aware that in the transitional period to socialism, it is still poor and therefore has to concentrate on developing its productive forces to create wealth for society. As the Party has advocated the development of a socialist-oriented, multi-sector economy under Party leadership, it should encourage its members to do business, in different ways and with different forms of production and business, to simultaneously improve their living standards and that of their families and make contributions to enriching society.

In summary, for years while implementing the renewal and the 1991 Political Program the Party has incessantly supplemented

and developed its perception of many fundamental and important issues, making contributions to the step-by-step clarification and perfection of the renewal policy and to national construction in the transitional period to socialism in Việt Nam. It is also an important basis of the 11th National Party Congress's consideration of, and decision on whether to supplement and develop the 1991 Political Program.

CHAPTER TWO:

THE RENEWAL PROCESS AND THE CPV LEADERSHIP ROLE

THE MARKET ECONOMY AND THE COMMUNIST PARTY'S LEADING ROLE¹

1. Does the market economy in Việt Nam need to be led by the Party?

Currently, some hold the view that once the market economy, i.e. an economy operating under the principles of value, supply-demand and competition, etc., is in place, there's no need for the Communist Party's leadership; in many cases, the Party's leadership may hinder or even "block" the economy's operations (!); the Party's organization in some places is very weak, but that does not cause any problem for the economy and the latter even well develops.

The above view just looks into one part of what is on the surface without, more importantly, understanding the nature and contents of building up a market economy in Việt Nam.

As is well known, the Party holds the view of developing a market economy (in replacement of the subsidized economy under centralized and bureaucratic administration). However, it is not *any* market economy, but a market economy under the State administration in the socialist orientation, an economy really for the objectives of a wealthy people, a powerful nation, and an equitable, democratic and civilized society. In the past, we used to wrongly understand the market economy, deeming it as synonymous to capitalism and not compatible with socialism. However, over time, reality has helped us to have a better perception of it: the market economy is far from being identical to capitalism, and embarking on the market economy does not mean following the path to capitalism. In the transitional period

¹ Article in *Cộng sản Review*, Issue 1, 1994.

to socialism, it is also a "must" to develop a commodity economy and apply the market mechanism. For us, however, the market economy does not mean everything, but merely an approach and measure to develop our production forces. Development of the production forces should go along with setting up appropriate production relations, cultivating a fine man-to-man relationship, and building up a society filled with love and humanism.

At the moment, there exists a number of theories for further study, which can only be completed and clarified on the basis of a review of reality. However, basically a market economy in the socialist orientation is different from a capitalist market economy in the following respects:

- *Ownership*: Under capitalism, its foundation is capitalist private ownership. In our country, currently, there's a diversification of ownership, based on the public ownership of the major capital goods.

- *Economic sectors*: Many economic sectors exist under capitalism (state-owned economic sector, joint-venture, state capitalism, etc.) administered by the bourgeois state and dominated by private capitalists. In our country for the time being, there are also many economic sectors, but they are administered by the socialist State, a state of the people, by the people and for the people. The State and collective economic sectors play an increasingly fundamental and dominant role.

- *Administration*: Capitalism allows a spontaneous market and free competition. Though here and there some regulation and interference by the capitalist State does exist, that is not a basic trend. In our country, on one hand the market mechanism is encouraged, providing favorable conditions for its positive side to develop, but on the other it is necessary for the State to actively and strongly interfere (by means of its planning, policies, law and economic power...) to regulate, guide and restrict the downsides of the market mechanism.

- *Distribution*: Under capitalism, distribution is made on the basis of capital, which is in favor of the capitalists. Currently, our country applies many forms of distribution among which distribution based

on work achievements and economic efficiency plays a key role, promoting labor and at the same time ensuring basic social welfare.

- *Social policy*: Capitalism was born in misappropriation, its primitive accumulation was made with robbery. It was, therefore, "soaked in tears and blood to its pores." Nowadays, capitalism has somehow re-adjusted itself. However, given its nature, capitalism fails to harmonize underlying contradictions, avoid barbarous exploitation of the workers or rich-poor polarization and utter injustice and inequity. Concerning our country at the moment, the market economy is developed in limitation of the exploitation of the workers; economic growth has to go hand in hand with social equity; enrichment is encouraged as long as it goes along with poverty reduction. Right from the very beginning, with underdevelopment, it is necessary to take care of social policies, implementing social equity and preserving morality and national cultural identity.

In short, we develop a market economy without allowing it to evolve spontaneously and blindly, but it should be guided and administered so that its positive side is promoted and its downside held back, for the benefits of the majority of the workers as well as an equitable and civilized society. The one that is capable and entrusted with favorable conditions to realize that is none other than the Communist Party – a Party always striving for socialist and communist ideologies, a genuine representative and protector of the benefits of the working class and the toiling people. The Party's leadership is the most decisive factor to ensure socialist orientation for the market economy and national development as well.

Recently, some people who are looking forward to, and happy to see, a Việt Nam turning to develop a market economy, hoping it would be a "free, privatized market economy". They have done everything and sought to drive us into the orbit of capitalism. They analyze that Việt Nam should be encouraged to develop a "market economy," where economics will determine politics, and that alteration in the economic system will bring about changes in the political regime. From that perspective, on one hand they laud the market economy, but on the other, they strongly criticize and deny the Communist Party's leadership. The hostile forces seek to launch a "peaceful

evolution,” trying to attack the Communist Party’s leadership to break the market economy’s socialist orientation, and finally wiping out socialism. Right in our country and among those living abroad in exile, some elements still openly require the Việt Nam Communist Party to give up its leadership. Reality in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe has shown that once the Communist Party breaks up, socialism will not exist and the economy does not follow socialist orientation. And the Western capitalist countries are very happy to see that. They rush, timely and energetically to support the tendency. It’s a pity that in our ranks, there are some who are vague, waver and lose vigilance in the face of such dark designs.

2. Why is there only the Communist Party as the leader in our country?

Some argue that the market economy is the one of many economic sectors, to each of which there’s one corresponding class. Each class, in its turn, has one corresponding party or political organization. Why does Việt Nam have only one leading Party? A multi-sectoral economy led by only one Party will trigger “contradictions,” it’s “a paradox.” They raise their strong voice to demand for implementation of political pluralism, denying the one-Party leadership. Such is democracy, according to them.

Firstly, it should be noted that we do not simply say “combat political pluralism and multi-party system” because if pluralism means “a large number,” “diversification,” or “a wide variety” in its true sense, that is nothing to be against or evaded. Actually, isn’t it that we are trying to diversify ownership and distribution, multilateralize and diversify our foreign relations? Isn’t it that we stand for developing a multi-sectoral economy and implementing diversified and multi-dimension information diffusion? Concerning the multi-party system, it once existed in our country. If all those parties share the same purpose and basic benefits (like the way the Communist, Democratic and Socialist Parties once co-existed in our country) and submit to the leadership of the Communist Party, then that is nothing to deny. What we don’t accept is pluralism and co-existence of opposition parties, that is, we don’t accept opposing

organizations, factionalism and isolation tendency, which are aimed to break up the Party’s unity and our people’s revolution.

We do not say “combat” either because each country has, at different times, specific circumstances, resulting in different democracy levels and specific conditions. Some countries may need to implement “pluralism and multi-party system,” that is their internal affairs.

We say that Việt Nam does not have objective conditions for implementation of pluralism and co-existence of opposition parties. It is because that we don’t have favorable conditions in terms of politic development, economic and social level, people’s intellectual standard and legislation... We have just stepped out of the wars, thus we need political stability and national unity to build up and develop the national economy. Hostile forces keep watching us, implementing policies of blockage and internal dissension to destroy our people’s just cause. There remain in our country reactionary and opposing elements that were formerly punished and whose property expropriated by the revolution. If we allow pluralism and multi opposition parties, it means that we provide the reactionary forces with favorable conditions to crop up and legally work against the nation, the people and the regime. That’s what our people absolutely cannot afford to do.

In his answer to recent interviews and talks in America, even Nguyễn Cao Kỳ, a determined anti-communist, calculated: “If a poor and ignorant country like Việt Nam tries to copy American-style democracy, that is just going to bring about upheaval, smuggle, prostitution...” He analyzed that 30-40 years ago, the countries and territories like Taiwan, Republic of Korea and Singapore “embarked on a mono-party system”, “denying opposition” aimed to bring about political and social stability, paving the way for the market economic development. And those countries have been “very successful, being capable to build up a prosperous and powerful economy,” “really turning into democratic and advanced nations, a good example for the Third-World under-developed countries”.¹

¹ See *The Times* issued on 7-8 November 1992 and *Vietnam* issued on 7 November 1992, for more details.

It has been shown by reality that there often tends to be instability and coup d'état in those countries practicing pluralism and multi-opposition party regime. Some researchers on international political regimes have asserted, with figures for its illustration: among 23 countries following the mono-party regime, 19 are stable and 4 fairly stable (there's no single unstable country). Among 26 countries following a multi-party regime, 11 are stable, two fairly stable and the other 13 unstable. The Soviet Union and some other East-European countries fell deep into upheaval and continuous civil wars since practicing pluralism and multi-party regime, dumping their economies in crisis, unable to develop and livelihood deteriorating their people's livelihood.

Recently, some have argued that no practice of "pluralism and multi-party regime" means no democracy and the democratic level of a country is illustrated in the number of parties existent. It's not true. A large or modest number of parties is not the criteria for a democratic or undemocratic society, a society where much or little democracy is allowed. The society under the US-Diệm regime had a lot of parties such as "Diligence," "Human Altruism," "Spiritualism," "Democracy" and hundreds of different socio-politic organizations, but one could not say that the society was democratic and even could not say that the society was more democratic than it is today. Obviously, the nature and level of democracy in a country, a society is decided by the fact that to what level the people's right to mastery is promoted and the benefits as well as wishes of the majority of people in the society (i.e. the working people) are ensured. Democracy means execution of the people's right to mastery and that the government is really in the hands of the people, protecting and serving the people's interests, enhancing the people's wisdom, energy and creativeness, but it is not demonstrated in a large or modest number of parties in operation.

We have turned to a multi-sectoral economy, but as was mentioned above, it is a socialist-oriented multi-sectoral economy under the State administration and regulation. Therefore, it does not necessarily mean that a multi-sectoral economy must go hand in hand with multi-opposition classes and corresponding political parties.

The nature of the argument demanding "pluralism and multi-party regime" by the anti-communist reactionary forces is to undermine or wipe out the Communist Party's leadership, instigating chaos and confusion in the country and overthrowing the current administration. It does not serve any other purpose. They keep bellowing and clamoring about "democracy," "pluralism," and "human rights" as a pretext to realize their crafty and cunning designs to incite disorders and disrupt our domestic affairs from the inside.

Do the countries of those clamoring for "pluralism and multi-party system" really accept opposing organizations and forces? Why do they advocate assassinating the communist leaders, murdering their opponents, suppressing the revolts against the administration? Why do they try to laud "democracy," "pluralism," and "multi-party system" when the administration is not yet in their hand but once they have it and the Communist Party's leadership is wiped out, they immediately prohibit the Communist Party's operation, outlawing it, demanding nationalization of the Party's assets, closing its headquarters, burning out the office of the Party Central Committee, seeking ways to retaliate and boycott the Party's members? They no longer strongly demand "pluralism and multi-party system".

The Việt Nam Communist Party is not imposing its monopoly leadership. In order to be recognized by the people as a leader, the Party has undergone a protracted and arduous struggle, full of challenges and sacrifices. Hundreds of thousands of the Party's members, the nation's children, have lost their lives. The establishment of the Party's leadership is the outcome of the revolution done by the working class and the entire Vietnamese people. Though shortcomings and errors were committed by the Party at certain times, it is still recognized and trusted by the majority of people as it has timely and publicly recognized and honestly rectified the mistakes. In fact, nobody has been able to refute the Party's leadership up to date, and no other political forces except the Communist Party, are capable of leading the Vietnamese revolution. Only the imperialists and reactionaries are seeking to slander the Party in order to undermine its reputation and wipe out its leadership. And only those who are foolish will deny the revolutionary achievements of their nation,

wishing to establish opposition parties, mistakenly deeming it as freedom and democracy.

3. The content and methodology of the Party's leadership in condition of a market economy

As the only leader of the whole Vietnamese society, in the context of a market economy, the Việt Nam Communist Party is well aware of its honor and responsibility to the nation and the people. The Party has responsibility to define the proper direction, objectives and the nation's path to prosperity. From whence, it leads the whole political system and social apparatus, above all the State, to achieve all the set targets and objectives, playing the leading role in institutionalization and legalization of the Party's decisions, designing an organizational structure, training and arranging staff, administering and fostering the staff for political duties; checking on the implementation of the Party's guidelines, reviewing the reality, revising and amending the guidelines and policies... All this is to ensure the political character, the correct orientation and stability in the advance of the nation and national development.

Specifically in the economic domain, the Party sets guidelines and strategies for economic development, ensuring the political character in economic development, bringing the economy a high economic development speed and labor productivity as well as increasingly strong productive forces, all in the orientation of socialism, limiting injustice and exploitation, taking care of and protecting the benefits of the majority of the toiling people. This is not only demonstrated at the central level, in macro-administration activities, but in every cell of the Party as well. Each of the Party's units and members has the responsibility to bring the Party's political orientation into every socio-economic activity. It is the function that cannot be done by none other than the Communist Party.

The prime responsibility of the Party's committees is to lead, to check and to directly involve in the struggle for the efficient implementation of the Party's guidelines and politics, making sure that all the economic sectors follow the socialist orientation and not jumping off the orbit of socialism. The Party committee, the Party

cell and the Party members in the State-owned enterprises, collective economic units, joint-ventures, private enterprises are responsible to lead the masses and people's organizations in striving to translate the Party's resolutions into reality, executing the Party's decisions and enforcing the State legislation, protecting the legitimate rights and benefits of the workers and the laboring people, combating all barbarous exploitation, torture and bad treatment of the working people. The failure of Party committees and organizations to undertake these responsibilities is tantamount to their failure to fulfill their functions and duties.

Of course in the current condition, the Party cannot lead the movement and operate in its traditional way. The Party should hold fast its leadership without letting loose or undermining its leading role. At the same time, the role of the administrative agencies, economic institutions and public union is to be promoted. There should be distinction between the Party's leadership and the governance of the administrative bodies, between administration and production/business management. The Party committees should not cover or fulfill the daily responsibilities of the administration and economic institutions. The Party leadership should be specific and close to reality but not be commands. The Party conducts direction through its Party members and units. Party members are assigned to the State agencies and economic institutions, operating under the Party's political platform and guidelines, and following the principle of democratic centralism. The Party's system should be re-structured to be appropriate and streamlined, ensuring smooth, prompt and dynamic leadership going in line with the market mechanism. The Party exercises leadership in a democratic and persuasive manner. Party members should be examples in executing the Party's resolutions and the State law, constantly persuading and motivating those who are not Party members. The Party itself should change its activity in the orientation that allows more dynamism, fewer redundant meetings, increased checking and on-site inspection, and proximity to the grassroots.

The fundamental condition to ensure the Party's efficient leadership is that the Party has to be clean and strong in politics, ideology and organization, closely attached to the people, trusted and

supported by the people. Especially in the current situation, the Party should manifest its firm political stuff, holding fast its objective and ideology, with wisdom, knowledge and sufficient information, and with capability to sensibly settle complicated matters in an active and proper manner.

The Party should set up a well-organized, streamlined and strong structure, including a socialist State under the rule of law and the people's organization.

The Party should have an excellent and honest think-tank, capable of analyzing, combining and proposing solutions, and at the same time checking and appraising the projects for national development.

The Party should build up a team of members loyal and dedicated with high morality, capable of leadership and management, with knowledge in economics and economic management, capable of doing business, with knowledge in legislation, capable of conducting State administration according to the law, skillful in access to market, active, diligent and resourceful.

Party members should continuously train themselves in political qualities, taking a thorough grasp of the guidelines and path of action defined, trying to raise their knowledge and work capability, continuously learning and improving their revolutionary morality, leading healthy way of life, effectively combating corruption and other manifestations of demoralization and depravation within the Party ranks. Only when the Party is determined to cut off boils in its body (though that's much painful), then can the Party develop strongly and healthily.

Once the body of the Party is strong and healthy and when unity and principle is ensured within the Party together with trust and support from the people, no obstacle cannot be overcome by the Party and nothing is impossible to the Party.

ON THE PRINCIPLE OF DEMOCRATIC CENTRALISM IN THE PARTY¹

Over the past decades, anti-communist thinkers have constantly attacked the leadership of the Communist Party, especially the principle of democratic centralism, in an attempt to undermine its unity and break up its organization. More recently, along with attacks on Marxism-Leninism, the Party's ideological foundation, they have fiercely attacked the principle of democratic centralism, its organizational foundation. They have criticized the Communist Party as being authoritarian and dictatorial, while advocating and praising political pluralism and extreme democracy, with different factions within a party and different opposition groups.

During the on-going renewal process, where political approaches and theoretical principles are being reviewed, certain Party members have come to query and criticize the principle of democratic centralism; some have even called for its abolishment. They argued that the principle was now outdated and that it was suitable only when the Party was yet to seize power or working underground, or when the country was at war. Democratic centralism would lead to dictatorship, and deprive the Party and society of democracy and humanism, they claimed.

Is that true? Is it necessary to preserve the principle and keep implementing it? If so, how can the principle be observed properly in the present renewal process?

First of all, it should be recognized that all those who criticized the principle and asked for its abandonment did have a ground

¹ Article in *Cộng sản Review*, No. 10, 1990.

for that, whether they are anti-communist ideologues, dissidents, extremists, or uninformed people. The reason was that democracy was lacking for a long time in quite a few communist parties and socialist countries, and in certain cases very seriously. Some leaders were in fact bureaucratic, out of touch with the people, authoritarian, or paternalistic; others even fell into militaristic feudalism and became almost omnipotent and ambitious monarchs. Situations in which leading officials bullied subordinates actually happened. So did situations in which internal strikes prevailed and members of one and the same organization fought each other for power and mistreated each other. There were many cases where democratic rights of the population and Party members were not respected and promoted, and State operations remained formalistic and ineffective. Economic management mostly emphasized centralism, which was actually bureaucratic centralism while neglecting democracy, and focused on planning while making light of the initiative and dynamism of enterprises. Also, it overemphasized vertical relations and ignored horizontal ones, thus failing to promote the diversity and initiative of the different economic sectors, economic relations and economic establishments, and driving the whole economy into stagnation.

All these are true. But are they consequences of the principle of democratic centralism?

The statutes of communist parties all define the following basic contents of the principle:

- The Party's leading bodies at all levels shall be established through democratic elections and by secret ballot. They shall be obliged to report, and be answerable to corresponding-level congresses, higher level leading bodies, and lower level party organizations.

- They shall perform collective leadership coupled with individual responsibility, and regularly carry out self-criticism and criticism.

- The Party's affairs, depending on their importance, shall be handled by competent agencies. For instance, issues related to fundamental guidelines and policies of the Party, as well as matters of nation-wide importance, shall be handled by the Party's national

leadership (national congress, central committee). Those issues lying within the responsibility and competence of localities will be handled by local Party organizations in accordance with guidelines, policies and decisions by higher-level bodies.

- All resolutions of Party meetings shall be carried by a majority vote. Party members shall be entitled to discuss and fully express their views before voting. Once a resolution has been taken, every member shall abide by it. If there is anything in the resolution he/she does not agree with, he/she shall be entitled to reserve his/her views or submit them to higher-level bodies including the national congress, but in the meantime, shall have to implement the resolution.

- Every Party member shall be entitled to participate in democratic and straightforward discussions on all Party affairs, elect, stand for election or be nominated as candidates to the Party's leading bodies at all levels. He/she shall also be entitled to criticize or query about Party affairs and express all his/her opinions when a Party organization decides to discipline him/her.

- Every Party member shall strictly subject himself/herself to the party organization and discipline. The minority shall subject itself to the majority, lower-level organizations to higher-level competent bodies, and the entire Party to the Central Committee.

So, democratic centralism is a close and harmonious combination between centralism and democracy in an organic, dialectical relationship and should not be understood as either centralism or democracy alone. Democracy is a precondition for centralism, while centralism is a guarantee for the practice of democracy. Overemphasis of either aspect may likely lead to mistakes detrimental to the leadership and strength of the Party.

In the early days of the struggle for the establishment of the Russian Social - Democratic Workers' Party, predecessor of the Russian Communist Party, Lenin asked for a close combination of centralism and discipline with broad democracy, i.e. the practice of democratic centralism.

On the one hand, he affirmed, "All the Party's current organization was democratically built,... meaning that all Party members

elect leaders, members of executive committees,... that all Party members discuss and decide on the issue of political mobilization of the proletariat,... that all the Party membership define the tactical orientations of Party organizations.”¹

On the other hand, Lenin asked for intra-Party centralized discipline, where all Party members should subject themselves to Party discipline and the Party’s ideological unity should be ensured and strengthened through organizational physical unity. It would be unthinkable that a political body exists outside an organization and does not belong to any organization. Lenin stressed, “I want and demand that the Party, the class vanguard, should be extremely well organized, that it should only admit those who at least accept a minimum sense of organization.”² Whoever refuses to obey Party discipline or deliberately weakens it “actually declines Party membership, or sabotages the Party.”³ He clarified, “Here we have come to a very important principle in all the Party’s organization and operation: if there should be centralism as strong as possible for the leadership of proletarian revolutionary movements and struggles in terms of ideology and practice, then there should also be decentralization as broad as possible when it comes to helping the Party Central Committee (hence the entire Party) grasp the development of such movements and being responsible before the Party.”⁴ United action should always go hand in hand with free discussion and criticism; broad democracy should be closely linked with centralized discipline. Later on, when mapping out urgent tasks for the Soviet power, particularly to organize and administer Russia after the October Revolution, Lenin again put forth the formula of combining the then flooding spirit of democracy with discipline, centralism and unity. At the 10th Congress of the Russian Communist Party in March 1921, it was Lenin himself who drafted the resolution “on Party unity,” which “orders the immediate dissolution” of all factious groups in the Party. He also requested the Congress to

1 V.I. Lenin. *Complete Works, op. cit.*, vol. 13, p. 244.

2 V.I. Lenin. *Complete Works, op. cit.*, vol. 8, p. 286, 424

3 V.I. Lenin. *Complete Works, op. cit.*, vol. 8, p. 286, 424.

4 V.I. Lenin. *Complete Works, op. cit.*, vol. 7, p. 23.

authorize the Central Committee to apply penalties, including expulsion from the Party, against Central Committee members, who breached Party discipline or tolerated factionalism in the Party. Thus, Lenin never left Party members to act passively, dependently or without regard for discipline. Neither did he ever allow the existence of opposition factions within the Party, as some have recently claimed untruthfully.

In fact, democratic centralism is conducive to the Party’s organizational cohesion, unanimity of will, and unity of action, while promoting the initiative and creativeness of every Party member and organization.

Those who have called for abandonment of the principle of democratic centralism showed a misunderstanding or deliberate distortion of its content and nature. They have thought of democratic centralism as merely discipline and centralism, and forgotten its basic and crucial aspect, namely democracy. They have cited often exaggerated examples of bureaucratism, authoritarianism, and lack of democracy by some Communist Party leaders in an attempt to criticize and condemn the principle without knowing that such examples came precisely from violations of the principle.

Some say that democratic centralism is correct only in theory and on paper but not carried out in reality. It is true that there have been in reality quite a number of violations of the principle, some even serious, leading to disastrous consequences. Even specific regulations for realizing this principle are still insufficient. But is it right to drop a sound and necessary principle just because it has not been carried out or not implemented properly? Wherever and whenever democratic centralism is not properly implemented, leading to paternalism, authoritarianism, bureaucratism or indiscipline, these malpractices should be overcome and democratic centralism achieved by all means instead of being abandoned. To abandon it in such cases would be like “emptying a tub and emptying also the child inside it,” as Lenin said, or “beating a mouse and breaking also the flower vase where the mouse is hiding,” as Hồ Chí Minh remarked.

Some have argued that the principle of democratic centralism is true and appropriate only when the Party is operating clandestinely

or during wartime. In such situations, discipline should be strict, and centralism and uniformity should be practiced at the highest level, whereas in peacetime when there are no more enemies and the people have become the masters, there's hardly any need for centralism, discipline and dictatorship. Practicing democratic centralism at this time would mean not being sensitive and democratic, and facilitating the return of dictatorial feudalism (!).

This argument is not right, either. As explained earlier, the principle of democratic centralism aims not just at ensuring discipline, but also at promoting Party members' and cells' initiative, creativeness and intelligence. When the Party is operating clandestinely or during wartime, it should be tightly organized and its members and cadres should strictly obey discipline, but democracy should also be promoted. In such situations, every Party member and cadre should react proactively, creatively and flexibly rather than waiting passively for orders from higher levels. Realities of the Party's protracted and arduous struggle and the country's sacred people's wars have highlighted numerous examples of creativity, flexibility and cleverness of our Party members and cadres and our people. And this is one of the main reasons behind the Party's immense power and the people's miraculous victory.

In the present conditions of peaceful construction, we have to not only promote democracy strongly (because democracy is the nature, content and motive force of the new society) but also to ensure a high level of unity and centralism. It is unthinkable that such a militant and leading organization as the Communist Party could be organizationally tight in one situation and loose in another. In fact, certain parties, despite decades of indomitable fighting, have fallen into anarchy, internal disunity, organizational chaos and disintegration due to lax discipline, overemphasized democracy, and failure to control opportunists and extremists.

In conditions of transition to socialism in peacetime, there remain elements of spontaneity, trends towards anarchism, and plots of division and sabotage the system in and outside the country. For a country where small-scale production is still prevalent and which is suffering from blockade in many respects like Việt Nam, we could not

slacken discipline and order. Recent realities have shown that it would be impossible to avoid localism, lack of organization or even disorder in a multi-sector commodity economy with business accounting system and diverse ownership forms, including individual and capitalist ownership, if macro-management was improperly carried out, utilization not coupled with transformation, planning loose, law lax, and control and regulation negligent. How do we account for such recent negative phenomena as bankruptcies in the credit and banking sectors, land disputes, widespread smuggling, uncontrolled export or unpredictable price upheavals? Aren't they consequences of the separation of democracy from discipline and law, and loosening of control and macro-management?

Clearly, in the present situation, we have to promote democracy and maintain discipline and law at the same time. Centralism and democracy should be closely combined, and the principle of democratic centralism, well observed.

In fact, the arguments presented by anti-communist thinkers, opportunists and extremists have nothing new. They are but repetitions of antiquated views that have been clamoured for decades. The only thing that may be called "new" is that they have become more deceitful and wicked, hiding themselves behind the motto of renewal and making full use of communist parties' mistakes to stage fiercer counter-attacks.

The above analyses have led to a conclusion: the principle of democratic centralism is not outdated at all and it should not be dropped. However, in the new circumstances, we have to understand and realize it properly in keeping with the spirit of the times, not too rigidly or dogmatically, avoiding past mistakes.

It is difficult to understand and realize the principle properly. It is even more difficult to work out sound mechanisms and specific regulations, and be firmly determined to achieve that principle efficiently.

RULING PARTY: CONCEPT AND MODE OF LEADERSHIP¹

In the theoretical study of the Party, we have mentioned the question of *ruling Party* to a large extent. As this is a very new and difficult question, we haven't got any documents containing fundamental and thorough study about it as of yet. Up till now, some people remain unclear about this problem, including such basic questions as: What is a ruling Party? Is the Party an organ of State power? Is ours a ruling Party? The Party and the State are two parallel power systems or should Party "embody" or "turn into" the State? What is the difference between a ruling Party in a one-party system and that in a multiparty system? What is the difference between a ruling Party in the socialist countries and that in the capitalist countries?

Clearly, there is no simple answer for those questions at all, which calls for many experts to study seriously and meticulously. Here are some thoughts to contribute to the general study of this messy question.

For a long time in the past, like in the other socialist countries, some in Việt Nam misunderstood the concept of "ruling Party." This led to inappropriate actions, especially in the relationship between the Party leadership and the State administration, which restrained the enhancement of democracy. The socio-political system did not manifest and implement fully the people's mastership. It was common that the Party took over the government's duties and the Party was too preoccupied with the tasks of the State and economic institutions. Therefore, the Party nearly became an organ of state

¹ Article in *Công sản Review*, Issue 8, 1992.

power and stood above the State. The anti-communist and the hostile forces took advantage of this situation to trumpet that the Communist Party is the "one-party rule", "the Party-State", "communism is a system of extremist power!"

Recognizing these shortcomings and mistakes, we advocated for renovating the mode of Party leadership and the whole organization and administration of the political system toward fully respecting and developing the State's role as well as implementing the people's mastership. But then there emerged a trend to underestimate the Party leadership. Some tried to imitate foreign countries by upholding demagogic slogans like "returning all power to the people", "handing power over to the State", the Party should "retreat after the backdrop." There were manifestations of slighting and denying the leadership of the Party organizations in several institutions and enterprises. Others suggested disaffirming the Party leadership in the Constitution and not stipulating "ruling Party" or "Party's comprehensive leadership." According to them, the Party should only lead the country on a political and general basis.

Not all those who made those suggestions were ill-intentioned or reactionary. Apart from anticommunist thinkers, reactionaries, dissidents or opponents, and those with vague ideas, most people in our Party were really interested in studying and contributing to the renovation movement. We should respect and listen to each other as this is a very difficult and complicated question with many unclear theoretical and practical aspects. We had to grope our way and draw experience most of the time. Before the socialist regime in the Soviet Union and countries in Eastern Europe became nonexistent, there were opinions that the mode of Party leadership should be changed drastically, and further enhance the power and responsibility of the State. On the contrary, some people suggested further strengthening Party leadership due to the conception that Party leadership and people's mastership would be lost if the power of the State were to be enhanced.

Since the 6th Party Congress, we have gradually acquired clearer conception and made certain innovations in the Party leadership, which has improved quality of the Party leadership, raised the

efficiency of State administration and brought into full play the aggregate power of the political system. Initial success has been made in the working procedure and relationship between the Party, the State and the mass organizations; regulations on working procedures have been built here and there. The National Assembly, the people's councils of all levels have operated with more practical power and less formalism.

However, it is still common for leaders, especially at grassroots level, not to make a clear distinction between the role and tasks of the Party and those of the administration. Sometimes, general guidelines and standpoints are agreed upon, but disagreement breaks out when it comes to specifying and building up regulations. In many cases, they don't know for sure which issue should be decided by the people's committee, which issue is within the authority of the Party committee, which issue is within the competence of the Party committee secretary, which is within the power of the chairman of the people's committee, and which issue the Party committee should provide guidelines only; and they don't know if it is right that the Party committee should make qualitative decisions, while quantitative decisions should be made by the local government. Many resolutions made by the Party committee are similar to those made by the local government, and vice versa.

Regarding personnel work, a rational mechanism and procedure is yet to be established to ensure implementation of the following principle: the Party leads and manages the personnel work, brings into full play the roles of the administrative authorities, and coordinates activities of the Party committee and the administration, and activities of the personnel boards of the Party and the organization boards of the local government.

How should the Party's system be organized? Is it vital that there should be correlative bodies between the Party and the State? How can the Party committee use the government machinery? Should a Party committee secretary take the role of a government leader? These are very controversial questions that need to be answered.

Many sections and departments are "set up" and then "closed", "closed" and then "set up"; in some cases they are "disintegrated and then integrated", without any appropriate grounds.

Why is there such a confusion? There must be many reasons. But one basic reason is that we lack a complete, consistent and concerted conception about the ruling Party.

"Ruling Party", "power-assuming Party", "Party in power" are long-used terms, even in the capitalist countries, to express the role and responsibility of a Party once it has powers in its hands and to distinguish it with those Parties, which are not or have not yet been in power, or which have no role in the government. In a society of classes and strata, there may be many Parties (as Party is an organization of volunteers who are united to fight for the common interests of a certain class or a certain stratum) of which one is the ruling Party and the rest are Parties that are not in power. Dependent on specific national circumstances and the correlation of power between Parties, a country can be ruled by one Party or by a coalition of Parties. A ruling Party means a Party that has power, dominates the administration and makes every operation of the administration reflect and implement its ideology and guidelines in line with its stand-point and interests. The ruling Party also utilizes the administration machinery and leads society by means of the administration.

A State, in its original sense, is a tool for a class or an alliance of classes to rule over a country and protect interests of the class in power. The political Party of a class is set up to lead that class in the struggle for power and use the achieved power to transform society in the interests of that class. In reality, no state in the world today stays outside the leadership and dominance of one or several parties. The bourgeois thinkers try to hide the class nature of their bourgeois state by upholding the tricky label of "democratic state" and "civil state" but they can't avoid the questions: which Party their State and Government belong to? Who is in power (even by means of force, coup d'état or a parliamentary method, "free election")? And whose interests does that state serve?

In Việt Nam, the Communist Party of Việt Nam, whatever it is expressed, is in fact the ruling Party. In the words of late President Hồ Chí Minh, "Ours is the ruling Party", moreover it is the sole Party in power. It is not a natural gift, but it is the fruits of arduous struggle of the whole Party and Vietnamese people for many years. The

Communist Party of Việt Nam was established in 1930, but it took 15 years for it to succeed in leading the people to seize power in 1945 with great difficulties and sacrifice of many cadres, people and Party members including excellent leaders. It took the Party another 30 years of two prolonged and bitter struggles¹ to strengthen, hold fast the power and reunify the country. The leadership of the Party over the State is the determinant to guaranteeing that the State is really of the people, by the people and for the people. It also plays a vital role in advancing the country to socialism. The people of Việt Nam, with their sensitivity and practical thinking, acknowledge the leadership of the Vietnamese Communist Party. Even when the Party commits errors they are sympathetic and ready to help the Party rectify the errors. This is because the Vietnamese people understand that their interests are closely associated with the cause of the Party and that the goals and ideals of the Party correspond with the people's dreams and aspirations. Up to now and in reality, there has not been any political organization that has as much ability, credibility and stuff in leadership as the Communist Party of Việt Nam.

Clearly, we should not let go or underestimate the Party leadership, while trying to rectify the mistakes in the methodology of Party leadership. We should not be afraid of admitting that our Party is the ruling Party and that our Party exercises comprehensive leadership of the nation when we try to overcome the disease of "Pooh-Bah". Past experience in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe suggests that a little ambiguity and relaxation of Party leadership can create favorable conditions for the hostile forces to disrupt the Party leadership, take over the power and lead the nation on to another path. On the other hand, only by clearly affirming that the Communist Party of Việt Nam is the ruling Party can we correctly elaborate the contents and methodology of the Party leadership, make use of advantages and limit disadvantages and risks of a ruling Party.

A ruling Party means a party that grasps its role of leading the administration and society, taking accountability to the people and the nation. In the words of President Hồ Chí Minh, the Party should

¹ The two grim wars are the war against the French re-occupation of Việt Nam from 1945 to 1954 and the other against American imperialists from 1954 to 1975.

not only take charge of the general tasks like economic and cultural transformation, but cover minor duties as necessities of "soy, aubergine, fish sauce and salt" of the people as well. We can never say that the Party only leads politically and generally and that it is not accountable to the people and the nation. As the ruling Party, it represents the interests not only of its class of workers but also of the entire working people and it should become the vanguard of the nation politically. The important thing is that the Party has a rational methodology of leadership, which is compatible with its role and duties.

The first noble but heavy responsibility of the Party is to *elaborate a sound platform and guidelines to lead the whole country forward*. This is the responsibility that can only be taken up by the Party, especially at the current turning-point in which the country and the world are changing in a rapid and complicated manner. There emerges a series of theoretical and practical questions that require clear and correct answers. Therefore, Party committees of all levels, first and foremost the Party Central Committee, have to spend a lot of time and efforts leading theoretical study and summing up of realities. They also have to grasp newly arising issues and new situations, try to understand the people's feelings and aspirations, forecast future events to draw necessary conclusions, and reaffirm viewpoints that orient our advancement.

For example, the Party should clarify the issues concerning socialism and the path to achieve it in Việt Nam, on a clearer and more profound basis. It should gradually specify and complete the items stated in the *Platform and Strategy*. It should also come to conclusion of so-far controversial questions such as ownership, labor exploitation and hired labor, efficiency of the State economic sector, planning and market, market economy and social equity... The Party should not give general directions only, but it should come up with specific patterns and solutions as well.

After elaborating a sound platform and guidelines, the Party should ensure that they will be incorporated into *the State activities*, and institutionalize its ideas and viewpoints into State laws and policies. Every ruling Party has to do so. It is the *raison d'être* and

the vital function of a ruling Party. In other words, the platform and guidelines of a ruling Party must be transformed into State laws and policies. When the people observe the policies and laws of the State, they also implement Party guidelines. When a court judges a criminal, rules on its verdict and pronounces sentence in accordance with the State laws, it also expresses the viewpoints, thought and attitude of the Party. The Party doesn't need to direct the daily activities of the State and it refrains from giving commands or orders to the State institutions.

How to transform the platform and guidelines of the Party into State policies and laws lies in the mechanism, methodology and art of the Party's leadership? A decisive measure of the Party is to assign *most of its prestigious and capable cadres and Party members with a high Party spirit to key positions in the State bodies and machinery*. The assigned cadres and Party members must be supervised under appropriate mechanisms. These cadres and Party members have the responsibility of persuading their State institutions to observe the views and guidelines of the Party, and actively working for their translation into reality. Every Party member should execute the Party's decisions and observe the Party's discipline.

In Việt Nam, the Party advocates selecting and recommending members with good qualifications, abilities, qualities and high Party spirit to work in the National Assembly. Several heads or deputy heads of the Party Central Committee's departments may participate in the committees of the National Assembly. In localities, secretaries or deputy secretaries of the Party committees may run for presidency of people's councils; some members of the Party committees may be recommended to become leaders of a certain section of the local government (on condition that the standards of each position must be guaranteed and these should be practiced by means of elections or appointments as stipulated in the State regulations). This is to improve the unity between the Party and the State, thus ensuring the Party leadership and enhancing the practical efficiency of the State.

There are worries that if key cadres of the Party take over key positions of the administration, it is very likely that they will become arbitrary and autocratic. Therefore there must be a checking

mechanism to ward off any possible malpractices. It's clear that there must be a mechanism. Apart from education and control of the Party cell, the supervision and criticism by the people, one of the mechanisms to check the performance of Party members in the State machinery is *Party units* (in people-elected bodies) and *Party personnel boards* (in executive bodies). Through the two types of Party bodies, the Party exercises leadership over the State bodies (including thorough implementation of Party resolutions, assignment and management of cadres, supervision of activities of the State bodies). The Party, also through these bodies, directs and checks the activities of Party members in those institutions and ensures that every member executes the Party's resolutions and that the ideology and viewpoints of the Party are included in, and implemented through activities of the State institutions. This mechanism is to concretize and facilitate the practice of the democratic centralism principle in the Party activity and the democratic and persuasive nature in the methodology of Party leadership over the State bodies. The mechanism also curbs and overcomes situations in which the Party's leadership over State agencies is slackened, or the Party imposes or commands the State agencies.

Another important measure is that the Party should *hold firm and rely on the mass organizations, mobilize and organize all classes in the process of State building and consolidation under its leadership*. It should also take part in the State duties, supervise and check the performance of the State and of its cadres and Party members working in the state machinery. Moreover, it needs to safeguard the State and the laws, help the State to operate effectively and efficiently, prevent and overcome the evils of bureaucratic red tape, corruption and other negative practices within the State machinery. The Party leadership over the State makes it really a State of the people, by the people, and for the people. Under the Party leadership, the State is strong, effective and operates dynamically within their power and competence as stipulated in national laws, in line with the ideology and viewpoints of the Party and in close links with the people. The fundamental difference between a socialist and a bourgeois state is that: the socialist state is not a master who stands above and rules over the people, but it is the highest-level body with the most

concentrated right of people's mastership, and the core of this body is made up of workers, peasants and intellectuals who are under the leadership of the Communist Party. A ruling Party doesn't mean that the Party takes the place of the State to administer society or takes the place of the people to master the State. On the contrary, the ruling Party taps and brings into full play all creative potential of the people, encourages and organizes the people to build their State in order to transform society and advance to socialism. Both the Party and the State are tools to ensure and exercise the people's mastership and work for their interests. The Party is not a State power institution and it should not be considered as a power system in parallel with the State. The Party and the State should never be separated or opposed to each other. The Party leads the State and the political system but it is also part of the political system and a member of the Fatherland Front. The Party exercises its leadership in the process of formulation of the Constitution and national laws and it also acts within the Constitution and national laws. Party cadres and members neither stand above laws nor act unlawfully.

ESTABLISHING A SOCIALIST STATE OF THE PEOPLE, BY THE PEOPLE AND FOR THE PEOPLE¹

From the experience of history all over the world, it is clear that: State power is a vital issue of every revolution. When it has not got power, the Communist Party has to exercise its leadership to seize power into the hand of the people. As soon as it has seized power, it must always consolidate and maintain it, beef up its might in all areas. This is a matter of life and death.

Thanks to the victory of the August Revolution in 1945, the Democratic Republic of Việt Nam was founded. It is a state that manifested the fine and progressive nature of the new social regime in Việt Nam, a state with strong attachment to the people, protecting and serving the people's interests. Led by the vanguard Party of the working class, built and supported by all of the people, our State has constantly developed, grown up and completed its mission in the struggle for independence and freedom, safeguarding national independence as well as building a new life and new society.

In the current renovation movement, we have recorded certain achievements in the restructuring of the organization and activity of the State in the legislative, executive and judiciary domains. Meanwhile the quality and efficiency of the State administration have been more and more enhanced, specifically in the following respects:

- The State administration under rule of law has been given much more importance and reinforced, the legal system step by step revised, amended and formulated in compliance with the demands

¹ Article in *Cộng sản Review*, Issue No. 3, 1995.

of the new period. The promulgation of the 1992 Constitution asserts and inherits the sound contents of the previous Constitutions, with major revisions and amendments, to ameliorate the structure of the State apparatus, enhance the role and accountability of the National Assembly and the Government; develop the three powers: legislative, executive and judiciary.

- Socialist democracy has been perceived more accurately and developed more strongly as the core of the renovation of the political system. In economics, socialist democracy guarantees the rights of free manufacturing and trading of all the economic components, protects the legal ownership of the private sector, the land use of the farmers, and brings into full play all the potentialities, enthusiasm and creation of all walks of life. In politics, it is the right of democracy in election, candidature, discussion, contribution of comments to the elaboration of the draft laws, as well as the democratic activities in people-elected bodies, social organizations and on the mass media. It is also the human and civil rights that are more and more respected and secured.

- The organization and activities of the State apparatus are being reformed, with remarkable progress. The National Assembly operates with better efficiency, more democratically and realistically. The organization, activity and administration of the Government are being step by step innovated, concentrating on macro-administration and supplying concrete guidance to prompt and close execution. There has been some discrimination between the function of State administration and the function of production management. The activity of the Procuracy and the People's Court has made some fresh progress.

- The Party's leadership of the State is more clearly and more specifically defined, with better quality and efficiency, thus providing conditions for completion and enhancement of the role and efficiency of the State management.

It is thanks to this progress that our State has got conditions to administer and handle the renovation movement effectively, with important achievements: the national economy has grown

remarkably, the people's living standards improved, the foreign relations expanded and the socio-political stability retained.

However, in this new period with new demands and duties, our State shows certain weaknesses and shortcomings as follows:

- Its legal system is far from complete and synchronic and the observance of the law far from strict, with lax rules and discipline. Here and there, democracy and social order are not exercised, with violations of the citizen's rights.

- The organization and activity of the State are far from effective and efficient. The State apparatus is heavy and bulky; bureaucratic red-tape and corruption are still serious; the implementation of democratic centralism are far from satisfactory; the discrimination of the functions, responsibilities and powers between the institutions not so clear, hence the inefficiency in the work coordination. Meanwhile, the discrimination between the functions in the State administration and production management, in some cases, is not clear-cut either. In general, the State administration is still weak and confusing. The civil servants and officials, though making some progress, still do not meet the demands of the new period. In addition, some officials have degenerated.

- The leadership of the Party is yet to be enhanced to guarantee the amelioration and development of the State apparatus. In fact, a few Party units still double up jobs of others, deeply interfere in the work under the State administration. At the same time, there is manifestation of lax leadership of the Party and the executive committees, especially in defining the guideline for work and examining the implementation of the Party resolutions. Some Party committees' abilities in awareness and leadership are limited therefore they are still confused in their mode of leadership.

Nowadays, the Vietnamese revolution is in a very important stage: the transition from the economic system based on central planning and State subsidies to a multi-sectoral commodity economy with the participation of many economic components under the administration of the State, and liberalization for international interaction; in which the most important duty is to gradually

implement industrialization-modernization in the orientation of socialism. Along with this progress, it is necessary to well implement social democratization, innovate the political system, establish and gradually ameliorate socialist democracy. A current major problem is how to develop the advantages, seize the opportunity, check danger, overcome challenges, accelerate economic development, preserve political stability and improve the people's living standards.

These are major duties of revolutionary significance to both the production forces and the production relations, both the infra- and the superstructure, both domestic and foreign relations. They affect all fields of society, and pose a series of difficult, new and complicated problems that call for both the Party's and the people's efforts and strong determination. The political system should be established and consolidated firmly and synchronically. Particularly, the knowledge, capacity, determination, quality and organization of the Party should be good enough to meet the demands of its leadership in the new period. The State should be immaculate and powerful; handle and administer society under rule of law effectively and efficiently.

An urgent demand is to actively reinforce and build up a strong State apparatus; make it a State of the people, by the people and for the people; always preserve and develop the revolutionary nature of the working class; and combine with the national and people's character led by the Communist Party. The State should be ameliorated and innovated in both its organization and administration structure; improve its approach on activity so that it complies with the economic renovation as well as meet the demands for security and national defense.

During the process of establishing and ameliorating the State apparatus, it is necessary to have a thorough grasp and comprehend the fundamental points of view as follows:

Firstly, ours is a socialist State of the people, by the people and for the people, based on the worker-farmer-intellectual alliance under the leadership of the vanguard Party of the working class. Our State exercises fully all democratic rights of the people; upholds the social law and order and applies its dictatorship to all activities in violation of the interests of the Fatherland and the people.

Thoroughly grasping the nature of the working class means holding fast the leadership of the Communist Party, Marxism - Leninism, Hồ Chí Minh Thought as well as the socialist path. As a State in the transition to socialism, the historical mission of our State is to transform, build up and administer the nation in the orientation of socialism as well as preserve national independence, sovereignty and defend the Fatherland.

The nature of the working class of our State is always interrelated to the national and people's character because the basic interests of the working class is in harmony with the basic interests of the nation and the people. The source of power and political foundation of our State lies in the great unity of all the classes in society and in the inheritance and development of the good traditions of the nation. The activity of the State is based on the viewpoints of combination of national independence and socialism, true patriotism and internationalism of the working class, with its service to the people always as the top priority. It is necessary to build up a transparent, stable and powerful state, which always expresses the will and aspiration of the people as well as guarantees that all rights belong to the people.

The State should respect and guarantee all human rights. Human liberation should be closely associated with national, class and social liberation. Human rights are only guaranteed fully with national freedom and socialism. It is necessary to resolutely combat and overcome bureaucratic red-tape, corruption and violation of the people's ownership. At the same time, it is necessary to defeat all conspiracy of the hostile forces benefiting democracy and human rights to slander our state and oppose our regime.

Secondly, the State power is unified. There is assignment and close coordination among State offices in implementing three rights: legislative, executive and judiciary.

The people are the subject and the origin of the State power. The people entrust the State power to the National Assembly, which is elected by direct, secret suffrage. The National Assembly is the highest representative body of the people and the mightiest body of the State power. As a legislative body, it implements part of the executive and judiciary power, supreme supervision to all the activities of the State.

The National Assembly rules on all important problems of national welfare and the people's livelihood. All important posts and offices such as President of State, Prime Minister and members of the government, President of the Supreme People's Court and Procuracy are appointed by the National Assembly and the NA is accountable to the people for such appointment.

And so, we don't apply the "three branches of power" system like other capitalist states, but concentrate power into the NA, with a close division of work and coordination between the State institutions to promote State activities as well as to prevent arbitrariness and despotism. This division of work does not mean each office holds its own power and these powers are split and separated from each other

Thirdly, it is necessary to grasp the principle of democratic centralism in the structure and the activity of the State apparatus, guarantee the single leadership and administration of the Central level as well as develop initiative, dynamism and creativeness of each locality, each unit, each institution, each individual and the system as a whole.

This is the key factor for the power of the structure and the efficiency of our State. It creates the homogeneity in organization and activity; simultaneously develops and closely coordinates the might of the collective, each individual, the whole country, each region, each unit, each institution and the State system as a whole. It is necessary to take precaution and combat bureaucratic red-tape, splittism and departmentalism.

In the area of organization, close combination of centralism and democracy should be grasped in the law, decrees, and regulations of the organization and operation of the State apparatus as well as defined in detail suitable with the nature and function of each organization and each field of activity.

It is necessary to promote the centralized and unified leadership and regulation of the Central level as well as enhance the accountability, initiative and flexibility of local authorities. Meanwhile, it is necessary to well define the power and accountability of each echelon of authority (four echelons). The Central echelon

decides on macro-affairs such as enforcing laws, mechanism, policy, strategy and socio-economic development planning as well as controlling important resources and instruments that affect the scale, speed and orientation of the socio-economic development, administering foreign relations, and safeguarding national security and defense. The local authorities develop their initiative and responsibility for tapping their potential, developing their economy, culture, education, public health and care of the people's living conditions to meet the local people's urgent demands.

Fourthly, the State should not only administer society under rule of law, but also promote socialist morality and combine administrative measures with ideological education as well as combine the power of law with the might of the people.

Administering society by means of law and in compliance with the law is a basic function of every modern state. Meanwhile, the structure and activities of the State themselves must be within the framework of the law. Therefore, it is in this sense that we're establishing a socialist law-governed state, a state of the people, for the people and by the people under the leadership of the Communist Party. Meanwhile, we also promote socialist legislation in all the three areas: formulating law, executing law and protecting law. On one hand, we revise, amend and ameliorate the State apparatus. On the other, we reform the national public administration, execute and observe law, and combat all activities in disregard of the law and order of society.

We not only promote legislation and administration of society under rule of law, but attach particular importance to education, enhance social morality, combine administrative measures with ideological education, raise the people's educational background and combine the power of law with the might of the masses. This is a distinctive characteristic of Hồ Chí Minh Thought on social administration, the State and the legislation.

The State administration society not only with the power of legislation, but also with moral examples of employees and civil servants, making people believe and admire, then follow the examples. President Hồ Chí Minh is an excellent example in

this regard. He held in high regard legislation and administration of society under rule of law. He directed the drafting of the two Constitutions, dozens of laws and hundreds of decrees on administration of the nation. He especially upheld moral examples and set a great moral example persuading people to consciously observe policies of the Party and the State.

It is necessary to rely on the masses, let the masses to educate themselves, prevent and combat violations of the law through the people's movements as well as develop the roles of mass organizations and local authorities to reconcile disputes among the people to avert and restrain complicated developments in due course.

Fifthly, it is necessary to promote the leadership of the Party over the State

The leadership of the Party over the State is an objective demand. In modern society, any state must have a ruling party, which represents the interests, ideology and viewpoints of a certain class. In our country, with the success of the revolution, the Việt Nam Communist Party has been entrusted by history with the mission to lead the State, hence it is a ruling Party. And this dictates the nature and characteristics of the Socialist Republic of Việt Nam.

The leadership of the Party guarantees that the State has the nature of the working class, a state of the people, by the people and for the people. The State's activities are launched along the lines and policies of the Party, expressing the revolutionary and scientific nature of Marxism-Leninism and Hồ Chí Minh Thought. The Party's leadership creates conditions for coordination and development of the might of the political system and helps the State accomplish all its duties.

Naturally, promoting the leadership of the Party over the State should be based on the restructuring and innovation of the Party as well as enhancement of its leading capacity and fighting spirit. As the Party's leadership is not based on power and commands, but on its qualifications and capabilities of formulating sound political guidelines as well as persuading all organizations and the entire society to consciously follow them. The Party's leadership should be

also based on the example of the Party units and members marching in the van as well as the people's confidence in the Party.

Rectifying and renovating the Party includes both the innovations of the contents and its approach of leadership, accurately defining the relations between the Party and the State. The Party leads the State in establishing the legislative system but the Party and its members' activities must be within the framework of the Constitution and the law, and the Party members should set good examples in observing the policies and the law.

Strengthening the State in these directions is a long process with positive and stable steps, entirely in the context of renovation of the political system, linked to the renovation and rectification of the Party. In immediate terms, we should focus on launching such major guidelines and duties as follows:

- Keep renovating the organization and operation of the National Assembly;
- Renovate the State administration;
- Renovate the organization and operation of the judicial institutions;
- Enhance people's mastership over the State;
- Strengthen the leadership of the Party over the State.

In all this, focus should be laid on State administration reform to establish a pure and transparent administration, capable of exercising its power correctly, and to gradually modernize it, so that the policies and guidelines of the Party are implemented; the State's activities managed effectively in service of the people's livelihood; a law-abiding lifestyle and work style established; the renovation for development promoted, thus accomplishing the goals of "a prosperous people, a powerful nation, an equitable, democratic and civilized society."

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION REFORM: VIEW AND SOLUTION¹

Of all the tasks related to building up and ameliorating the State apparatus, public administration reform bears extremely important implications, as a decisive breakthrough.

That can be *first* explained by the fact that administration is the biggest sector in the State structure, taking executive responsibility to administer and control every area in social life, directly involving in implementation of the Party's politics and guidelines and executing people's power. The public administration includes an institutional system to administer the society under the rule of law, an organizational structure as well as working method of the administrative apparatus, and a contingent of employees and civil servants. A good public administration reform is likely to move the State apparatus forward, pushing up all its activities.

Secondly, our country is currently embarking on a new stage of development with the central tasks of industrialization and modernization in the orientation of socialism, developing a multi-sector economy operating under the market mechanism, opening to international exchanges under the State administration, executing social democratization, promoting the people's rights to mastership, establishing law, order and disciplines in society. Only a transparent and strong administration, capable of using its powers (in a correct manner) and gradually modernized can match these tasks of the revolution.

Thirdly, over the past years, our public administration has been built up and developed on a step-by-step basis. Even though

¹ Article in *Cộng sản Review*, Issue 3, 1995.

a number of fortes and progress have been observed, mistakes and shortcomings have been revealed in this new phase, notably the rampant and serious bureaucratic red tape, lack of discipline, over-spreading corruption, cumbersome and inefficient organizational structure as well as a contingent of employees and civil servants inferior to the tasks assigned.

Having seen the significance of the public administrative reform (PAR), and upon the elaboration of a guideline for renovation right at the 6th Congress, our Party clearly pointed out that it was a must to "launch a full-scale reform of the organizational structure of State institutions." After that, quite a few documents and resolutions of the Party kept underlining the necessity of a public administration reform, building up and ameliorating the State apparatus on a step-by-step basis. In light of the new Constitution (issued in 1992), there have been significant positive changes in the organization and operation of the State apparatus. Such progress, however, is far from an appropriate response to the requirements of a comprehensive national renovation, especially the renovation of the mechanism of economic administration. The Party's mid-term National Congress in early 1994 asserted the reform of the State apparatus had been slow and ineffective. It was partly because of our lack of strong determination and adequate measures to organize the implementation of the resolution adopted by the Congress. On the other hand, it should be admitted that we are short of necessary knowledge on the State and administrative governance in the transition to market mechanism; many issues are still in experimental processes; theoretical studies and review of practical work in this regard have not been able to make the guidelines any clearer, we are even in utmost confusion in defining the contents and methodology for the conduct of the PAR.

With the passage of time, reality shows that public administration reform is a very urgent need, a key task to be fulfilled in the establishment of a law-governed State of the people, by the people and for the people, under the leadership of the Party. It efficiently serves and pushes up the comprehensive national renovation, focusing on the economic sector and actively facilitating the socio-economic reform. The ruling Party leads the society through the State.

Therefore, it is a must to build up to a powerful State and a strong public administration. The guidelines and solutions for the public administration reform should take root from the actual requirements and specific conditions of Việt Nam, based on the review of reality, the inheritance of the national traditions and the creative application of the world's experience.

The 8th Plenum of the Party Central Committee (7th tenure) clearly pointed out that given the current situation of our country, the public administration reform should be conducted at the same time on the three aspects: institution, organizational structure and the contingent of cadres and civil servants.

1. Institution

Administrative institution includes laws and legal and regulatory sub-law documents providing a legal framework for administrative bodies to deal with all aspects of social life, for all agencies and all individuals to live and work lawfully. A reform of the administration institution aims to meet the requirements of gradually establishing a socialist democracy, strengthening the close relation of the people and the administration, ensuring the State governance is going in line with new developments, enhancing the positive sides as well as preventing and limiting the downsides of the market economy. Efforts should be focused on addressing the following imperative issues:

Reform of administrative formalities: Currently, administrative formalities in our country are too cumbersome. It is expected that such formalities are to be streamlined as soon as possible, dropping unnecessary formalities in applying for permission and approval for the convenience of the people and the entrepreneurs, saving them from harassment and costly charges. At the same time, the governance by administrative agencies under rule of law is to be ensured, contributing to the prevention and elimination of bureaucratic harassment, fraud and law violation. An order in the issuance of administrative formalities and fee-related regulations should be established.

Right in the year 1995, fundamental progress in this respect should be made. Special attention should be paid to such aspects of direct impact on social life as well as production and business, in difficulties or with malpractices such as granting land for construction; house construction and repair licensing; import-export; emigration-immigration; establishment of enterprises and business registration; approval of foreign investment projects; allocation and distribution of the government's investment capital; and fees related to formalities, etc.

Establishment of institutions for settlement of complaints, ensuring the people's right to be informed and those relating to the people's supervision of and comments on State-owned agencies.

Regarding law suits brought by the citizens (individuals, or organizations) there should be clear and specific policies on hot subjects (from 1992 to 1994 there were close to 27,000 law suits mainly on land and housing disputes, execution of preferential treatment policies, etc.). On the other hand, a system of administrative jurisdiction bodies (administrative courts) should be established to settle the law suits brought by citizens.

In case of letters sent by citizens to denounce the misconduct of governmental cadres and civil servants, from 1992 to mid-1994, there were 47,000 accusation cases mainly on corruption and bullying of the people and the inferiors. Half of the cases were anonymous letters and those with assumed names. A settlement procedure should be developed to make sure that any denouncement made is properly looked into and seriously dealt with. The accused have the right to be well informed and defended. Those who accuse others with bad intention should be punished according to the law.

In case of letters sent by citizens to leading bodies or leaders aimed at contributing comments to common affairs of the nation, there should be a mechanism with assignment of responsibility for studying, collecting and giving feedback. A system in which people are received by the Party's leaders and authorities at all levels to exchange views on people's petition and recommendation should be established. The way of collecting comments should be modified for the people's convenience in expressing their attitude,

ensuring honesty and openness in collecting and reporting the people's comments.

Ways to openly informing about the State undertakings should be diversified, which provides conditions for the people to get informed, grasp the situation, contact with and evaluate activities of people-elected representatives, ensuring their civil rights to supervision of and attitude exposition over any institution or civil servant.

Timely institutionalization of the Party's guidelines and policies: A system of legal and sub-law documents should be established and supplemented, providing a legal framework for the operation of the economic sectors under the market mechanism. Importance should be focused on civil law, business law, legal and regulatory documents providing a basis for a synchronic formation of market elements (stock market; real estate market, technology and currency markets, etc.) and for the creation of a cooperation and healthy competition environment among enterprises.

The institutions for the administration of public finance (budget, the State treasury, the government's investment for capital construction, etc.) and public assets (land, resources, offices, public buildings, national reserves, etc.) should be finalized to ensure a rational distribution and efficient utilization of public assets, prevent wastage and utilization of public assets for private purposes, and promote the leading role of the State economic sector. Regulations on administration of groups of State-owned enterprises (SOEs), and an SOE-group administration council should be established and developed.

Renovation of the establishment of the State institutions. Regulations on work distribution and closer cooperation between the Government and National Assembly agencies should be available for good and timely development of the law. Procedures on development of legal and regulatory documents should be renovated. Inconsistency in the content and issuance time difference between legal and legislative documents, the government's documents and specification/implementation guidelines by the ministries should be avoided.

Any administrative decision, whether it is a general guideline or the solution of a specific issue has to be documented. The competent authority having the right to sign the documents should be clearly identified.

Strengthening the effectiveness of law enforcement, establishing order and discipline in society as well as in the State apparatus. The way of law popularization, education of law observance and execution of civil obligations should be improved. There must be good cooperation among law protecting agencies, promoting an integrated strength in law observance.

2. About the organizational structure and regulations on the operation of the administrative system

Against the background of the development of a multi-sectoral economy operating under the market mechanism, the State administers the economy and society in an appropriate approach without direct interference in the production and business activities of enterprises. Given the innovation in the organization and management of the SOEs of all types and the establishment of enterprise corporations as well as the amelioration of the capital and public assets management institutions, the administrative bodies do not necessarily play the role of "managing agencies" of the SOEs. The government and administrative bodies of all levels should focus their activities on the innovation and perfection of the administrative institutions in economic administration, improving the development planning, building up the socio-economic infrastructure, renovating the financial-monetary policies, enhancing the leading role of the State economic sector, taking care of socio-cultural issues, protecting the environment, maintaining order and security as well as law enforcement, consolidating national defense and protecting the national interests. It is necessary to fully understand and apply the principle of democratic centralism and that of combining sectoral and regional administration in retooling the organizational structure and operating regulations of the administrative system, ensuring centralization throughout the whole system, while promoting the dynamism and creativeness of localities. The rights and

responsibilities of each level should be clearly defined, especially in regulation and budget set-up. The right to regulation set-up belongs to the government. Municipal and provincial administration are authorized to set up regulations relating to local issues, but that should not be contrary to the law and other legal and regulatory documents enforced by the government. Collective and individual responsibilities should be clearly defined under the principle that collective leadership is ensured on important issues, while individual responsibility is promoted in operating tasks; rights and obligations should be well proportioned. Supervision and inspection need to be further strengthened in order that everybody acts according to regulations and business sectors operate lawfully.

The organizational structure should be modified and the administrative apparatus of all sectors and levels streamlined on the basis of a clear definition of functions, duties, rights and responsibilities of each institution and work relation within institutions. The organizational structure of each ministry should be re-adjusted so that it is streamlined and appropriate to new functions. Separation has to be drawn up between research units as think-tanks for the ministers (departments) and bodies under the respective ministries' administration guiding and administering each specific field (general departments/departments); and non-profit civil service units conducting training and scientific researches (colleges, institutes); and public services sector (enterprises). In general, the government and the administrative bodies of all levels should be streamlined, focusing on good conduct of the state administration in all fields. At the local level, the responsibilities and work ethics of the People's Council and People's Committee need to be promoted in observing the law and decisions made by the government, the Prime Minister, ministers and other superior administrative bodies. Focus should be given to the improvement of communal administration, settlement of commune budget and gradual specialization of some posts at the commune level. Village leader winning respect from village people will be appointed as a member of communal administration and assigned with a number of administrative duties relating to his village.

The work mechanism of and coordination relation between bodies in the administrative system (from the government down

to the ministries, sectors, functional agencies and local authority at all levels...) should be institutionalized. In the work regulations, responsibility has to be clearly assigned in details to avoid the situation of pushing it here and there or being unable to claim the responsibility of anybody in face of mistakes or shortcomings committed. In each individual institution, the responsibility of the leader and board of management should be clearly defined. The leader conducts the operation of his institution. He's, therefore, accountable for all the wrong decisions made. Though the matters may have been brought under collective discussion and final decision, the leader is still mainly accountable. He is also accountable for the decisions made by any junior leader as the latter is delegated to help him in settling work-related issues.

In the coordination of institutions, the main responsibility of the steering institution and those of the other participatory institutions should be clearly defined to avoid the situation that one relies on the others, delaying or blocking each others' work.

3. About building up a contingent of administrative cadres and civil servants

In the administrative apparatus, apart from a few people's elected deputies working in defined terms of office, the majority is civil servants. The latter need to be built up in the orientation of specialization aimed at achieving a stable, fully-dedicated, skillful and capable contingent matching to the criteria set for each specific post.

Regulations on official work and staff should be built up and gradually finalized as they provide an important basis for training, selecting, arranging the staff and exercising policies towards them. That serves also as a standard for the staff to do their official work, striving to improve their quality and capacity, while providing a basis for streamlining administrative payrolls.

Staff recruitment should be conducted through exams or tests for those wishing to work in administrative institutions. Those who have degraded in terms of misconduct should be timely dismissed. Those

who do not match their work requirements should be transferred to other posts or moved out of the official payrolls (of course with reasonable treatment policy). Retirement should be based on the right stipulated age. The regulations for civil servant should clearly define such business areas they are not allowed to engage in.

Medium and long-term plans should be available for enhancing the capacity of existing staff and providing training to the newly employed. Special attention should be paid to training and capacity building for medium and high-level civil servants. The training curriculum needs to be practical with quality ensured, meeting the requirements of building up an administrative system gradually catching up with modern standard in both foreign languages and application of information-communication technology. To this objective, training requirements are to be surveyed and identified, and training plans made for each administrative branch; training skills of trainers should be urgently refined and strengthened; cooperation with external sources in training is to be extended; the system of training institutions has to be properly arranged; administration should be a subject of study in the curriculum of several colleges.

For a good implementation of the regulations on official service and increased work efficiency of administrative bodies and civil servants, offices need to be gradually modernized, mainly by using modern equipment and establishing a computer network in the administrative system. Work places should be arranged in a serious and practical manner rather than showing off.

By so doing, administration reform, especially the reform of administrative formalities, regulations on official service and staff, capital and public assets management and establishment of administrative courts, etc. are effective measures to actively contribute to eliminating from its roots the wastage of public assets, the scourge of corruption, embezzlement, harassing the people, collaborating with private and foreign enterprises for illegal benefits, etc. Our Party and State require that it is necessary to clearly define the jobs related to business and foreigners' employment which civil servants are not allowed to do; there will be strict regulations on receipt of gifts, reception of guests; and cadres, governmental employees, Party

members, firstly and foremost those who are key leaders at all levels, have to report on financial sources for land purchase, house building, and such sources should be checked.

The regulations on responsibility shall be set up and implemented. In case serious wastage or corruption happens in any institution or department, not only those directly involved in such misconduct will be punished, but the institution's leader will also be held accountable as well. He's accountable for being unable to discover the cases. Even if the cases have been discovered by the leader, he will be held responsible for being undetermined to take action against or covering them up. Such guidelines are considered appropriate, meeting the people's wishes which should be executed strictly and seriously.

It has been proved by reality that public administration reform is a very important task. It is by no means simple and easy, since this is a really scientific job related to many areas of works. Furthermore, it should be settled concurrently and it presents a complicated struggle, concerning the benefits of many units and individuals. It is not the job of the administration system alone but a common duty of the Party and all the people. It requires strict Party's leadership, exemplary role of the Party's representative units, cadres and Party members (first of all those in the administrative bodies themselves) with active participation by the people and mass organizations.

WHY DOES THE VIỆT NAM COMMUNIST PARTY PERSEVERE WITH MARXISM-LENINISM?¹

Recently, many anti-communist and anti-socialist thinkers have emphasized the collapse of socialism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe to severely criticize and repeatedly attack Marxism-Leninism. They aim to shake the ideological foundations of the communist parties and induce the ruling communist parties to deviate from socialism. In Việt Nam, many enthusiastic people have studied and discussed the problem with a constructive mind. But there are a few people, due to certain reasons, have chimed in with hostile arguments to openly refute Marxism-Leninism, criticize the consistency of the Việt Nam Communist Party with Marxism-Leninism and socialist construction. They have managed to write a few documents and propagate them at home or with the help of some foreign anti-communist publishers, newspapers and radio stations. They have attacked Marxism-Leninism with grudge and sharp arguments.

From criticizing Marxism-Leninism, some have even condemned President Hồ Chí Minh that his mistake was to introduce Marxism-Leninism into Việt Nam, “driving the country into darkness, stagnation, fragmentation, humiliation and affliction.” Then, they have loudly demanded the Communist Party “drop Marxism-Leninism before it is too late.” They claimed that “the Communist Party, more than anyone else, should first of all acknowledge its mistakes,” “courageously carry out a comprehensive and thorough political renovation” and

¹ Article in *Cộng sản Review*, Issue No. 11, 1995.

“if the Communist Party persists in its old style... it will fall in despair and it is doomed to collapse.... It will be forever cursed by history (!).”

Their political attitude is very clear and categorical. Whoever safeguards Marxism-Leninism is immediately branded the label of “dogmatism, conservatism, adulation and clinging to power and position.” If their superiors try to rectify their thought, they will noisily bellow that such an act “is repressing people with different viewpoints, stifling democracy and freedom of thought.” Some have even recklessly said that the Party maintains its consistency with Marxism-Leninism because the Party’s leading bodies at all echelons “are imprisoned in classical Marxist-Leninist principles” or “are alarmed and frightened” in the current situation. And, the Party must loudly shout revolutionary slogans to “keep its mentality at peace” and “practice demagogy (!).”

Is all this true? Let’s put aside the hostile attitudes and actions of some people. Let’s go straight to some major arguments on this topic.

1. The anti-Marxism-Leninism critics always try to deny the scientific nature of Marxism-Leninism. They try to prove that Marx, Engels and Lenin are not scientists. They fabricate that Marxism is “an illusory ideology,” “an intentional lie,” “delusive dramas full of illusions”, and that Lenin “further highlighted Marx’s delusion.” They conclude that “Marx and Lenin are sociologists of utopian metaphysical idealism” and Marxism-Leninism is “fictitious and illusive (!).”

Obviously, this is a distortion of Marxism-Leninism. Perhaps, up to now, few people, even the most rabid anti-Marxists and anti-Leninists, have had the cheek to raise such arrogant and rash arguments. Some could criticize Marx in some points and give him a deep resentment and bitter opposition because Marx declared war on capitalism for the sake of the working class, but nobody could deny the fact that Marx and Engels were scientists. In fact, Marx and Engels were really brilliant and genius scientists and “miraculous minds” of all mankind. Their entire theory was the result of a strict

and serious scientific research. It was a voluminous scientific work answering numerous issues raised by humankind. Inheriting the best ideological trends up to the 19th century (German philosophy, English political economy and French socialism) and summing up the realities during their era, Marx and Engels created a perfect, close and accurate theory the high scientific nature of which is combined with an absolute revolutionary spirit. That is the great merit of Marx and Engels.

Firstly, they protected and developed materialist philosophy, created dialectical and historical materialism, opening a fundamental turning-point in philosophy, providing humankind with a new outlook and a sharp weapon to perceive and transform the world. Marx's historical materialism is a brilliant achievement of scientific ideology. Marx discovered the laws of social development and the necessity of the transition from one socio-economic form to another higher one.

Secondly, Marx and Engels relied on the achievements of classical political economy to create a new economic theory, bringing about a real revolution of political economy. By finding out the law of surplus value, Marx disclosed the methods of capitalist exploitation and gave a scientific justification for the inevitable doom of capitalism and the necessary triumph of socialism.

Thirdly, by analyzing capitalism, they found out the laws of its movement and development. Then, they foretold social development in the future and pointed out that the social force who could become creators of a new society was the working class under the leadership of the Communist Party. The working class must carry out an arduous revolutionary struggle to overthrow capitalism. Class struggle would be the motive force behind the development of a society with different classes. Therefore, Marxist socialism is a scientific one, which is quite different from the previous utopian socialism in France.

Right in 1872, Russian economist I.I. Kaufman gave comments on the magazine *European Courier* No. 5: Marx is more realistic

and dialectic than anyone among his predecessors. Because "when proving the inevitability of the current order, he also indicates the necessity of another order, which the current one must be shifted to, whether people believe and acknowledge it or not."

Lenin assessed the nature of Marxism as follows: "After studying the laws of social development, Marx understood that the development of capitalism would naturally lead to communism and – as a fundamental issue – when proving this truth, Marx based himself on the most accurate, meticulous and deepest research of that capitalist society by fully grasping everything provided by sciences."¹ Even capitalist ideologists had a deep respect for Marx. They studied Marxism seriously and carefully. In reality, it is Marxism that helps capitalism readjust some of its approaches and ways of operation. Recently, famous French philosopher Jacques Derrida confirmed: "There is no future without Marx."² And most recently, in early 2001, a survey conducted by BBC (UK) showed that Marx is the greatest ideologist in the second millennium.³ But some Vietnamese "sages" insistently affirm that Marx was idealistic and delusive!

How about Lenin? He was well known as a scholar and a fighter for social progress who had great influence on the cultural and scientific development of the times. Lenin closely linked science and culture to progressive socio-political forces in the 20th century. As a scholar, Lenin made great contribution in many fields, dealing with a lot of issues in philosophy, political economics, history, natural sciences, logic, law, sociology, etc. Lenin not only applied Marxism, but supplemented and developed it as well. Lenin always worked with a deep passion, extraordinary energy and most serious scientific spirit (To compile the work *Capitalist Development in Russia*, Lenin read and studied 583 books). Lenin was very keen and sharp in summing up realities. By doing so, he could write

1 V.I. Lenin. *Complete Works*, op. cit., vol. 41, p. 361.

2 Jacques Derrida. *The Ghosts of Marx*, National Political Publishing House and General Department II of the Ministry of Defense, Hà Nội, 1991, p. 42.

3 *Thông tin công tác tư tưởng* (Information on Ideological Work) Review, No. 2, 2002.

the book *Imperialism – the Final Stage of Capitalism*. By doing so, he could change the initial awareness of socialism and present the famous *New Economic Policy* (NEP). It is not by chance when communists call Leninism “Marxism in the era of imperialism and proletarian revolutions” and combine Leninism with Marxism to form Marxism-Leninism. It is not by chance when Lenin’s theories have had such a great influence on the world. According to UNESCO statistics, Lenin’s works have been translated into 120 languages and read more frequently than those of L. Tolstoy,¹ W. Shakespeare,² and H. de Balzac.³

In short, Marxism-Leninism is a science and more than that, it is a dialectical and modern science of the laws of natural and social development, of the revolution of the depressed and exploited masses, and of the triumph of socialism and communism. The sustainable values of Marxism-Leninism are its scientific truthfulness, comprehensiveness, systematism and dialectics to liberate the working people and society from all oppression, exploitation and degeneration to build an equitable and humane society.

With dialectical materialism as its soul and the theory on surplus value as its economic foundation, with famous discoveries of historic materialism of which the basic content is the theory on socio-economic forms and the historical role of the working class, up to now, Marxism-Leninism has still been the intellectual acme of humankind and a perfect and accurate science which cannot be replaced. Though inevitably supplemented, developed and ameliorated, Marxism-Leninism’s basic contents are still correct in the present-day situation. It is still a spiritual weapon for the working class and oppressed peoples throughout the world in the struggle to liberate themselves. Though being intentionally distorted by hostile elements, Marxism-Leninism still preserves its enduring vitality and sustainable values.

- 1 Leo Tolstoy (1828-1910), Russian writer. His famous works include *Childhood*, *War and Peace*, and *Anna Karenina*.
- 2 William Shakespeare (1564-1616), English playwright and poet. His famous works include *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, *Romeo and Juliet*, and *Hamlet*.
- 3 H. Balzac (1799-1850), French writer famous for his novel *La comedie humaine* (The Human Comedy).

– It is not difficult to understand that Marxism-Leninism has been attacked and distorted for the past 150 years (Marxism) and nearly 100 years (Leninism). Not only distorting and criticizing Marxism-Leninism, some have even sought all ways and means to eradicate it. In 1913, Lenin said: “In the whole civilized world, Marx’s theory has caused the worst hostility and resentment in the entire circle of capitalist scientists.... It is impossible to expect a better attitude because in a society built on class struggle, there is no “impartial” social science.... To expect such a science in a society built on slavery and indentured servitude is so naive.”¹

The fact that the forces hurl distortion and disparage of Marxism-Leninism prove its sound, scientific and revolutionary nature. Most of the anti-communist thinkers are very afraid of this. And whenever fighting against the opposite ideological trends, Marxism-Leninism always shows its strong vitality. It combats not only the reactionary capitalist viewpoints and ideologies, but also the wrong tendencies in the international communist and workers’ movements as well, for example “the socialism of the Kingdom of Prussia” of Lassalle² in Germany, the petty bourgeois socialism of Proudhon³ in France and Belgium, the rightist opportunism of the trade-union leaders in the UK, the “leftist” adventurism of the German communists, the anarchism of Bakunin⁴ in Russia, the capitalist nationalism in the issues of warfare and colonialism, etc. and the various current “trends” nowadays, as is well known.

Marxism-Leninism is still attracting billions of people on this planet thanks to its scientific, revolutionary and humane nature.

- 1 V.I. Lenin. *Complete Works*, *op. cit.*, vol. 25, p. 23, 49.
- 2 Ferdinand Lassalle (1825-1864), German socialist, whose views formed the basis of the political philosophy known as state socialism.
- 3 Pierre Joseph Proudhon (1809-1865), French political theorist, considered the father of modern anarchism. He opposed the view of the French Utopian socialists Fourier and Saint-Simon. He envisioned a society in which people’s ethical nature and sense of moral responsibility would be so highly developed that government would be unnecessary to regulate and protect society.
- 4 Mikhail Bakunin (1814-1876), Russian revolutionist and anarchist.

This is an important reason why the Communist Party always maintains its consistency with Marxism-Leninism, considering it as the Party's ideological foundations and the lodestar for all its revolutionary actions.

2. Some people think that the introduction of Marxism-Leninism in Việt Nam is the cause of all disasters that drive the country into darkness and sluggishness(!?).

This is an incorrect viewpoint without any scientific basis which distorts history, turning black white. Our nation has a traditional patriotism, which is the factor that generates the nation's miraculous power to defeat all invaders. This patriotism is always highlighted in all historical periods. However, reality shows that, only in the Hồ Chí Minh era, under the leadership of the Communist Party, is national power raised higher and the people's triumph is more complete, comprehensive and thorough. Those who want to attack or deny the leadership of the Communist Party and Marxism-Leninism clamored that, in the past when the Communist Party and Marxism-Leninism did not yet come into existence, the Vietnamese people could still win over all foreign aggressors! This is only half the truth. They forget what is the country's perspective after the triumph over the invaders? How to ensure the people's mastership and well-being life without hardships, repression and exploitation by the feudal landowners? How to escape from the vicious circle of exploitation? Moreover, in the former resistance wars against foreign resistance, the nation's and the people's might revealed certain historical limitations in each period. During the anti-French time, prior to the foundation of the Communist Party, our nation gave birth to a number of outstanding heroes with an ardent noble patriotism and strong will to sacrifice themselves for the country, such as Nguyễn Trung Trực¹, Tống Duy Tân², Phan Đình Phùng³,

1 Nguyễn Trung Trực (1838-1868), leader of the revolts against the French in Tân An in Long An province and Rạch Giá in Kiên Giang province.

2 Tống Duy Tân (1837-1892), patriot and revolutionary leader in Thanh Hóa province.

3 Phan Đình Phùng (1847-1895), leader of revolts against the French. He rallied soldiers and stationed in Hương Sơn, a mountainous region in Hà Tĩnh province.

Hoàng Hoa Thám¹, Phan Bội Châu², Phan Chu Trinh³, and Nguyễn Thái Học⁴. However, why did all the movements and insurrections led by these men fail? Before the Communist Party was founded, Việt Nam was in despair and seemed to be in a blind alley. Why? Because it lacked a sound guideline. Over 70 years, the country fell into a crisis for a way of national salvation and liberation. After its foundation, thanks to its adoption of Marxism-Leninism, the Communist Party found out a sound path to meet the people's aspirations. Thus, Việt Nam had opportunities to successfully embark on its national liberation. The Vietnamese revolution could record lots of achievements.

Some argued that a few non-Marxist-Leninist "dragons" in the region can achieve high economic growth rates and improve their peoples' living standards. It is true that in the current era of scientific and technical revolutions, some countries can launch a rapid development. However, each country has its own historical situations. Why only some among hundreds of capitalist countries in the world have been able to become developed ones? Why some have been able to succeed in national renovations and reforms while others failed? Việt Nam has its own historical and geographical conditions. No country on the earth, except for Việt Nam, has to fight against so many brutal invaders within a short time and suffers such heavy consequences: 1.1 million war martyrs, 600,000 war invalids, 300,000 missing, (most of them are members of the Communist Party and the Communist Youth Union), nearly two million ordinary people

1 Hoàng Hoa Thám (1858-1913), leader of a revolt against the French in the early 20th century and leader of the Yên Thế resistance movement in Bắc Giang province. The movement was widespread throughout the mountainous and lowland regions in North Việt Nam including Hà Nội.

2 Phan Bội Châu (1867-1940), patriotic scholar enthusiastically opposing the French. He founded Duy Tân (Renewal) Association and went to Japan asking for help. He started the Đông Du (Eastward Travel) movement. He was imprisoned in Guangdong in China. After that, he was sentenced to life hard labor and died in Huế. He wrote a lot of poetry and prose in Chinese to awake people's patriotism.

3 Phan Chu Trinh (1872-1926), a patriotic scholar who aimed to save the country by means of reform and non-violence. He called for national renovation and opening of schools teaching Romanised Vietnamese script in the direction of bourgeois democracy.

4 Nguyễn Thái Học (1901-1930), leader of a movement opposing the French in Yên Bái in 1930.

killed, two million disabled, and two million intoxicated. No place in the world but Việt Nam where the people could achieve glorious feats during so short a time. That was the glorious victory of the August 1945 Revolution, which disintegrated the colonial system of imperialism. That is the glorious triumph of the nine-year anti-French resistance war to defeat old colonialism. That is the victory of the twenty-year anti-American resistance war to rout neo-colonialism, reunify the country and take it to a new era, the era of national independence, freedom and socialism.

Over the recent ten years of renovation, in the context of complicated changes in the world and difficulties at home, our people under the leadership of the Communist Party have recorded remarkable achievements. Today, though still facing a lot of difficulties, our economy can develop well; the GDP growth rate tops over eight percent per year; economic quality and efficiency has been continuously increased; the livelihood of the majority of the population improved; foreign relations broadened. The country has pulled itself out of socio-economic crisis. We have created necessary preconditions to shift to a new development stage: enhancing industrialization-modernization to integrate into the region and the world. Việt Nam has established diplomatic relations with 155 countries (including leading great powers), trade relations with over 120 countries, relations with 180 parties and 250 non-governmental organizations. Foreign direct investment (FDI) in Việt Nam has recorded over \$15 billion and official development assistance (ODA) \$3.6 billion. In 1994, though suffering terrible natural disasters, the country could harvest 26.2 million tons of foods, satisfying all domestic demands and exporting two million tons of rice. The people's living standards, travel, schooling, customs and lifestyle have been much improved though still far from desired. Throughout the country, 60.2 percent of communes have got power supply, 86.5 percent with asphalted roads, 92 percent with clinics and 76.2 percent with junior secondary schools. Electricity has come even to some remote areas. Hand-phones have appeared in the southernmost region of Cà Mau-Minh Hải.

These rapid changes are supported by every ordinary man and encouraged by our friends. Even some people from "the other

side" sincerely recognize our achievements. Yet, a few people still intentionally distort the current social situation in Việt Nam as very dark and terrible. They deliberately ignore the fact that those who sowed sufferings and poverty in Việt Nam are the imperialist aggressors, the colonial invaders and their reactionary henchmen!

The Communist Party, during two-thirds of the 20th century, always made great efforts for the sake of national independence, a prosperous people and a progressive country. Armed with Marxism-Leninism and Hồ Chí Minh Thought in close combination with national traditions and mankind's quintessence, the Communist Party has led the people to record glorious achievements, and the country to develop for the past 50 years. This is a truth. This is also the reason why the Party perseveres with Marxism-Leninism in Việt Nam.

3. Some people say that, at present, the Communist Party has in fact given up Marxism-Leninism and socialism, but as a face-saving maneuver, the Party still maintains its perseverance with Marxism-Leninism in words and official documents (!). On one hand, they demand the nation to carry out "a thorough renovation" in Việt Nam. And their "thorough renovation" means full privatization and the realization of "pluralism and multi-party system." On the other, they allege that the Communist Party has abandoned Marxism-Leninism, that our cause of renovation lacks consistency and is "out of place".¹

This is also an arbitrary slanderous allegation. Up to now, it has been known that the Communist Party is a genuine Marxist-Leninist Party. It has always maintained its consistency with, and creatively applied, Marxism-Leninism to the specific conditions of Việt Nam. By summing up realities, the Party has concluded that deviation from Marxism-Leninism, dogmatism and imitation is doomed to failure. The current renovation comes to success because the Party has renovated its way of theoretical thinking, thoroughly grasp and creatively applies Marxism-Leninism. Renovation means to creatively apply authentic Marxism-Leninism. The Party's Political Platform, politics and guidelines clearly show this viewpoint. The followings are some examples:

¹ See *A Chronology of Chinese History*, op. cit., p. 33.

- thoroughly grasping and applying the laws found by Marx “the production relation must be in conformity with the productive forces,” the Communist Party has set up and directed the implementation of the guidelines on developing a multi-sectoral market-orientated economy operating under the State administration in the socialist orientation. This work must be considered as the long-term strategy during the transition to socialism. Among the economic sectors, the State-run economy must play the leading role, with the collective economy as the foundation;

- thoroughly grasping and applying the NEPs raised by Lenin, Việt Nam has boldly and actively applied all models and methods of State capitalism (public-private cooperation, joint-ventures, share contribution, land renting, etc.) to build socialism. This is an important line during the transition to socialism;

- Việt Nam has applied and realized the laws of commodity production (the laws of value, supply-demand, competition, enlarged reproduction, etc.), introduced various market models (the markets of consumer goods, capital goods, labor, monetary), closely combined plans with the market, economic growth with social equity and progress, lawful enrichment with poverty alleviation and preservation of national cultural identities;

- Việt Nam has applied and dealt with the relations between the working class and the nation, national and international communities, economics and politics in order to create its comprehensive power to embark on industrialization-modernization, national construction and defense;

Is it true that all of these actions depart from Marxism-Leninism? Or they always abide by Marxist-Leninist principles and ideology? Marxism-Leninism is still the lodestar and beacon to show the road for our Party and people to march on.

Experience shows that if our ideology is vague and unstable, we are likely to face unsound guidelines and politics, organizational disorders and failures in actions. Therefore, the Communist Party repeatedly asserts that perseverance with Marxism-Leninism and Hồ Chí Minh Thought is the number-one principle and the first major task in the whole theoretical and ideological work of the Party.

Of course, perseverance with Marxism-Leninism does not mean imitation and dogmatism but creativity without extremism, opportunism and revisionism. To be perseverant with Marxism-Leninism is to maintain consistency with its theoretical and methodological principles, grasp its revolutionary and scientific nature, creatively apply and develop it, and fight against opportunism, revisionism and dogmatism. Consistency and protection must be combined with creative application and development. A creative development is to protect in a best scientific manner. The Communist Party has repeatedly confirmed that Marxist-Leninist theology should not be considered as a rigid, perfect and inviolable. By contrast, it should be creatively applied and further developed in all respects. As Lenin said: We never expect that Marx or Marxists have had an insight in all aspects of the way towards socialism. That's too irrational. We only know the direction of the way. But in fact, how that way will be followed is reflected in the experience of millions of people when they start the journey.

THE ROLE OF PARTY LEADERSHIP IN THE NATIONAL RENEWAL CAUSE¹

One of the big lessons in the renovation process of Việt Nam is to keep and renovate the Party's leadership, and consider Party building to be the core issue. Unlike the Communist Parties in the (former) Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, the Communist Party of Việt Nam (CPV) does not underestimate the leadership of the Party during the renovation period. On the contrary, it always pays attention to Party building and its sound leadership. The more Việt Nam renovates, the more attention the CPV pays to Party building, and the improvement of its role and leadership capability. The 6th Party Congress (December 1986) confirmed: "It's necessary to build the Party to meet the political demand of a ruling Party in the socialist revolution."²

After the 6th Party Congress, with the motto of "renovating the way of thinking, the organization, staff, and working style", Party committees of various levels started to carry out the task of Party building. The Politburo issued Resolution 4 on "*Purifying the Party, the Government and Creating Healthy Social Relationships*." The Party Central Committee promulgated Resolution 5 on "*Some Urgent Tasks in Party Building*." The 6th Plenum of the Party Central Committee (March 1989) drew up five leading principles in the renovation period, based on the summation of the two-year implementation of the resolutions of the 6th Party Congress, which emphasized the decisive significance of Party leadership and criticized the idea of denying or underestimating it. At this plenum,

1 Article from the book *Có một Việt Nam như thế - đổi mới và phát triển* (There is such Việt Nam - Renovation and Development), National Political Publishing House, Hà Nội, 1997.

2 Communist Party of Việt Nam: *Complete Collection of Party Documents*, National Political Publishing House, Hà Nội, 2006, pp. 364-365.

the Party Central Committee criticized and rejected the thought of "pluralism or a multi-Party system" and confirmed that Việt Nam would have only one leading Party: the Communist Party of Việt Nam. Two successive plenums (the 7th and the 8th ones) also discussed the ideological work of the Party. The 7th Party Congress (June 1991) approved the political program, which underlined the course of action for Party building during the renovation period.

After the 7th Party Congress, the Party Central Committee continued to direct the work of Party building, especially by summarizing the reality, researching the theory in order to supplement, develop, and improve the political program, criticize and rectify the ideological errors to create a unified and stable political view among Party ranks and the masses. Moreover, it also focused on correcting the implementation of the democratic centralism principle, training cadres and renew the work on cadres, and renovating the leadership and working styles.

The Politburo's Resolution 1 on "*Theoretical Work in The Current Period*" (early 1992), the Politburo's Resolution 9 on "*Major Guidelines in Ideological Work*" (early 1995), and especially the Resolution of the 3rd Plenum of the Party Central Committee (7th tenure) on "*Party Building*" (June 1992) thoroughly grasped and implemented the proposed guideline, leading to new changes in Party building. A series of documents from the Politburo and the Secretariat detailed the implementation of the adopted resolutions and the Resolution of the 3rd Plenum of the Party Central Committee (7th tenure). Executive committees and Party organizations at all levels spent a lot of time and efforts on this mission.

Implementing the resolution of the 7th Party Congress, from 1992 to 1996, the Politburo summarized the task of Party building during the 1975-1995 period in five main fields: politics, ideology, organization, membership development, and renovation of the leadership mode. The summation was serious and meticulous with the participation of many leaders and researchers.

After the 8th Congress (June 1996), the 3rd Plenum of the Party Central Committee (June 1997) issued a resolution on cadre development strategy in the industrialization and modernization period, pointing out five leading ideas in the strategy. The 5th Plenum

and especially the 6th Plenum of the Party Central Committee (2nd time) in October 1998 decided to expand the movement of Party building and rectification, and to speed up the struggle against bureaucracy, corruption, and degradation in political ideology, morality, and lifestyle. The 7th Plenum of the Party Central Committee (August 1999) issued a resolution on the rectification of the Party and the whole political system.

The 9th Party Congress (April 2001), the first one in the 21st century, generally reviewed the process of Vietnamese revolution during the 20th century, pointed out the lessons learned after 15 years of renovation, worked out a strategy for national development with the general direction of "Promoting the nation's strength, continuing renovation, speeding up industrialization and modernization, and constructing and safeguarding the socialist society." The Congress also evaluated deeply and comprehensively the role and the content of Hồ Chí Minh Thought.

After the 9th Congress, the 4th, 5th, and 9th Plenums of the Party Central Committee, among others, continued to issue resolutions and conclusions on the promotion of Party building; fight against corruption, consolidation of ideological, theoretical work; renovation and development of the political system at grassroots levels; training, retraining, reshuffling cadres and improving people mobilization work.

Noticeably, besides the close guidance of the Party Central Committee, strict operation of the executive committees and Party organizations, there emerged positive feedback and contribution from the masses, cadres, and Party members. Never before have they ever paid attention to Party building like this. There were a lot of ideas that contributed to the draft proposals, instructions, and resolutions of the Party and the organization and the personnel after each Party Congress. Some people worried about the degradation of a section of cadres and Party members; some others were anxious about the corruption and the "peaceful evolution" plot of hostile forces. More importantly, all the resolutions and decisions of the Party were implemented with practical and specific actions in order to contribute to Party construction and record great achievements in the renovation of the country.

It can be said that all the achievements and drawbacks of the country's renovation process are closely related to the leadership and the activities of the Party. They are key factors leading to the achievements during the renovation process. At the same time, the Party recognizes its shortcomings and puts forth proper measurements to cope with them.

During the renovation process in Việt Nam, we can see some important achievements in Party building.

First, the most important and fundamental achievement is that the Party has defined and gradually supplemented and improved the renovation policy in a sound and creative way, thus shaping more clearly the path to socialism in Việt Nam.

It is clear that the political line plays the most important task in Party building. It is because the political line points out the objective, direction, and fundamental solutions of the revolution and the nature of the Party. It is the flag which helps gather and encourage the masses; it also decides the destiny of the Party and the nation.

In the national democratic revolution, the Vietnamese Communist Party devised the right political line, which reflected its consistent strategy, keen and flexible tactics, and diversified and creative revolutionary methods. This is the most important factor, which decided all the victories of the Vietnamese revolution.

After national unification, the Vietnamese Communist Party made the right decision to lead the whole country to socialism. The 4th Party Congress put forward the general guideline for socialist revolution in the whole country, defined foreign policy and other important policies. When defining these policies, the Vietnamese Communist Party tried to apply and develop Marxism and Leninism and Hồ Chí Minh Thought to the reality of the Vietnamese revolution in the new situation, and develop a socialist revolutionary policy, which had been set at the 3rd Party Congress, and then supplemented during its implementation.

However, Việt Nam made some mistakes in designing specific models and in the organization for their implementation. These mistakes were evaluated at the 6th Party Congress as "serious and

long-lasting mistakes regarding the major policies, the strategic direction and implementation". The reasons accounting for these mistakes are subjectivism, voluntarism, simplification, impatience in regard to thinking and actions, disrespect of natural laws, wrong awareness of the real situation of Vietnamese society, lack of democracy, and disregard of the public's opinions. Moreover, some leaders were so obsessed with the victory in the liberation of the South that they were not keen on analyzing the situation and unable to predict the difficulties in the processes of economic development.

Following the partial renovation, the Party set forth the plan for complete renovation at the 6th Congress, which marked the milestone in the Party's awareness of socialism and the transitional period to socialism in our country.

The 6th Congress concretized the new standpoint on the economic structure, and socialist industrialization in the initial period, and then put forward the policy that focused on "three major economic programs." The Congress showed a new view on socialist renovation as a regular, long, and continuous process with suitable steps and forms, and realized that even when socialist production relations prevailed, there could be the existence of other sectors, such as small-scale production and private economic sector to a limited extent. The Congress also admitted the objective existence of commodity production and market. The centralized subsidiary regime was strictly criticized and replaced with self-accounting business system.

The Congress launched on develop economic reform compatible with the mode of production. In distribution, it was important to combine the interests of three players: the individual, collective, and society. Social problems were also put in a new perspective in which attention was paid not only to social welfare, but also to comprehensive care for humans and bringing into play the human factor.

The resolution of the 6th Congress was translated into life via the resolutions of various Party Central Committee plenums and Politburo meetings. It is noticeable that the 6th Plenum of the Party Central Committee (March 1989) specified and developed many ideas of the 6th Party Congress and helped perfect some fundamental renovation ideas of the Party, and quickly rectified the erroneous

perception and ideological thinking to confirm some leading principles in the renovation process.

The 7th Party Congress took place in June 1991, when socialism in the Eastern European countries had collapsed and the Soviet Union was on the verge of break-up. By that time, Việt Nam had gained some important initial achievements in the renovation process, but the country still did not come out of the social and economic crisis. When the Soviet Union collapsed, a part of the population and Party members showed signs of fluctuation, some even wanted to change the social structure in the country. Hostile forces took this opportunity to attack the socialist revolution of Việt Nam. Based on the summary of the implementation of the comprehensive renovation policy since the 6th Party Congress, the 7th Party Congress ratified the Program for building the country in the transitional period to socialism and the Strategy for socio-economic stabilization and development up to 2000 and the amended Party statutes. At its 7th Congress, the Party confirmed the determination to build Việt Nam into a socialist country and defined six characteristics of the Vietnamese socialist society, in addition to seven leading principles in the process of moving towards socialism in the transitional period. Moreover, the Party also defined major orientations for the economic policy and the renovation of the political system to promote socialist democracy.

After the 7th Congress, the Party Central Committee and the Politburo continued to promulgate resolutions to supplement, develop and concretize the fundamental views and lines mentioned in the Program and Strategy. Among them included the resolution of the 3rd Plenum of the Party Central Committee (June 1992) on national defense and security, and foreign policy, the resolution of the 4th Plenum of the Party Central Committee (November 1992) on social welfare, the resolution of the 5th Plenum of the Party Central Committee (June 1993) on agricultural development and building new rural areas, the resolution of the 7th Plenum of the Party Central Committee (July 1994) on pushing ahead the process of industrialization and modernization, the resolution of the 2nd Plenum of the Party Central Committee (December 1991) and that of the 8th Plenum of the Party Central

Committee (January 1995) on construction and perfection of the Government apparatus.

The mid-term congress of the Party (January 1994) reviewed the two-year implementation of the resolution of the 7th Congress, summarized the renovation process and set forth measures to speed up renovation. Specifically, the Congress pointed out four risks: further economic lag, deviation from socialism, corruption and bureaucracy, and "peaceful evolution" scheme of the hostile forces. It also noted some fundamental advantages: the right guideline of the Vietnamese Communist Party, the intelligent and hard-working Vietnamese people, Việt Nam's new standing and strength, and the development of technology and the worldwide scientific revolution. Based on the evaluation of these risks and advantages, the Party set forth the policy to help the country move to a new development period – a period of industrialization and modernization.

The 8th Party Congress (June 1996) confirmed that Việt Nam had finally got out of the socio-economic crisis and continued to clarify the concept of the initial stage, the next stage in the transitional period, and then specified the target of speeding up national industrialization and modernization to make Việt Nam a basically industrialized country by 2020. The plenums of the Party Central Committee (8th tenure) continued to further clarify the socialist orientation in the development of a multi-sector economy and the building of a socialist law-governed state of the people, by the people and for the people. The Party also confirmed that the development of education, training, science, and technology was the prioritized national policy, the breakthrough factor in the industrialization and modernization process; and the development of culture as the spiritual basis for society and the target and driving force for socio-economic development.

The 9th Party Congress (April 2001) ratified the strategy for socio-economic development in the first two decades of the 21st century, and confirmed the development of the socialist-oriented market economy, which was considered to be a general economic model for the whole transitional process. Moreover, the Congress confirmed that Việt Nam would continue their independent, open,

and multilateral foreign relation policy. Other plenums of the Party Central Committee (9th tenure) specified and developed the view of developing a multi-sector economy, renovating and improving the effectiveness of the state-owned and collective economic sectors, encouraging the development of the private economic sector, speeding the industrialization of agriculture and modernization of the rural areas, strengthening national solidarity, promoting democracy, renovating the operation of the political system and carrying out the strategy for national security in the new situation and so on.

It can be said that the time from the 6th Congress until now is the period of formation and gradual development of the renovation policy of the Party in which the Party had newer and sounder perception of socialism and the way to socialism in Việt Nam.

It is difficult to have sound policies in a normal situation. It is even more difficult to have sound political lines and ensure they are implemented successfully, especially at historic turning points in a complicated and fast-changing context both inside and outside the country. These political lines are the result of brainpower, talent and dignity, which must go through a long period of thinking and searching to renovate our theoretical thinking, summarize the reality, readiness for trials and errors, even to face temporary failures. In fact, the Vietnamese Communist Party made some mistakes. However, it did not conceal these mistakes, but publicly admitted them and sincerely listened to the public's opinion to correct them.

The reasons why the Party could realize its mistakes and work out new sound guidelines:

- The Party is absolutely loyal to the interests of the working class and of the nation. It is also persistent with the target of national independence and socialism without changing its ideology and organization principles. It also maintained the principle of renovation, but did not deny its tradition and revolutionary past. It did not compromise on its principles, and combined the persistence of strategy with the flexibility of tactics and the creative methods.

- The Party grasps, creatively applies, and develops Marxism-Leninism and Hồ Chí Minh Thought; inherits and brings into play

the nation's tradition and is open to acquire the cultural quintessence of mankind.

- The Party closely follows reality, pays attention to theoretical research and combines theory with practice. It pays special attention to new factors and supports them.

- The Party promotes democracy and brings into play the intelligence of the whole Party ranks and the people. It can be said that the success in correcting the mistakes and defining the right renovation way mostly resulted from the fact that the Party is always determined to uphold the principle of regular meetings, ensuring democracy in the Party and society. The Party also listens to the opinions of cadres, Party members and the masses without being subjective and self-satisfied.

Second, the Party has confirmed that Hồ Chí Minh Thought and Marxism-Leninism are the ideological foundations and the guidelines for all of its actions. At the turning points in the revolution and facing the complicated changes of the reality, the Party has timely put forth appropriate political directions, correcting the wrong ones, combating against the hostile allegations, thus creating the ideological unification in the Party and the masses.

Hồ Chí Minh Thought is the result of the creative application and development of Marxism and Leninism to the reality of Việt Nam. It is the crystalization of the quintessence of Vietnamese culture and harmonious combination of the progressive thought of other countries, both in the East and the West, of the world. Hồ Chí Minh Thought has become a valuable spiritual asset of the Party and the nation. The assertion of Hồ Chí Minh Thought as the ideological foundation proves the development of theoretical thinking of the Vietnamese Communist Party suits reality and meets the expectations of the Party ranks and the masses, and helps foster creative thinking during socialism construction in the real condition of Việt Nam.

A lot of research on Hồ Chí Minh Thought has been done in various aspects such as his thought on national, social and human emancipation; on the combination of national independence and

socialism; on revolutionary methods to mobilize all forces in the great national solidarity bloc; on the art of using strategy and tactics; on building a people's government; on people mobilization; on the economy, culture, and the military; on revolutionary morality and work style, and so on. The publication of these researches and other activities on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of Hồ Chí Minh's birthday, the activity to promote the revolutionary tradition and to popularize his thought and morality all contributed to make cadres, Party members and the masses further understand and follow Hồ Chí Minh Thought.

In the beginning years of the renovation, some Party members wanted to copy the renovation model of foreign countries, especially in politics, the economy, press, and culture. There emerged tendencies which demanded "democracy, openness" in an extreme way; denial of the past while painting a gloomy picture of the present; quick change to the market economy regime with complete privatization and commercialism of the press and publishing sector. These tendencies were timely stopped and revamped. The instructions and resolutions of the Party Central Committee, the Politburo and Secretariat shaped the views in the Party and society. In fact, there was a wide and deep ideological struggle to renovate and determine the socialist orientation.

Regarding the ideological work, alongside with regular education, it is necessary for the Party to have timely ideological directions at turning points in the revolution. At certain critical time during the revolution, a number of Party members and the masses may have negative feelings. Some documents such as the conclusion of three viewpoints of the Politburo on economic development before the 6th Party Congress, Conclusion 20 of the Politburo on some issues of the ideological work, Resolutions of the 6th, 7th, 8th Plenums of the Party Central Committee (6th tenure), Conclusion of the Politburo (7th tenure) on the collapse of the Soviet Union, the timely settlement of political fluctuation, and resolutions of various plenums of the Party Central Committee and the Politburo of the following tenures, provide important direction for ideological education. On the other hand, the success of the renovation process constitutes the foundation and important driving force for

ideological education, and help increase the ideological unity in the Party and the masses.

In general, ideological education has contributed to changing the way of our thinking, and raising our awareness of the renovation process on the basis of the persistence to follow the path of socialism, national independence and self-reliance. Moreover, it also timely encourages the achievements of the renovation process, and initiatives of the masses; fights against distorting allegations; overcomes negative and doubtful feelings and increases the belief of the masses in the leadership of the Party.

Third, it is necessary to uphold the principle of democratic centralism, of collective leadership, and individual responsibility. Progress in carrying out democratic principle in the Party and in society should be made.

In the circumstance that some communist parties and workers' parties in the world gave up or lowered the principle of democratic centralism, and in the context of mechanism changing in Việt Nam, democratic centralism was also challenged. Yet, the Vietnamese Communist Party was determined to follow this principle. Many resolutions of the Party emphasized that upholding this principle in the Party organization and activity was one of the standards of a true Marxist-Leninist party.

In reality, during the process of policy-making, preparation and issuance of resolutions and guidelines, the Vietnamese Communist Party always brings into play the collective intelligence of Party executive committees, listens to opinions from cadres, Party members and the masses, summarizes the experiences from the grassroots levels, and stirs up the creative potential in the Party and the masses.

Progress has been made in the construction and implementation of the norms, and procedures for cadre evaluation, appointment, promotion, election, commendation and punishment to ensure the collective and democratic principle in making decisions related to cadres.

The regular activities of Party committees from central to grassroots levels must be maintained. In general, before a meeting

of a Party committee, important content is informed, and during the meetings, parts or whole of the resolution are openly discussed and voted. Important and controversial issues are usually discussed and balloted. The principle of collective leadership and individual responsibility is duly paid attention to. The Politburo, the Secretariat and various Party committees have improved the quality of self-criticism and criticism towards the committee as a whole and each committee member.

In the promotion of democracy in society, the Party has paid special attention to the renovation of the election mechanism and the promotion of democracy in the National Assembly, people's councils, socio-political organizations and governments at all levels, and the implementation of the principle for democracy at grassroots level on the basis of the motto "the people know, discuss, carry out and check." Based on the Program for National Construction in the Transitional Period to Socialism, the Constitution and many important laws have been amended, such as the Law on the renovation of government systems, Civil Code, Land Law, Labor Code, State-owned Enterprise Law, Domestic Investment Laws, among others; the reform of the national administration system has been expedited, and the socialist law-governed State of Việt Nam continues to be constructed. In the government agencies at all levels, the principle of democracy has been promoted and discipline and efficiency improved. The content and mode of operation in the Fatherland Front, people's associations, and social organizations have been improved to increase efficiency. The people's mastery right in the economy, politics, ideology and culture is promoted. Ethnic minority people and those of different walks of life have become more united in the common task of striving for Việt Nam to turn into a strong country, a wealthy people, an equitable, democratic and civilized society. Overseas Vietnamese people take more and more part in the effort to achieve this common goal.

Nowadays, the people's democratic rights can be clearly felt. All people are free to do business legally, free to take part in social activities, to vote, to run for election, to nominate, to contribute opinions to the policies of the Party and the State. The mass media and cultural activities have enjoyed conditions for development;

people have the chance to assess diversified and multi-dimensional information, to develop creativity, to criticize publicly and to fight against social evils. Many Party and State organizations usually carry out surveys to collect opinion of the public and encourage them to take part in the country's activities.

Experience shows that if we want democracy, there needs to be a diversity of practical, interesting and suitable means in parallel with the intellectual level of the masses and tradition of the country. It is also important to raise the political awareness among Party members, the law-obedient sense of citizens and gradually supplement and complete the laws, regulations, and mechanisms to protect the democratic rights of Party members and citizens, fight against the extreme tendency which takes advantage of democracy to spread wrong viewpoints, factions, indiscipline, as well as fight against bureaucracy and formalistic democracy.

Fourth, the renovation of organization and cadres should be pushed ahead, the intellect and combativeness of Party members increased, the decline and weakness of several Party organizations prevented, and initial renovation in management method and working style made.

In implementation of the resolutions of the Party Centre Committee and the Politburo, many Party committees set forth policies to renovate and revamp Party organizations alongside with the policies on socio-economic development and the strengthening of the political system. The organization system of the Party and agencies in the political system from central to grassroots levels have been duly paid attention to, meeting the requirements of reality and the renovation process.

Alongside with regular meetings, Party committees at all levels have been consolidated; Party committees and bodies for public services at central, provincial and district levels streamlined. The functions and tasks of Party committees have been made clear; cadres have been appointed and supplemented, and the working agenda and style built.

The content, organization and operation mode of State agencies have been renovated in order to build a law-governed

State "of the people, by the people and for the people." The old organizational model and management mechanism have been gradually replaced with the new ones. Some ministries and ministerial-level agencies have been streamlined. The national administration has been reformed in the direction of building government management bodies, reducing direct management over production and business units. The organizational structure has been reformed to introduce knowledgeable and experienced candidates to elective posts to increase the role of the National Assembly and judicial offices as well as strengthen management of the State and society by laws. State agencies of different levels have also been streamlined.

In 1992, based on the resolution of the 3rd Plenum of the Party Central Committee (7th tenure), the Government's Party Personnel Bureau was established. Party Personnel Bureaus in the ministries and agencies of the government and some big corporations were also formed; Party member groups in elective offices and associations have been consolidated, ensuring the principle of Party leadership through organization. After their establishment, many Party member groups and Party Personnel Bureaus have worked effectively.

Alongside with the reorganization of the mechanism, Việt Nam has also changed and relocated many cadres to meet the requirement of the new management mechanism in the market economy. Besides the senior cadres with experience and political mettle, the Party has paid attention to training and using young, active, bold cadres with scientific, economical, legal, and business knowledge.

The evaluation and employment of cadres should depend not only on their curriculum vitae, background, qualifications, and working experience, but also on other aspects, especially the effectiveness of their work. Some principles have been reconfirmed; some regulations and procedures have been promulgated and administrated in a more democratic way. The pool of cadres features a mixture of different ages and experiences.

In general, during the renovation years, the criteria in selecting, training and allocating key leaders for different levels, sectors, Party organizations, and State offices has been paid attention to, so that

they can meet the demand of the political tasks. The achievements of the renovation process have proved that Việt Nam owns a pool of efficient cadres, meeting the requirements of the revolution in the new period.

Việt Nam has also made progress in the knowledge, ability and competence of economic and social management. The number of cadres with a university degree and higher is increasing to meet the demand of the market economy. Despite their difficult livelihood and negative influences from society, the majority of them still maintain a wholesome lifestyle and interest in the common cause.

The renovation and reorganization process has also brought about positive changes in the Party organizations. Especially, the leadership ability of Party executive committees has been improved, leading to higher consensus on political ideas, and correcting the situation of loose Party activities. Many Party organizations have effectively led the fulfillment of political tasks at the grassroots level, especially the tasks of economic development, improvement of the people's living standard, hunger eradication and poverty reduction, and care for members of the families having rendered services to the country. The responsibility of cadres and Party members has been improved.

The Vietnamese Communist Party pays attention to educating, fostering, improving, and developing the pool of Party members. Party Committees and organizations at all levels spend time inspecting and analyzing Party members to improve their quality, assigning tasks and specific responsibilities for Party members in residential areas, taking charge of households, businesses, mass organizations and associations. The proportion of Party members who are assigned tasks in different areas has increased. Some old and weak Party members have been spared from some responsibilities or Party activities on a voluntary basis.

The development of Party membership has been paid attention to, and witnessed positive changes. Since the implementation of the resolution of the 3rd Plenum of the Party Central Committee (7th tenure), the number of Party members has constantly increased, thus checking the decline in the newly-admitted membership in

the 1988-1992 period. The number of hamlets, villages without any Party members for a long time has decreased. In many areas, Party members are encouraged to improve their knowledge of many areas through complementary classes, courses of political theory, economic management, and foreign languages. The awareness of the need for further training among Party members, especially the young ones in some areas has increased. The Party's bulletins and newspapers have been delivered more frequently to Party organizations of all levels.

During the transition period from the old mechanism to the new one, together with the comprehensive and profound socio-economic changes and the development of socialist democracy, the Party has faced challenges to further renovate its leadership mode and content to gradually build a Vietnamese socialist law-governed State of the people, by the people and for the people. At the 6th Plenum of the Party Central Committee (6th tenure) in 1989, the Vietnamese Communist Party put forward renovation ideas to change the operation mode of the political system to suit the new condition. Fundamental directions were formed for the renovation of the Party's leadership content and mode in the context of a ruling Party. The 7th Congress confirmed these directions and put them in its political program and regulations. The following Party congresses and plenums of the Party Central Committee continued to concretize these guiding directions.

Reality has proved that the leadership mode and content of the Party is effective. The Party has effectively and unanimously led the State and mass organizations. The practice of taking too many or too few responsibilities has decreased; State offices' active management role, organizations' creativity and initiative, and the public's activeness have been improved. Party organizations have improved the quality of their decisions, renovated the process of decision-making and renovating the working style to promote democracy, individual responsibility, and consolidate the principles in Party organization and activities. The tasks of economic development, political stability, renovation and reorganization of the Party and the effectiveness of State management have been prioritized.

Besides the above-mentioned achievements, there still exist drawbacks in the task of Party building as follows:

1. Under the negative influence of the market economy and the sabotage of hostile forces, a section of cadres and Party members show degradation in political attitude, morality and lifestyle. These are signs of the fluctuating and disbelieving in socialism and Party leadership, decreasing the will for the struggle, longing for an opportunistic and materialistic lifestyle, taking advantage of their position and the weakness of the mechanism to embezzle public property for their own interests. Some embezzlement and smuggling cases have organized into networks. The gap between the rich and the poor exists among cadres and Party members; the number of unusually enriched people is increasing. In some places, the individual benefit is put higher than the common one; local benefit is considered more important than that of the country. Some people are becoming rich so fast and are being questioned or accused of their acquisition of property.

The Party is unprepared for the transition and does not pay enough attention to the education about morality. Many organizations have slacked in the education, training, and management of Party members and seem to focus on the one-sided material benefit and forget about cultivating the ideology and the sense of sacrifice. Many Party members themselves do not pay attention to self-perfection; they just long for material gains and make their fortune, even illegally. Some are blatantly ambitious, envious, partial, patriarchal, conservative, undisciplined, arbitrary, and ignorant of the Party regulations. Particularly, some are so dissatisfied that they betray the ideals of the Party and the interests of the masses. The number of Party members with political degradation is small, but their activities have caused serious consequences.

The above-mentioned negative actions of some Party members have eroded the reputation and prestige of the Party and raised concern among other Party members and the masses. The nature of the Party faces severe challenges.

2. The knowledge and management ability of Party members shows aspects where they do not keep pace with the requirement of the renovation. Generally, leaders and managers at all levels lack

the knowledge of many aspects, especially knowledge of economic management, and State administration; most of them have taken in-service courses. The academic standard of the key leaders in remote areas is low. During the transition to the market economy, there is lack of cadres with business management ability or knowledge of foreign trade and laws. We also do not have enough specialists in scientific and theoretical fields.

Many issues related to theory and practice have not been clarified, especially those of the socialist-oriented market economy; specific models of State-owned, collective and private economies; building a socialist law-governed State, the mode of Party leadership; the organization of administrative agencies and business management offices; the renovation of the content and operation mode of some associations.

3. Party organizations in many places are weak and dilapidated with clumsy leadership, lacking democracy, and discipline. Some cadres and Party committee leaders are conservative and patriarchal and do not respect and follow the democratic centralism principle; in some organizations, there is serious internal division. The structure of Party and State agencies and mass organizations is still cumbersome with many intermediary links, leading to their ineffectiveness.

The establishment of Party cells and mass organizations in private businesses and joint-ventures is slower than the development of this economic sector. The task of developing Party membership cannot yet meet the demand. Young Party members (under 30) are few, while the number of members who are retired is increasing. The average age of Party members is getting higher while the education, training and attraction of new members is still not effective.

One major problem in the cadre-related work is that the strategy for building up a pool of cadres for revolutionary tasks in the new period is not yet effectively implemented. Some policies, strategies and procedures are still based on routine. Forecast for the preparation of cadres in the new period is not made while a lot of time is spent on specific tasks. The lack of cadres is caused by a lack of preparation and partly by unsuitable approaches and selection methods and unclear responsibility in selection and appointment.

4. The inspection work is not paid enough attention to, and remains one of the weak points, especially the checking of the implementation of Party policies and resolutions, and the implementation of the Party's regulations. The drawback in the inspection work is that it has failed to closely follow the implementation of the Party's guidelines and policies and the State laws, as well as the fight against corruption, smuggling, wastefulness and bureaucracy. Many Party committee leaders carry out inspection tasks just by relying on reports, so they do not have a thorough understanding of the situation and rarely discover mistakes. Many Party committee leaders just pay attention to checking the lower level while forgetting about checking the same level, and do not have methods to prevent corruption and bureaucracy. Discipline is not strict, fair, and timely ensured, especially toward senior cadres. The number of people who violated the law is high. Some cases in which people seriously violated the regulations were not dealt with appropriately, while some others were treated too strictly.

Looking back on both the achievements and drawbacks of Party building and the whole renovation process, we can come to the following conclusions:

The success of the renovation process depends on the mettle, talent, and leadership ability of the Party. Therefore, it is necessary to uphold and strengthen the leadership of the Party and frequently pay attention to Party building. In reality, the sound and creative leadership of the Party is the key factor in the success of the renovation process. With its stable political mettle, firm revolutionary attitude, spirit of independence and creativity, the Party continues to uphold and promote the glorious national tradition, persevere in the target of national independence and socialism, grasp and review creative activities of the masses and timely define correct policies to promote the potential of the people.

It is a rule to persevere in Party leadership because it is the key factor in ensuring socialist orientation in the market economy and other social activities. Without the Communist Party's leadership, there will be no socialism. The leadership of the Party is always important, especially more so in the transitional period. This can

help explain the fact that during the past decades, especially the past few years, anti-communist forces have continuously attacked the Communist Party, supported the development of "a free market economy," "privatization," "pluralism and multi-Party system" and tried to abolish socialism and Party leadership.

In this current period, given many new and complicated tasks and the sabotage of hostile forces, Việt Nam needs to be more firm about this issue. It is necessary to fight against wrong conception and false allegations to uphold and improve Party leadership.

However, to be able to lead the revolution effectively, it is essential for the Party to renovate itself and reorganize frequently in order to improve its leadership and combativeness capability. Frequent renovation and reorganization are also a rule for the existence and development of the Party. Only by paying enough attention to its building, renovation and reorganization can the Party improve its combativeness and ensure the success of the renovation process and the right path for the nation.

During self-renovation and reorganization, the Party needs to hold fast to the direction and principle of being consistent and creative in developing the fundamental principles of Marxism-Leninism and Hồ Chí Minh Thought on Party building and fight against conservatism, opportunism and extremism. It is also important not to deny the achievements of the past, not to fluctuate over main principles, not to mistake the strategy for the tactics, and be firm but creative in conformity with the reality in Việt Nam.

The renovation and reorganization of the Party aims at building and protecting it to ensure the effectiveness of the political tasks, especially the socio-economic development, industrialization, modernization of the country, stability of the political situation, independence and socialism in Việt Nam. Therefore, the renovation and reorganization of the Party must link with the renovation of other aspects of the economy and society, firstly with the implementation and perfection of the policies and management mechanisms, consolidation of the political system, revolutionary movements of the masses, and the promotion of the people's creativity.

BUILDING A RULING PARTY: FROM THE REALITIES OF THE RENOVATION IN VIỆT NAM¹

Building a ruling party is a broad issue of theoretical and practical significance, but it is also difficult and complicated. Over the past years, in Việt Nam, many studies on this issue have been conducted and achieved certain results. However, further research should be carried out to find the satisfactory answers to the following questions: “What is a ruling party?”; “Is a party an agency of power?”; “Are the Party and State two parallel power systems?”; “What is the difference between being the ruling party in a single-party state and that in a multi-party one?”; “What is the difference between the ruling party in a socialist country and that in a capitalist one?”; “What should be done to make a party increasingly transparent and strong and to avoid the risks of a ruling party, especially in the conditions of the development of the market economy and the implementation of the open-door policy and international economic integration?” The 9th Congress of the Vietnamese Communist Party stated: Besides strengths and achievements, weaknesses and shortcomings have still existed in both theoretical and practical aspects of Party building in the past years, including the “failure to delve into the clarification of the characteristics of and requirements for the leadership of the Party as a ruling party.”

In such a context, the study of this issue is of great significance. The building of a ruling party has actually taken place in Việt Nam in the recent years of renovation with the following features:

A party is a political organization of people who are animated by the same sense of purpose which is to voluntarily struggle for

¹ Article in the *Cộng sản* (The Communist) Review, Issue 5, March 2004.

the sake of a certain class or stratum. Such terms as “ruling party and “power-assuming party” have been used for a long time in Western countries to refer to the role, position, and responsibility of a party in power. They help differentiate a party in power from one which is not in power, has not seized power, or remains in opposition. In a society including many classes or strata, there may be one or more than one party; some are in power and some are not. Depending on its specific conditions and the balance of forces in it, a country may be led by a party or a coalition of parties at a time. A ruling party is one that leads and controls the government so that all of the government’s activities reflect and realize its ideas and guidelines, for the sake of the class or stratum it represents.

The issue of ruling party was raised quite early in the former socialist countries. Before the Russian Revolution (1917), Vladimir Ilyich Lenin said that the Russian Bolshevik Party would “be ready at any time to hold power.” After the Revolution, the Russian Bolshevik, and later the Soviet Communist Party, became the ruling party and made considerable contributions to the revolutionary cause of the Soviet people in particular and the world people in general. On 27 March 1922, in the Political Report of the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party, Lenin, for the first time, proposed the concept of “ruling Communist Party” and stated that there was only “one ruling party” in Russian. Later on, the concept of “ruling party” was used repeatedly in many documents of the Soviet Communist Party.

However, the concept of “ruling party” had been misunderstood for a long time in the Soviet Union and many other socialist countries due to the theoretical and practical ambiguity. This led to many inappropriate behaviors, especially in the relationship between the Party’s leadership and the State’s management role. Besides the loose leadership of the Party, many negative phenomena occurred, such as the Party undertook the government’s tasks. It was so occupied with the tasks which should have been done by the State and economic organizations that it nearly became an agency of power and stood above the State.

Being aware of this mistake, in the 1980s, the Soviet Communist Party decided to renovate its method of leadership, struggle against making administrative its tasks, and stop itself from undertaking the State tasks. It was a right policy.

In Việt Nam, after the August 1945 Revolution, the Vietnamese Communist Party became the ruling party. President Hồ Chí Minh repeatedly stated, "Ours is the ruling party." It did not come naturally, but it was the result of the Vietnamese Communist Party and people's revolutionary struggle that had lasted for years. The Vietnamese Communist Party was established in 1930. However, it took the Party 15 years later, with the sacrifices of many cadres, Party members, and people, to seize power. Then after the following 30 years of bravely fighting in hardship, the Vietnamese people totally liberated the country and the Vietnamese Communist Party became the ruling party in a united country, leading it to socialism. The achievements that the Vietnamese people gained under the leadership of the Party make them realize clearly that only the Vietnamese Communist Party can lead the Vietnamese people to a life of prosperity, freedom, and happiness; that the people's interests are closely attached to the Party's cause; and that the Party's goals and ideas are coincidental with the people's wishes and aspirations. Today, as a ruling party, the Vietnamese Communist Party is fully aware of its responsibility to the country. Accordingly, it should work out the right guideline for national construction and development as the foundation for promoting the collective strength of the whole political system and society, organize the successful implementation of that policy, define correctly the Party's operation content and method, promote its advantages, limit its difficulties, and prevent and overcome the risks of a leading party.

A ruling party is a party that leads the whole society and use the machinery of government to gather and promote the strength of the whole people so that its view plays the decisive role in social development, and its goals and guidelines are implemented throughout society. Besides, it should be responsible before the people. As President Hồ Chí Minh put it, the Party should take charge of not only big things like economic and cultural changes

but also small things like the people's daily necessities. As a ruling party, the Party has the conditions to represent the interests of its class—the working class and those of the laboring people and become the political vanguard of the whole nation. It is important and decisive that the Party should always keep its revolutionary and scientific nature, protect itself from degeneration, and have the right leadership method.

The leadership of the Vietnamese Communist Party is repeatedly tested and confirmed in the cause of national renovation. The country is facing a lot of difficulties and the world is undergoing extremely complicated changes. In this context, the Party is still persistent on the revolutionary goals, holding fast to the spirit of independence, self-reliance, and creativity. The Party has led the people into the renovation and achieved initial results as follows: the economy has incessantly developed, the socio-political situation has been stabilized, foreign relations have been widened, and the people's living standards have been obviously improved. These achievements are of great significance. On the one hand, the Party's leadership is one of the determinants of the renovation's achievements. On the other hand, it is in the process of renovation that the Party becomes increasingly mature and aware of its weaknesses and shortcomings to have measures to overcome them and keep moving forward.

From the realities of the renovation for the past nearly 20 years in Việt Nam, it can be concluded that, a country in its renovation should hold on to the Party's leadership. At the same time, it should implement frequently and effectively Party building, renovation, and rectification. It is an issue of principle which determines the success of the renovation and the socialism-oriented development of the country. The deeper the country goes into renovation, the market economy, and open-door policy, the further it should maintain, reinforce, and renovate the Party's leadership. It should absolutely not equivocate or fluctuate about this issue. The 6th Party Congress (December 1986) firmly stated, "It is a must to build the Party with a political mission equal to that of a ruling party that leads the people into the implementation of a socialist

revolution.”¹ Shortly after the Congress, with the direction of “renovating the thinking, first of which is economic thinking, organization, staff, and the leading and working style,”² the Party’s executive committees and organizations implemented Party building extensively and intensively. Since 1987, the Party Central Committee and Politburo have issued 15 important resolutions on Party building and gave focused directions to this work. To implement the 7th Party Congress’s Resolution, from 1992 to 1996, the Politburo directed and carried out the summarization of the Party building work in the 1975–1995 period in the Party’s politics, thinking, organization, staff management, and mode of leadership, which practically served the direction of the Party building work. At the 9th Plenum of the 9th Party Central Committee, pursuant to the mid-term review of the implementation of the 9th Party Congress’s Resolution and the practical requirements, the Vietnamese Communist Party determined to give more focused and drastic directions to the Party building work in the next years to create more profound changes in this field; gradually check and overcome bureaucracy, corruption, and waste; improve the combat ability of the Party’s organizations; strengthen the Party’s staff; speed up the theoretical research and regular reality summarization; and renovate the Party’s leadership method.

In many resolutions, the Vietnamese Communist Party firmly stated that *Party building was the key and vital task of the whole revolutionary cause, and that the frequent renovations and rectifications were the laws of existence and development for the Party*. In Party building, it is necessary to incessantly hold firm to, and creatively develop the fundamental viewpoints of Marxism-Leninism and Hồ Chí Minh Thought. It is also vital to fight against the tendencies of conservatism, opportunism, and extremism. Renovation should not be understood as the denial of the past achievements, the fluctuation about the issues of principle, or the confusion of strategies and tactics.

1 Vietnamese Communist Party: *Văn kiện Đại hội Đảng thời kỳ đổi mới (Đại hội VI, VII, VIII, IX)* (Documents of the Party Congresses in the Period of Renovation (Sixth, Seventh, Eighth, and Ninth Party Congresses)), National Political Publishing House, Hà Nội, 2005, p. 30.

2 Ibid.

Besides, persistence in the issues of principle should be accompanied with ceaseless renovations and creations in accordance with the realities of Việt Nam.

One of the most important tasks in Party building in the period of renovation is *to promote the fine traditions and maintain the revolutionary and scientific nature of the Party*. This issue has attracted special attention from the Vietnamese Communist Party. As a ruling party in the conditions of developing the market economy, open-door policy, and international integration, the Party has both advantages and disadvantages. One of its disadvantages is the social environment with new complications. Many cadres and Party members in high positions have daily contact with many seductive things such as fame and wealth. Therefore, if no attention is paid to the education, maintenance, and promotion of the Party’s fine traditions and revolutionary nature, the Party will easily be degraded. It is an extremely fundamental issue to keep the Party from degradation so that it will be eternally a communist party and a truly revolutionary party that works for the sake of the working class, the laboring people, and the whole nation.

The fine traditions and the revolutionary and scientific nature refer to the nation’s patriotism and resilience in struggle, as well as the working class’s persistence, intelligence, altruism, and sense of strict organization. Maintaining and promoting the working-class nature means that the Party should hold firm to the view and stance of the working class; be absolutely loyal to the interests of the working class, the laboring people, and the whole nation; and incessantly strive for the goals of national independence and socialism. Despite any complications in the situation at home and in the world, the Party should not oscillate or diverge from those goals and ideals.

The Vietnamese Communist Party should always take Marxism-Leninism and Hồ Chí Minh Thought as the ideological foundations and guidelines of its actions. In the present context, it should be more steadfast to Marxism-Leninism and Hồ Chí Minh Thought; creatively apply these revolutionary and scientific theories in the specific context of Việt Nam to perfect its political

programs and policies; and complement, develop, and enrich these theories based on its summarization and generalization of the realities of its application.

The revolutionary and scientific nature requires the Party to be strictly organized; observe the principles of democratic centralism, collective leadership, individual responsibility, and regular criticism and self-criticism during operation; and maintain its solidarity and unity. Any manifestation of division, factionalism, or relaxed discipline is contrary to the Party's nature.

The Party is closely attached to the people and the nation. It leads the people into the building of the national united bloc; acts as the key force in that bloc; and incessantly fights against factionalism, localism, egoism, and dissociation.

The Party combines the inheritance and promotion of the nation's true patriotism and fine traditions with the reception of mankind's cultural quintessence.

In Việt Nam, the working-class nature is not contrary, but closely attached, to the national character. In other words, the working-class nature implies the national character; in return, the national character, mentioned in the present context with the Party's leadership, implies the working-class nature. The Vietnamese working class has ties of kindred with the peasantry in particular and the whole nation in general; the interests of the working class are similar to those of the laboring people and the whole nation. In reality, the Party has strived not only for the interests of the working class but also for those of the whole nation. It has not only incessantly maintained and improved its working-class nature but also learned from, received, and developed the national quintessence, traditions, and identities. It is the national traditions that have multiplied the Party's strength. President Hồ Chí Minh—the founder, leader, and trainer of the Vietnamese Communist Party, is an excellent representation of the unity between the class interests and national ones, between patriotism and socialism. He is not only the supreme leader of the Party but also that of the whole nation. Thus, the Vietnamese Communist Party can be said to be the political vanguard of the working class with the revolutionary

and scientific nature of this class. Simultaneously, it is the leading vanguard of the whole nation with the fine qualities of the nation. The combination of the working-class nature with the national quintessence and traditions makes up the special quality of the Vietnamese Communist Party.

The first noble and heavy responsibility of a ruling party is to work out right political programs and policies to lead the country and guide the people forward so that any risk of making mistakes in guidelines can be avoided. This is a vital issue in Party building. It requires the Party to frequently improve its political mettle, understanding, and theoretical work quality. A right political policy is one that reflects correctly the objective law; meets the requirements of reality; agrees with the people's aspiration; points out the targets, directions, and basic measures of the revolution; and thence gathers, organizes, and encourages the masses to follow those directions and implement those measures effectively to reach set targets.

In the process of national renovation, the Vietnamese Communist Party proposed and then gradually complemented, developed, and perfected the policy for renovation, shaping more and more clearly the road to socialism in Việt Nam. Following the partial and step-by-step renovations, the Party put forward a policy for comprehensive renovation at the 6th Congress (1986), approved the Political Program for National Construction in the Transitional Period to Socialism at the 7th Congress, and continuously made complements and developments at the following congresses. As a result, a system of viewpoints directing the renovation in Việt Nam has finally taken shape. It is the result of a process of researching and renovating the theoretical thinking, summarizing realities, widening democracy, promoting the Party's and people's brainpower, and grasping the issues emerging from life. While holding to the targets, ideals, and issues of principle, the Party always has a sense of frequently implementing renovations and creations; dares to give up the old things which are no long suitable in the economic, cultural, and social aspects, as well as in domestic and foreign affairs; settles effectively the relationship between the class and the nation, and that between the nation and the globe; widens

the national and international unity; and focuses all its strength on national construction and defense. In other words, the Vietnamese Communist Party always has a thorough understanding of the principle and method of dialectical materialism and protects itself from one-sidedness, extremism, or simply moving from one pole to another.

The improvement of understanding and vanguard spirit is organically related to the renovation and improvement of the quality of theoretical research and practical summarization, as well as the reinforcement and enhancement of the faith, mettle, and persistence with the revolutionary ideals among the cadres and Party members, including first and foremost the key leading cadres at different levels. Aware of this issue, the Party made a plan for the direction and organization of the education and improvement of ability and understanding among cadres and Party members in all aspects. First of all are the abilities of thinking theoretically; understanding and grasping natural laws; accessing, analyzing, and summarizing realities; proposing right resolutions and policies; and organizing the effective implementation of the Party's policies and guidelines.

In face of each turning-point and complicated happenings in the international and domestic situations, the Party gave timely directions, completed satisfactorily the politico-ideological work, rectified deviations, criticized unrighteous viewpoints and tendencies, and created a high level of unanimity and ideological stability within it and a consensus among the population. However, the theoretical level, understanding, and leadership ability of a part of cadres and Party members have not kept pace with the requirements of renovation, especially in the aspects of state and economic management, and production and business leadership. If the Party does not intensify the theoretical study and research and reality summarization, it shall not be able to meet the new requirements of the revolution.

To organize the implementation of the Party's resolutions is an important task and a key step at present. Many resolutions are right, but they have not been translated into life or have not been realized. Therefore, the Party has decided to enhance the direction

of the practical organization and improve the ability of practical organization. It includes specifying and institutionalization of cadre arrangement, as well as the management, control, and inspection abilities of officials who are directly involved in these tasks.

Besides the raising of its mettle, intellectual standard, and leadership ability, the Vietnamese Communist Party attaches much importance to the cultivation of revolutionary morality and the opposition to individualism, degradation, and corruption within Party ranks. After the 6th Party Congress, in 1987, the Politburo issued Resolution 4 on purifying the Party and the State machinery and making healthy social relations. In addition, the 3rd Plenum of the 7th Party Central Committee issued a resolution on Party renovation and rectification; the 5th Plenum of the 8th Party Central Committee stressed the necessity of improving moral virtues, considering them a fine cultural feature of the Party, and decided to carry out a campaign of criticism and self-criticism within the Party. Particularly, the 6th Plenum (second time) of the 8th Party Central Committee determined to launch a two-year (1999–2001) campaign for Party building and rectification, according to President Hồ Chí Minh's Testament, to promote the struggle against corruption and negativity. The Politburo also promulgated Regulation 19 stipulating what Party members are not allowed to do. It also enhanced the examination and punishment of guilty Party members at different levels. The 4th Plenum of the 9th Party Central Committee reviewed the implementation of the campaign and determined on the continued realization of the resolution adopted by the 6th Plenum (second time) of the 8th Party Central Committee, furthering the struggle against corrupt and negative behaviors. Many cadres and Party members with violations, including some high-ranking cadres such as members of the Party Central Committee, ministers, and deputy ministers, have been strictly punished.

The Party's resolutions require all cadres and Party members, regardless of their positions, to incessantly self-cultivate and self-improve their revolutionary morality, overcome bureaucratic and authoritarian behaviors, and preserve the Party's reputation and prestige. Cadres and Party members should be deeply imbued with and follow President Hồ Chí Minh's teachings on preserving

the revolutionary morality and fighting against individualism. The higher positions they hold, the more exemplary they should be. Party organizations should build up regulations and work out measures for the education and cultivation of cadres and Party members, as well as for the examination and management of their activities. They should also praise exemplary cadres and Party members in a timely manner and simultaneously strictly punish the morally-corrupted ones, whoever they may be and whatever positions they may hold.

During the years of renovation, the Vietnamese Communist Party always attached much importance to Party building and reinforcement in terms of organization to ensure its internal unity and solidarity and high combat ability. The Party building and reinforcement in terms of organization involves many tasks, two of which are the effective implementation of democratic centralism and the correction of the Party's organizational system.

The effective implementation of democratic centralism is an essential issue that ensures the Party's close organization, solidarity, unity, and high combat ability. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, before the disintegration of the Soviet Communist Party and some Marxist parties in East Europe and the new attacks of hostile forces, there appeared in Việt Nam some manifestations of oscillation regarding the implementation of democratic centralism; there also appeared the tendency of lowering or denying democratic centralism and replacing it with the Western model of "pluralism and multiparty." The Vietnamese Communist Party straightened and corrected these deviations, required the Party's executive committees and organizations to do well the work of education and reach a unity of awareness, and directed the building of a mechanism to guarantee the effective implementation of democratic centralism within the Party in a timely manner.

On the one hand, it is necessary for the Party to observe fully its members' democratic rights and work out specific regulations for its members to directly participate in the process of planning and organizing the implementation of the Party's policies and guidelines. The leading cadres, especially heads of Party executive committees,

should respect and listen to Party members and inferiors' opinions, appreciate their creative actions, listen to different opinions before making any decisions, and implement collective democracy in staff management. On the other hand, it is necessary for the Party to struggle against the tendencies of formalistic democracy and extremist democracy, which make corrupt use of democracy to cause divisions and factionalism, practice demagoguery, and follow the backward masses. Without centralism, discipline, and responsibility, true democracy is out of reach. Democracy does not mean arbitrariness or anarchical freedom. To diverge from or underestimate democratic centralism is to go against the nature of Party organizations; to implement wrongly democratic centralism is to weaken the Party from its root.

For recent years, the Party has stressed the serious implementation of criticism and self-criticism and the enhancement of unity and solidarity within it on the basis of political guidelines, the principle of organization, and comradeship. It has also focused on the settlement of disunity in some places, and resolutely struggled against individualism, enviousness, scrambles for office and interests, localism, and regionalism—the important causers of disunity.

In the construction and perfection of the organizational system of the Party's machine and the political system, the Vietnamese Communist Party always grasps thoroughly the spirit of activeness, scientism, and synchrony. It also follows hard on its political requirements and tasks. The establishment of the organizational system does not only mean the arrangement of the structure and machine, but it also implies the clear definition of the functions, tasks, and operation regulations of each organization as well as the whole system. The overlapping, unclear definition, and repetition of tasks should be overcome; redundant and unnecessary intermediary units should be reduced.

Party organizations at grassroots level play a greatly important role in the organizational system of the Party. Recently, the Party organizations at grassroots level in many places have suffered a decrease in leadership and even fallen into dilapidation and paralysis. To quickly overcome these situations, consolidate its organizations

at grassroots level, and ensure its leadership nationwide, the Vietnamese Communist Party should attach special importance to the reorganization and improvement of its regular activities, have a right policy for assignment of key officials—those who have real abilities and moral qualities and are trusted by the people, and implement effectively the Party membership-related work including the admission of new Party members who meet all the required criteria. Many issues have emerged among economic organizations, private enterprises, and joint-venture enterprises. Therefore, the Party is recommended to enhance the research and summarization of realities to establish and reinforce its organizations, and to have appropriate forms of activities to simultaneously ensure its leadership and promote the autonomy of production and business units.

It has been proved profoundly through realities for recent years that the staff plays a decisive role and that staff management is especially important. As a ruling party in the present context, the Vietnamese Communist Party should frequently give its mind to the staff management and look after its staff in the whole political system and in all fields.

In many resolutions adopted by the Party Central Committee and Politburo, including especially the Resolution of the 3rd Plenum of the 8th Party Central Committee on the staff strategy in the period of promoting industrialization and modernization, the Vietnamese Communist Party has pointed out the directions and tasks for staff management in the new conditions, stressing a must for innovations in the thinking related to staff management and improvements in the planning, education, training, arrangement, and use of staff. At the same time, it is necessary to renovate the method of implementing the staff management in the direction of true democracy and collectivism and in combination with united centralism according to a strictly controlled process.

On the basis of grasping thoroughly the working class' view, the Vietnamese Communist Party has proposed policies for uniting and assembling widely different types of cadres from various economic sectors, as well as for training and treating well the country's talents, including those living abroad. It has also proposed policies for

attracting talents and avoiding brain waste. It is recommended that the Party should bring new blood into its staff; combine well the "three age ranges"; ensure the continuity, inheritance, and development within its staff; and exploit the strong points of each type of cadres so that they can complement each other.

While perfecting the staff training establishments, the Party advocates the ceaseless renovation of curriculum contents, as well as the improvement of training quality and efficiency. The Party also attaches special importance to the comprehensive training and cultivation of staff, including leaders, managers, specialists, businessmen, and, above all, key cadres at all levels, in terms of virtue, qualification, and ability. All cadres should frequently cultivate their revolutionary virtues, set themselves as examples of morality and lifestyle, be absolutely loyal to the Party's and the nation's causes, and combine harmoniously personal interests with collective ones, and willingly put the latter above the former when they are in contradiction. These make up the prestige of the cadres and the Party.

The Vietnamese Communist Party stresses the necessity of using and arranging work for the staff according to their strong points and set criteria. It is advisable to promote and appoint cadres to new positions in the right time, assign appropriate tasks to them, and have policies and mechanisms to encourage them to make ceaseless efforts to become capable of undertaking bigger tasks and make more contributions. It is also necessary to deal strictly and clearly with cadres who violate the discipline and law, and replace in a timely manner those who are unable and fail to complete assigned tasks. Simultaneously, it is advisable to promote the existing staff, cultivate and train cadres according to new requirements, and create a long-term source of cadres. To achieve these goals, it is greatly important for the Party to work out a plan for staff management that combines training at school with testing at work; rotate cadres according to the plan; have measures for proactively defending cadres; and implement effectively the staff education, cultivation, and management.

Establishing a close relationship with the people is the rule of existence, development, and operation for the Party. It is also the determinant of the Party's strength. This relationship, as Lenin said,

should be based on mutual trust. The people trust, support, and follow the Party. In return, the Party makes every effort to serve the people and promote the role and endless creativity of the people. This is especially significant for the Party as a leading party. As Lenin said, one of the biggest and most fearful risks for a leading party is that it severs relations with the masses.

For over 70 years of leading the people in the implementation of the revolution, the Vietnamese Communist Party has incessantly maintained a strong attachment with the people. It has also been supported, protected, and assisted wholeheartedly by the people. Thanks to this, the Party has had enough ability and strength to lead the revolution to overcome all difficulties and win all enemies, even the most atrocious ones. Maintaining a close relationship with the people is a fine tradition of the Party and a great lesson for the Vietnamese revolution.

Given the new context of the present day, the great scale and stature of the revolution, the increasingly higher role and standard of the people, and its new standing, the Vietnamese Communist Party, on the one hand, has more favorable conditions to widen and strengthen its relationship with the people. On the other hand, its relationship with the people also faces higher requirements and new challenges. Besides objective difficulties, the Party should make every effort to overcome its subjective defects such as bureaucratic and authoritarian behaviors in some leadership and management agencies, as well as degradation in the morality and lifestyle of a part of cadres and Party members manifested in the acts of misappropriating public properties, harassing the people, and making corrupt use of authority to seek personal profits, and victimize and oppress the masses.

Aware of this, the Party has continuously implemented policies and measures to promote its work with the masses and actively participated in all activities within its capacity to strengthen its flesh-and-blood relationship with the people over the past years. This issue has been addressed profoundly and comprehensively in the Resolutions of the 5th and 8th Plenums of the 6th Party Central Committee, the Resolution of the 7th Plenum of the 9th Party Central Committee, and many resolutions adopted by the Politburo

regarding mass mobilization and the construction of the Fatherland Front and socio-political organizations. Particularly, the Resolution of the 9th Party Congress highlighted the necessity of building and enhancing the bloc of great national unity to promote the aggregate strength of the nation in national renovation, industrialization, and modernization. This is considered to be the major motivation for national construction and development. Since 1998, the Politburo of the 8th Party Central Committee has given instructions on the realization of the regulations on democracy at grassroots level, as well as the drastic promotion and implementation of the people's right to mastership.

Realities have shown that many specific and practical things should be done by the Party and State to renovate the Party's work with the masses and strengthen the relationship between the Party and the people. For example, the Party and State should look after deeply and fully the people's living conditions; promulgate policies that will gain popularity and protect the people's legitimate interests; really respect and promote the people's mastership; strictly observe the regulations on democracy at grassroots level; build and rectify the Party and the State agencies so that they are always transparent and strong; implement effectively the politico-ideological work among the population; improve the Party's mode of leadership and civil servants' working style; and overcome such evil practices as corruption, negativity, and privilege among cadres and Party members to make healthy social relations. Also, it is necessary for the Party and State to be deeply imbued with and fully aware of Hồ Chí Minh Thought regarding the view of the people; strictly follow the people-oriented policy; implement effectively the mass mobilization work; truly be close to, respect, and trust the people; and resolutely fight against bureaucracy and deviation from the people.

Besides, the Party should build up mechanisms and regulations to force its executive committees at all levels and organizations to create favorable conditions for the people and their organizations to frequently participate in its activities and contribute constructive opinions to its guidelines and policies; supervise and criticize cadres and Party members; introduce worthy people to the leading

organs of the Party and State; recommend eligible people to the Party ranks; and help its organizations to inspect, detect, and struggle against corrupt and negative manifestations. In reality, in the years of renovation, many people's organizations, as well as social and occupational organizations have been established and reinforced with improved contents and modes of operation, and have implemented effectively many diverse and creative activities which have made practical contributions to national renovation in general and Party building in particular.

An extremely important issue of the building of the Party as a ruling party in socialist construction is to drastically renovate the Party's mode of leadership, first and foremost toward the State. This will help simultaneously ensure the Party's leadership and promote the State's management role. This will also prevent and overcome the situations of the Party abusing its power, acting for and on behalf of the State, and loosening its leadership. Through the realities of the renovation, the Vietnamese Communist Party has been increasingly aware that the enhancement of the Party's leadership and the promotion of the efficiency of the State's management are not contrary to each other. In contrast, they complement and support each other providing that they clearly define and strictly observe their functions.

In the capacity of a ruling party, the Vietnamese Communist Party works out guidelines and policies. It simultaneously leads the State to introduce these guidelines and policies into the content of its operation, institutionalize the Party's guidelines and viewpoints into policies and laws, and manage and organize the implementation of these policies and laws. The Party also arranges cadres and inspects the implementation of its guidelines, policies, and viewpoints. It is a must for every party in power. It is also the reason for existence and a function that cannot be undertaken by any organization but the Party. It should be guaranteed that by implementing the State's policies and laws, the people are implementing the Party's political programs and guidelines. When judging a criminal, determining the punishment, or returning a verdict, the Court should base itself on the State's laws, thus reflecting the Party's view, thought, and attitude.

How to turn the Party's political programs and guidelines into the State's policies and laws is the matter of the mechanism, mode, and art of leadership. It is a decisive measure that the Party should assign cadres and Party members who are prestigious, able and have high party nature to work in State agencies and hold key positions in the State machine, and simultaneously have a mechanism to supervise these Party members' activities. Party members who work in the State machine have the responsibility to mobilize and persuade the State agencies and civil servants to realize the Party's viewpoints and guidelines, and make every effort to put the Party's guidelines into practice. Every Party member is required to observe the Party's decisions, comply with the Party's discipline, and listen to the State agencies and civil servants to petition for the Party's timely correction of inappropriate guidelines.

Over the past time, the Party has selected and introduced its members who meet the requirements of qualification, ability, and morality to State agencies. In localities, the secretaries and deputy secretaries of Party executive committees have offered themselves as candidates for the posts of chairmen of the people's councils and committees; some heads of Party departments have been recommended to some departments of the people's councils; some members of Party executive committees have been introduced to the posts of heads and vice heads of local departments. This aims to enhance the unity between the Party and the State, simultaneously maintaining the Party's leadership and promoting the the State agencies' practical efficiency.

Some people are worried that, if the Party's key cadres hold key positions in the machinery of government, they will easily become arbitrary and authoritarian. Therefore, they demand for some mechanism to inspect, restrain, and prevent negative practices. This is a legitimate demand. Apart from the Party cells' education and management and the people's supervision and criticism, Party member groups (in people-elected agencies) and Party Personnel Bureaus (in executive and judicial agencies) should be established. It is one of the mechanisms that can ensure the Party's leadership and help supervise Party members' activities in State agencies. However, it is necessary to define clearly the competence and responsibility

of such groups and bureaus, as well as those of the heads of State agencies. This mechanism reflects and enables the principle of democratic centralism to be implemented in Party activities, as well as democracy and persuasiveness in the Party's leadership over State agencies.

Another important measure is that the Party should always rely on and promote the role of the Fatherland Front and people's organizations; lead the Fatherland Front and mass organizations to renovate their organization and mode of operation; do away with the tendency to make these agencies into administrations; mobilize and organize the people, via these organizations, to participate in the construction and reinforcement of the State machine and affairs; supervise and examine the operation of the State as well as cadres and civil servants working for State agencies; and struggle against, prevent, and overcome bureaucracy, corruption, and other negative manifestations. This is an important measure and can be said to be a mechanism to prevent and restrict negative practices that may emerge when there is one party in power.

The Party's leadership over the State is to make sure that the State will operate effectively in accordance with the Party's guidelines and viewpoints; reflect the people's will, aspirations, and interests; and have a strong attachment to the people. The Party's leadership does not mean that the Party takes the place of the State in administering society or that of the people in mastering the State. Both the Party and the State are tools to ensure and implement the people's mastership. They both strive and operate for the people's interests. The Party is not an authoritative agency of the State. The Party and State should not be understood as two parallel systems of authority or put in separation or contrast. The Party leads the State and the political system, but it is also a part of the political system and a member of the Fatherland Front. The Party leads the promulgation of the Constitution and laws, and simultaneously operates within the framework of the Constitution and laws. Cadres and Party members are not allowed to stand above the law or operate outside the framework of the law.

These are some fundamental issues withdrawn from the realities of the building of the ruling Party in the years of renovation in Việt

Nam. Not all tasks have been fulfilled satisfactorily. Some have been completed successfully; some have just been started; some are still in experiment. However, they are still considered as the initial experiences and the fundamental directions for Việt Nam to continue its implementation of the building of a leading communist party that satisfies the requirements of the revolutionary cause of the nation. Việt Nam understands that the building of a true revolutionary party is not a simple task. On the contrary, it is extremely complicated and difficult, especially in the present context when the Vietnamese Communist Party is the only one party in power, the market economy is being developed, and the open-door policy is being realized. The Party has to not only cope with the hostile schemes of reactionary forces but also overcome its own limitations. Nevertheless, with the achievements obtained by the Party over the past 70 years, new bright prospects in the new period, and the people's trust and support, it is to believe that the Vietnamese Communist Party will gradually rise up to perfect itself, and satisfy the revolutionary cause's requirements and the people's expectations.

BUILDING A SYNCHRONOUS, UNIFIED, FEASIBLE, OPEN AND TRANSPARENT LEGAL SYSTEM¹

The Vietnamese National Assembly is the only organization to have the power to make laws. Therefore, the legislative activity is politically and legally extremely important. For many years, the National Assembly has recorded many achievements in legislation, especially during the 11th term, which is shown in the increasing number and quality of laws. The legal base necessary for national development is becoming more comprehensive. The National Assembly has had its own legislative plan for this year and for the whole term 2002–2007, which it needs to complete in the short term.

The 10th Party Congress has just been crowned with success and has pointed out the direction and the mission of construction and completion of a socialistic government in which the perfection of legal system, the reinforcement of practicality and feasibility of legal documents, and the innovation of law-making processes are emphasized. Legislation needs to strictly follow the leadership of the Party mentioned in the Resolution of the 10th Congress; that is, to build a synchronous, unified, feasible, open and transparent legal system; gradually establish a fully developed legal framework; and avoid the lack of appropriate laws in some important fields.

The fields which need to be legalized are the ones related to the construction of socialist-oriented economic mechanisms, social management, political stability, social security, international integration, construction of a strong Vietnamese socialist

¹ An interview by Việt Nam News Agency on 26 June 2006, posted in *Tin tức* (News) Newspaper, issue 26, on 29 June 2006.

government, implementation of people's democratic right, consolidation of the bloc of great national unity, industrialization and modernization of the country. It is necessary to pay attention to the relationship between the legal reform and the reform of the administration and judicial systems. Việt Nam must quickly construct and promulgate the content related to administration and judicial reform in order to create a legal basis for the implementation of this important mission.

In addition to ensure the number of bills, it is necessary to pay attention to their quality to ensure the feasibility of the construction of legislation. It is necessary to decide the order of priority in the construction of laws, do research on the scientific and practical basis of the issue and involve all the deputies of the National Assembly in discussing law proposals. These are the important premises for laws to be applied to practice.

Reinforcement of the supervision and improvement of the committees under the National Assembly are of extreme significance in increasing the effectiveness of its operation.

During the past few years, the supervision activity of the National Assembly, agencies and members of the National Assembly has gained some initial achievements. Alongside with the outstanding results in law-making and in deciding important issues of the country, the quality of the National Assembly's meetings has been improved and the National Assembly's supervision has been supported by the public. In the future, the supervision of the National Assembly should be strengthened by increasing the effectiveness of different means of supervision, from the supervision of the whole National Assembly to the supervision of the Standing Committee, of Ethnic Affairs Committee, of other committees, and of different deputies of the National Assembly. It is also important to pay attention to the spending of the national budget and the effectiveness of the work of state titles, improve the quality of debates, supervise the special subjects and point out the political responsibility of each politician.

Moreover, increasing the quality of National Assembly deputies, promoting their expertise and responsibility, renovating

the organization and operation of the National Assembly and its agencies are also important tasks in the future. Meanwhile, the voting mechanisms need to be improved to increase the quality of National Assembly deputies; increase the numbers of full-time deputies and promote the roles of deputies and the delegations of National Assembly deputies; improve the way of contacting constituents in order to listen to the public's suggestions and expectations; create favorable conditions for National Assembly deputies to carry out their tasks.

CHAPTER THREE:

ENHANCING THE LEADERSHIP CAPACITY OF THE CPV IN THE PROCESS OF RENEWAL

TAKING THE PEOPLE AS THE ROOTS— A PRICELESS LESSON OF HISTORY¹

From the realities of the Vietnamese revolution for many years, the 6th Party Congress drew some precious and important lessons, the first of which was as follows: “The Party must thoroughly grasp the ideology of ‘taking the people as the roots,’ ‘constructing and bringing into play the ownership of the working people,’ ‘paying great attention to strengthening the close ties between the Party and the people’”². Trường Chinh³ stressed, “The former lesson ‘a revolution is the cause of the masses’ was important. Now it is all the more important as a priceless historical lesson of our revolution”.

Striving to implement the Resolution of the 6th Party Congress, the country should study the lessons drawn by the Party and thoroughly grasp and efficiently apply them. We should also launch mass mobilization campaigns and strengthen the ties between the Party and the people.

We understand that the lesson “trusting and taking care of the people and considering them as the roots” has been drawn from our long history. In the 15th century, despite the limitations of the time, Nguyễn Trãi⁴ was successful in drawing much important experience

1 Article in *Cộng sản Review*, Issue 2, 1987.

2 Communist Party of Việt Nam: *Văn kiện Đại hội đại biểu toàn quốc lần thứ VI* (Official Documents of the 6th National Representative Congress), Sự thật (Truth) Publishing House, Hà Nội, 1987, p. 29.

3 Cde. Trường Chinh (1907-1988), General Secretary of the Party Central Committee (2nd tenure) in 1951 and its late 5th tenure in 1986 in replacement of cde. Lê Duẩn who passed away mid-term.

4 Nguyễn Trãi (1380-1442), a great Vietnamese politician, army general, diplomat and poet. In 1980 the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization recognized him as a world cultural celebrity.

from the practices of many feudal dynasties: whether a country is strong or weak, survives or disappears completely depends on its people; a dynasty that wins popular confidence and can unite its people, it develops; if not, it will fall sooner or later. According to him, the Posterior Trần¹ dynasty collapsed chiefly because it did not carry out the policy of “staying close to the people” and follow Trần Hưng Đạo’s² advice that “nurturing people’s strength should be made the long-term and sustainable strategy”. Trần Kings led luxurious lives and took care of their own interests, while their people lived in utter misery and resentment. Hồ Quý Ly³, founder of the Hồ dynasty, was defeated quickly and lost the country to the Ming⁴ invaders due to its being remote from the people, or in the words of Nguyễn Trãi, “the very troublesome administration induced the people to become angry.” Therefore, Nguyễn Trãi came to a profound conclusion: only when the boat was capsized did they realize that the power of the people was as great as that of water; the water could “carry” the boat and also could “turn it upside down”.

According to Marxism and Leninism, a revolution is the cause of the masses, the Communist Party must ally itself with the masses if it is to lead the revolution, the revolution must have strong support from the majority of the masses if it is to succeed. Lenin repeatedly said that the main source of the power of a party lay in its close relationship with the masses, and that the vanguard could only fulfill its historical mission once it manages to stand close to, and lead, all the masses very well. He emphasized, for a ruling party, “one of the biggest and most threatening dangers is that it intentionally breaks up with the masses”⁵. This has been clearly proved by the historical experience of the international communist and worker movements.

1 The Posterior Trần Dynasty (1407-1414).

2 Trần Hưng Đạo (1226-1300), also known as Hưng Đạo Đại Vương Trần Quốc Tuấn, a perfect gentleman, an excellent military talent under the Trần Dynasty. He led the Vietnamese army to defeat the Yuan-Mongols three times in 1258, 1285, and 1288. He was also excellent at literature.

Hồ Quý Ly (1336-1407), the founder of the Hồ Dynasty (1400-1407).

4 The Ming Dynasty in China (1401-1644).

5 V.I. Lenin. *Complete Works*, Progress Publishing House, Moscow, 1978, vol. 44, p. 426.

Throughout its leadership of a brave and strong-willed people, the Communist Party of Việt Nam has been paying great attention to building and consolidating its ties with the people. And for this very reason, the Party, without many cadres, has managed to lead the nation’s revolution through many difficulties and defeat many enemies, however dangerous and violent they may be. The close relationship with the people is a good tradition and invincible source of power of the Communist Party of Việt Nam. The Party stressed, “Over the past revolutionary phases, the Communist Party of Việt Nam and its people have been integrated into a single block with blood and steadfast strings. The Party fully understands and completely believes in the incomparable strength of the Vietnamese people who, for their part, also wholly understand and wholeheartedly believe in the Party. In the long march to win national independence and freedom, the Communist Party of Việt Nam was always with its people, anywhere and anytime. The Party took the lead in the battles and performed difficult tasks. The relationship between the Party and the people was further glued with what it had done for national liberation.”¹

Since the total liberation of South Việt Nam,² our reunified country has begun to move towards socialism with the great dimensions of the revolution, establishing the socialist political system nationwide, and enhancing the people’s role and mastership, and the Communist Party of Việt Nam has got more favorable conditions to expand and consolidate its relationship with the people. However, in the new historical circumstances, with a fresh character and method of leadership, this relationship needs further development and faces new complicated challenges. Besides objective difficulties, such as the low starting-point of Việt Nam as a backward agricultural country bypassing the capitalist development and suffering from grave devastation by the wars, we still have to

1 Communist Party of Việt Nam: *Báo cáo tổng kết công tác xây dựng Đảng và sửa đổi điều lệ Đảng tại Đại hội đại biểu toàn quốc lần thứ IV* (Report to Sum up the Work of Party Building and Revision of the Party’s Statute to the 4th National Representative Congress), Sự thật (Truth) Publishing House, Hà Nội, 1997, p. 211.

2 On 30 April 1975, South Việt Nam was completely liberated in the historic Hồ Chí Minh campaign.

tackle schemes of sabotage by the hostile forces. From subjective point of view, however, we have made serious mistakes in strategic leadership and implementation of the socio-economic policies. Bureaucratic red-tape and authoritarianism are common in many governmental administration institutions and even in the agencies in charge of mass mobilization. A number of authorities fail to respect people's opinion and to practice mass mobilization work, but only focus on administrative measures and commands. Part of the cadres, the Party members, especially those in high positions, show signs of degeneration, stay out of touch with the people and are irresponsible to them. Many of the heads of various sectors and echelons are bureaucratic, patriarchal and arbitrary. Some even bully ordinary people. Some cases of corruption and abuse of privileges in the Party and State institutions have not been satisfactorily and strictly dealt with, thus spoiling the reputation and credibility of the Party, eroding the people's confidence in it, and undermining the Party-people relationship. The enemies and ill-willed elements are trying to take advantage of this situation to separate the masses from the Party and attempt to break up the unity between the Party and the people. In reality, they have gained certain results here and there.

A number of Party members fail to realize the seriousness of the problem and mistakenly think that it is unavoidable for a ruling party. Some even forget that the relationship with the masses is the *raison d'être*, development and activity of the Party and an indispensable condition in the struggle for socialism and national defense of the socialist Fatherland.

The relationship with the masses is the law of existence, development and activity of a Communist Party. Like the other laws of social development, this law only takes effect through the self-conscious activity of the subject, in this case, the Communist Party. The Party recognizes the law and tries to operate in compliance with it. This means that whether the relationship between the Party and the masses is solid and sustainable or not and whether the Party is strong or not depends first of all on the Party's efforts.

For the time being, to strengthen the relationship between the Party and the masses, it is critical to pay due attention to the lives

and interests of the masses; fully respect and bring into play their collective mastership; build a transparent Party apparatus, rectify the shortcomings and malpractices among the cadres and Party members, to make the Party a worthy leader and loyal servant of the people.

Taking care of the interests and happiness of the working people is the sacred goal and noble ideal of the Party. Making sacrifices for the Party's ideal and the people's happiness is a communist's *raison d'être*. In peacetime, one of the most important tasks and immediate goals of the Party and the State institutions is taking care of the people's lives. This will determine the popular trust and relation with the Party and initiate a mass movement for revolutionary action. Practical experience of the socialist countries has shown that only taking good care of the working people's interests can motivate them to work better and relate them more closely with the Party, the State and the socialist regime.

Over recent years, under the motto: "All for the socialist Fatherland and the happiness of the people", the Party and the State have made great efforts in taking care of the people's livelihood. The Party considers the improvement of the people's lives as its big task. However, it must be admitted that several policies have failed to meet the people's needs and aspirations. Several localities and institutions have not taken bold measures to develop production and ensure the people's livelihood. While the people in many places are in great difficulty and their essential needs are yet to be met, a number of the Party cadres and members try to enrich themselves by all means and indulge themselves in lavish feasts. Some even shirk responsibility to the people and show no emotion at the latter's difficulty and misery. Some cadres abuse their position and power to misappropriate assets of the State and the collective. In fact, they stay out of touch with the people and forget the days when they shared the weals and woes with the masses and got shelter and protection from them. Perhaps this is the biggest loss in the masses' sentiment and makes them feel very unhappy and sorrowful.

The Communist Party of Việt Nam has made it clear that, "the Vietnamese people have a high sense of revolution and precious

qualities. Over half a century of continuous struggles with huge losses and sacrifices, they always showed their revolutionary heroism through hard work and brave fights for national independence and freedom and socialism. In a situation where the Party made a mistake, the people still expected the Party to overcome it and bring the country forward. The Party cannot afford to fail the people's expectations... All the Party's lines and policies must be derived from the working people's interests, aspirations and capacities and they must be able to rouse the sympathy and support of the masses"¹. It is vital to "consider serving the people the highest goal of any activity". In current circumstances, if we fail to pay specific practical attention to the people's life, it will be meaningless and unconvincing no matter how much we talk about the masses and their collective mastership.

We need to further sharpen our awareness of the importance of taking care of the people and strictly implement the Party's lines and standpoints in this respect. We need to devise and adopt positive measures to ensure the people's basic needs, such as employment, food, clothing, health, education... We should also practice social equity and ensure cultured lifestyles and social security. Those involving in illegal activity and violating the people's interests must be strictly punished in order to restore law and order in every field of life. Only by this way can we set the masses' mind at peace and stimulate them to work. It is no coincidence that President Hồ Chí Minh reiterated, "Not shortage, but inequality in distribution should be our concern. Not poverty, but public discontent should be our concern."²

Fully respecting and bringing into play the people's mastership is a strategy and fundamental issue in the Party's lines. Throughout its leadership of the revolution, the Party has always closely combined its leadership with the people's creativeness. The Party, finding its power in the close links with the masses, has constantly created

1 Communist Party of Việt Nam: *Văn kiện Đại hội đại biểu toàn quốc lần thứ VI* (Official Documents of the 6th National Representative Congress), Sự thật (Truth) Publishing House, Hà Nội, 1987, p. 29.

2 Hồ Chí Minh. *Complete Works*, National Political Publishing House, Hà Nội, 1996, vol. 12, p. 185.

necessary conditions for the people to make their own history on a self-conscious and well-organized basis. In advancing to socialism, the Party believes that the people's socialist collective mastery is the fundamental nature of our regime. The Party is guiding the elaboration and implementation of an appropriate mechanism for organization so that the people's collective mastership will be brought into full play. In some localities, there are now regular discussions and meetings in which ordinary people can take part and discuss the Party's politics and guidelines and their local Party cells' task. On those occasions, ordinary people are informed about the decisions made by the Party and they are motivated to participate in the inspection, supervision and criticism of every activity of the Party cells, members and cadres. The movement of criticism and self-criticism in preparation for the 6th Party Congress and activities to collect comments on the Draft Political Report of the Party Central Committee, which attracts millions of people, are vivid demonstrations of the fact that the Communist Party of Việt Nam really respects and tries to enhance the people's collective mastership. It is said that never before have there been democratic movements that are comprehensive, practical and effective like the recent drives to collect people's recommendations for the Party.

However, many of the local Party committees haven't paid much attention to the mobilization of the masses nor fully respected the people's collective mastership. Some cadres and Party members just talk about the people's collective mastership, but do nothing to put it into practice. Quite a few Party members even look down on the masses, ignore public opinion, refuse to learn from the working masses and lazily execute their tasks of education and mobilization of the masses. A number of cadres and officials, who have direct relations with the people, are authoritarian and impolite, harassing and troublesome. Some even demand gifts and bribes from the people. Some incumbent officials are bureaucratic, patriarchal and behave like "a local king" in their regions. Worse still, some individuals and groups of cadres bully the masses or illegally arrest and beat innocent people in private revenge. Such cases are not common, but very serious as they hurt the people and erode their confidence in the Party. There are many folk-verses and funny stories

to ridicule “revolutionary officials”, which is very painful, indeed. We can never make light of these instances. If we fail to stop them, we can’t consolidate the people’s confidence in, and strengthen their relationship with, the Party. Party members who violate the people’s mastership and receive public resentment should be expelled from the Party.

The 6th Party Congress affirmed that materializing the people’s collective mastership essentially meant respecting human beings, bringing into full play the creativeness of all walks of life and orienting such creativeness to the building of a new society. Along with taking care of the people’s livelihood, respecting and ensuring civil rights as stipulated in the Constitution, Party committees and State agencies at various levels should encourage the masses to take part in economic and social administration on an extensive and regular basis. We should do away with the wrong point of view that mass mobilization is merely to encourage people to implement the Party’s policies. It is necessary for Party committees at various levels to hold opinion polls about policies or programs that closely relate to the people’s livelihood. “The people know, the people discuss, the people implement and the people supervise” must become a guiding principle for action and a guideline for mass mobilization. We must strictly observe the principle: “The policies of the Party must be derived from the people’s interests, aspirations and level of consciousness.” In case a policy is right, but the people don’t understand or support it, we must make every effort to explain it to them until they understand it thoroughly. We also need to make changes if necessary so that the policy will be compatible with realities and the qualifications of the masses. Lenin stressed: a policy that is incompatible with the masses’ qualifications is “an adventurous policy”.¹

On the other hand, Party committees and administrative authorities at various echelons should take positive measures to educate their cadres, Party members and staff to improve their service to the people, having a proper attitude toward them, staying close to them and respecting them. There should be direct meetings

¹ V.I. Lenin. *Complete Works*, *op. cit.*, vol. 25, p. 225.

with the people to deal satisfactorily with their complaints, requests and aspirations. Those who repress or bully people must be severely punished. Mass organizations, especially trade unions, youth’s and women’s unions, should innovate their way of working and focus on training and encouraging the masses to practice their collective mastership, participate actively in the building of the Party and administration, and in socio-political activities with full sense of their responsibilities.

An extremely important question is to immediately clean up the Party ranks, do away with degradation in morality and lifestyle of part of the cadres and Party members. Morality and lifestyle of cadres and Party members are crucial to the Party’s credibility and honor and they directly affect the Party-people link. The masses usually consider and comment on the Party through the morality and lifestyle of cadres and Party members. Therefore when the masses’ confidence in the Party declines, it doesn’t mean they lose confidence in the ideology, and in the cause of the Party. Instead, it means they lose confidence in corrupt cadres, Party members and units.

In recent years, there have been more and more corrupt Party members. Recent cases of discipline announced in the media have shown this bad situation. Quite a few have joined the Party not to sacrifice for the Party’s ideal and the people’s happiness, but seek fame and wealth. Some cadres, instead of showing a good example, set a bad image in front of the masses. Some of them disregarded the organization and discipline. They gang up, sweet-talk with their superiors, bully their inferiors and the masses, thus undermining internal unity. Those in direct contact with material wealth, goods or cash abuse their position to embezzle, smuggle, misappropriate public property, take bribes and act in collusion with dishonest traders for their own benefits. Seriously, quite a few cadres and Party members, including high-level ones, succumb themselves to material temptations, run after wealth and fame and lead a selfish, lavish and self-indulgent life. Some elements, who have completely degenerated, live a life of excessive luxury and debauchery. The majority of true cadres, Party members and the people are deeply discontented with such manifestations and are worried about some erosion in the nature of the working class and fine traditions of the Party.

Looking straight at this fact, the Party is determined to carry out in the near future a movement for Party building and rectification. The movement will also aim to push back negative phenomena in the State machinery and in society. The 6th Party Congress emphasized that one of the urgent needs and main tasks in Party building was to raise the revolutionary quality of our cadres and Party members, and combat malpractices in the Party. The Communist Party of Việt Nam considers the task as the core of its activities.

It is now very urgent for us to be imbued with and seriously implement the great Hồ Chí Minh Thought: "Each Party member and cadre from high to low levels should know well that joining the Party is to become a servant of the people, not a 'master' of the people."¹

¹ Hồ Chí Minh. *Complete Works, op. cit.*, vol. 12, p. 222

ENHANCING THE RELATION BETWEEN PARTY MEMBERS AND THE MASSES¹

How a Party member relates with the masses is one of the criteria for assessing his/her qualification and moral standards. Under the Party Statutes, the Party only admits those who have a close relationship with the masses and win their confidence. A Party member is obliged to strengthen such relations, promote the populations' mastership and do his best to serve the masses. A strengthened relation between Party members and the masses is significant to the whole Party's combat power.

A Communist Party's strength originates from its close relation with the masses. Regularly consolidating the relation is the law of existence, development and operation of the Party. It ensures the success of revolutions. This is not just a matter of work style or methodology, but also the one of the Party's standpoint, policy and strategy. It constitutes the nature of a true communist party, which is established for the sake of the revolutionary causes and interests of the working class. Lenin said, "Without its relation with the masses, the Party will be nothing." Kalinin said, "If the close relation between the Party and the masses is lost, the Party's communist content and character will also be lost."

In a situation where the Communist Party is a Party in power, the Party members who work in governmental institutions become the incumbents and have great influence on various social activities. Each of their deeds has direct influence on the masses' interests and daily life, and even their political life. The relation between the Party and the masses in some cases is also the one between civil servants

¹ Article in *Nhân dân Daily*, 12 March 1986.

and ordinary people. Therefore, if a Party member is not well trained, he/she will tend to make light of the task of the mass mobilization, overemphasize administrative, command and bureaucratic work, and stay out of touch with the masses. Some people who join the Party possibly do not strive to achieve the Party's ideals. Instead, they want to seek their own interests and power. Some have even bullied ordinary people, badly damaging the Party's image and the relation between the Party and the masses.

No doubt, enhancing the relations between the Party and the population is a fundamental and urgent task in a bid to consolidate the Party organization. It is also a necessary condition to enhance the Party's strength.

In the current stage of revolution, it is necessary to strongly promote the role of Party members as the vanguard and highlight the honour of being a Party member if the relation is to be improved.

Being able to work as vanguards and set good examples is the basic criteria for distinguishing a Party member and an ordinary person. K. Marx, F. Engels and V. I. Lenin pointed out that only the best and most progressive people of the working class, who have been tempered through revolutions, could become members of a Communist Party.

Criticizing the stance of the opportunists who said careful selection of working-class people as Party members would make the Party out of reach of the majority of the masses, Lenin asserted, "Our organization consists of those who are real social democrats. The more solid the organization is and the less wavering members it has, the greater influence it will exert on the masses." He constantly called upon every member of the Party to promote his/her role as vanguards and highlight the honour and significance of being a Party member.

President Hồ Chí Minh said, "The Party never forces anyone to join it. Anyone who wants to be a member of the Party must have a sense of responsibility and other requirements for a Party member."¹ Such requirements included political quality, revolutionary

1 Hồ Chí Minh. *Complete Works*, op. cit., vol. 12, p. 222.

enthusiasm, strong will, and ability to carry out the Party's lines and the State's policies and laws and lead the masses in doing so. Talking about the relations between the Party and the population, he repeatedly asked Party members to act as both leaders and loyal servants of the people.

According to the needs of the new circumstance, the Party's 4th and 5th Congresses defined specific requirements and tasks for a Party member. The Party stressed that a Party member must be the best representative of the fine revolutionary qualities of the working class and new socialist man. They should act as vanguards with a strong sense of revolutionary enthusiasm and responsibility so that they can implement the Party's lines and the State's laws and policies and contribute actively to national construction and safeguard. Their role as vanguards must be clearly displayed in their political consciousness, absolute loyalty to the Party, and determination to safeguard the Party's lines and realize them. They must be able to set good examples in any fields. They will definitely lose popular confidence and disqualify as Party members if they fail to set good examples, match their words with their deeds, shoulder their responsibilities, or abuse their power to do bad things. President Hồ Chí Minh said, "Before the populations, we just can't write the word 'communist' on our forehead to win their admiration. They only admire those who have high moral standards. If we want to lead them, we have to set good examples so that they can follow."¹

It is a great pity that even today, in our ranks, aside from the exemplary dedicated Party members tirelessly striving for the ideal and cause of the Party, some Party members still have allowed degeneration of their fighting spirit and have failed to realize their role as vanguards. As a result, they have failed to maintain the honour of their Party membership, blurred the distinction between Party members and ordinary people, badly damaged the Party's image, and undermined the relations between the Party and the masses. Some members, though not having committed serious mistakes, could not do anything better than an ordinary person. They adopt an indifferent attitude to everything and feel resigned to

1 Hồ Chí Minh. *Complete Works*, op. cit., vol. 5, p. 552.

their work all the time. In fact, they have failed to play their leading role, thus inviting popular reprimand.

It is very important to enhance the relations between the Party members and the masses by adopting a proper attitude to them and training in the masses' viewpoints in the current period. Specifically, Party members have to respect the people's mastership and ensure its implementation, take care of people's livelihood, stay in close touch with them, listen to them and learn from them. They have to combat against bureaucracy, command-based administration and authoritarianism, and must not stay out of touch with the masses. These are indispensable requirements for a Party member, especially in a country where the Communist Party is the ruling Party. At the same time, they are decisive to the Party's credibility and influence on the population.

President Hồ Chí Minh repeatedly reminded the Party members to regularly train themselves in the viewpoints of the masses and adopt a proper attitude to them. He said, "Before the Party and the people, we have a glorious obligation, which is being a lifelong loyal member of the Party and a dedicated servant of the people," and "Every Party member and cadre, from a high to a low position, must understand that he/she joins the Party to work as servants of the people rather than their masters."¹

During the arduous years when the Party engaged in clandestine activities and the wars, most of its members made sacrifices to defend the nation and the people and managed to maintain their dignity. The people held great respect for Party members. A large number of ordinary people went to great lengths, including risking their lives, to accommodate and feed Party members. They protected Party members as if they were keeping their most valuable property. The relations between Party members and the masses were a great, solid and moving bond. Meanwhile, the enemy resorted to numerous evil plots, including cruel 'white terrorist attacks' and Việt Cộng-denouncing and killing operations, in an attempt to destroy the unity between Party members and the masses and put an end to the Party. But they

1 Hồ Chí Minh. *Complete Works*, op. cit., vol. 12, p. 222.

faced a complete fiasco. The close bond between the Party and the masses provided a source of invincible strength and constituted a valuable tradition of the Party.

It is a great pity that today in new circumstances, some Party members have failed to maintain their qualities. Especially, some high-ranking Party members as incumbents have shown signs of indifference to the comments of the masses, have lost touch with people's lives, and have failed to live and work close to the masses and to mobilize them. Some even have abused their power to bully the masses. They enjoy being flattered and want their inferiors to execute their orders unconditionally. If anyone ever dares to oppose their wrong doings, he/she will be bullied with retribution, sometimes so blatant and barbarous. Some Party members have become irresponsible and have paid insufficient attention to removing troubles in the people's livelihood. Some even have availed themselves of these troubles to seek their own benefits.

The Party has criticized strongly cases of authoritarianism, retribution and bullying. It considers them the biggest problems for a ruling Party and the cause of the Party members' moral deterioration. The Party has asked its members to fully respect the people's mastership, adopt a proper attitude to them, pay attention to their livelihood, serve them with full dedication, and fulfill the mobilization of the masses.

Of course, this does not mean that we practice demagoguery, run after the masses all the time, follow the backward-looking people, or undermine the Party's leading role.

A Party member's moral standards and lifestyle are decisive to the Party's credibility and honor and have direct influence on the relations between the Party and the masses. The *Report on Party Building* presented at the 5th Party Congress said, "The quality of the Party's leadership and its prestige are demonstrated in its sound policies and how well such policies are implemented. Another factor that helps to ensure proper implementation of the Party's policies and retain its credibility lies in the qualifications of the Party members and cadres and their lifestyle."

In fact, the masses only admire and trust Party members, who have good moral standards and a healthy lifestyle. They cannot agree with, or respect those who fail to set good examples, lead a decadent, selfish life or pay too much attention to money. By Vietnamese traditions, a person is often judged through his/her morality and lifestyle.

Recently, what annoyed the public and undermined their confidence in some Party members had a lot to do with the latter's moral qualities and lifestyle rather than their ability. Malpractices among some Party members and cadres including high-ranking ones such as lack of discipline, irresponsibility, corruption, bribery, embezzlement of public property, factionalism, flattery, bullying the masses, collusion with law-breakers for self-enrichment, extravagance, and decadence have reduced popular confidence in the Party and badly damaged the relation between the Party and the masses.

Only by fostering moral qualities and healthy lifestyle of Party members and cadres, fighting against cases of demoralization, and strictly punishing the corrupt members and those who bully the masses, can popular confidence in the Party be redeemed and the relations between the Party and the masses be consolidated.

ENSURING DEMOCRACY IN THE PARTY¹

Practicing democracy is an innate requirement for the development of the Communist Party and a legitimate aspiration of a majority of Party cadres and members. It reflects a development trend of the modern era. If a Party is undemocratic, its members' initiative and wisdom cannot be promoted, and its organization cannot be strong and sturdy either. In the current situation, intensifying democracy in the Party is important to renovate the Party and accelerate democratization in society.

But how can real democracy in the Party be achieved? This is a matter worthy of careful consideration and summing up.

Recent realities show that democracy can never be brought about only by holding up democracy slogans and talking about democracy repeatedly. The most decisive thing is to successfully deal with the following three issues.

1. Understanding properly and beefing up unanimous consistent awareness of democracy in the Party

Democracy in the Party has been differently interpreted for a long time. Recently, it has come under review in some countries, and some people there want to revise it.

Some interpret democracy as the Party member's right to say and do whatever he wants to. In this interpretation, he can even refuse to execute a Party resolution, publicly spread his own viewpoints anywhere including the mass media, set up a faction within the Party, and act against the Party's general line. Also, a lower-level Party unit

¹ Article in *Cộng sản Review*, Issue No. 11, 1990.

does not need to submit to its superior. Some people even want the Party to act as a club, where debate is free about whatever issue. They want to set up opposition groups within the Party so that these groups will contain each other. And they consider it an important criterion for assessing how democratic a Party is. It's like a country is seen as democratic only when it has several parties in the leadership or in the opposition.

Others interpret democracy in the Party in a rigid and old-fashioned manner. In their opinion, democracy seems to fit a certain stereotype and serves as a tool to achieve centralism. They do not want Party members and lower-level Party units to think and act creatively on their own. They put science and politics on an equal footing. They do the same to research recommendations and the Party's viewpoints and guidelines. In this way, whoever has a different viewpoint will be alleged to be opposing the leadership and the Party.

Some pit democracy against centralism. They separate the promotion of Party members' initiative and creativity from the observance of discipline and maintenance of the Party's unity and unanimity. They invoke some leaders' mistakes such as bureaucracy, authoritarianism, and lack of a sense of democracy as a pretext to dismiss democratic centralism. They attribute the practice of democratic centralism to authoritarianism in the Party. They consider any criticism or punishment of a Party member a violation of democracy and a sign of dictatorship, militarism or feudalism.

The above interpretations are totally lop-sided and extremist, thus detrimental to the fostering of democracy in the Party. Both theory and practice prove that the nature and level of democracy in a Party are not displayed in how many opposition groups or opposite views it has, or whether there is the rat race or servile obedience among its members. The most important factor to decide how democratic a Party is lies in how well the organization enhances its members' wisdom and observes their right to equality. This is similar to the fact that the nature and level of democracy of a society is determined by how its working-class population's interests and resolve are served.

Democracy in a Party should be manifested in the following major criteria.

Firstly, its members' freedom of thinking is respected. Independent and creative thinking and straightforward discussions are encouraged to make use of every cadre's and member's wisdom in the preparation, issuance and implementation of decisions. At Party conferences, every member has the right to discuss and engage in the Party's businesses, criticize and question other members, express their opinion in full, and when necessary, reserve them or forward them to higher-level bodies up to the Party national congress. Decisions are made in consultation with the entire membership and put to the majority vote.

Secondly, the Party's leading bodies at all levels are elected democratically through secret voting. During the preparation for a Party committee election and in personnel work, the Party unit should listen to Party members and the masses and combine the recommendation of candidates from competent agencies with Party members' nomination and self-nomination. Every Party member has the right to recommend candidates, nominate himself or herself and vote. Self-nomination is encouraged.

Thirdly, the Party's leadership is carried out on a collective and personal liability basis. Party committees and their heads should report their work to the collectives that elected them and be accountable to them. The collectives and the masses should inspect and supervise their leadership bodies.

Fourthly, criticism and self-criticism within the Party should be exercised regularly, discipline and solidarity ensured.

Fifthly, the promotion, rewarding and punishment of a Party member should be done collectively and that person has the right to voice all his/her opinion before his/her organization decides on the punishment. All Party members are equal before the Party's punishment.

Finally, Party leaders work closely with the grassroots committees and the masses and regularly communicate with the Party members and the masses.

Clearly, if the above criteria are met, democracy in the Party will be promoted and its wisdom and strength will be well tapped.

Since its 6th Congress, the Party has made progress in practicing democracy in its activities including the preparation of formal

decisions, election of Party committees at various levels, and judging and promotion of cadres. Progress has also been made in the cadres' work style and in the relations between high-ranking cadres and their inferiors, between Party committees and administrative authorities, and between Party committees and mass organizations. Criticism and self-criticism drives initiated by the Politburo, the Secretariat and the Party Central Committee at central plenums have wrought changes in Party leadership bodies' work style. However, it must be acknowledged that such progress is quite modest and democracy in the Party is far from satisfactory. Lack of democracy, formalistic democracy, hierarchy, patriarchalism, authoritarianism and prejudice are fairly commonplace. Quite a few high-ranking officials have become "tycoons," "barons," and "baronesses" in their offices, abused their power and stayed out of touch with the masses. As a result, a number of ordinary people and Party members have had to suffer from injustice and misery. At the same time, excessive or extreme democracy has emerged, causing disorganization and unruliness, disunity and localism, and violation of the Party's discipline.

Though there may be objective reasons for these problems, the major reason is that Party members have not had full and consistent awareness of democracy. More importantly, there isn't a reasonable mechanism for practicing democracy in the Party yet.

2. Introducing detailed regulations for democracy in the Party

Reality shows that there must be a proper mechanism and detailed regulations if democracy is to be achieved in the Party. In other words, democracy-related issues should be "institutionalized" and "legalized" and binding on all Party members and organizations.

The Party's Statutes has defined concrete regulations on practice of democratic centralism and promotion of democracy in its units. A lot of decrees, resolutions, and work regulations have also pointed out necessary points. In the face of new developments and requirements of *đổi mới*, these documents need to be further revised. For example, there should be a regulation for regular supply of information to Party cadres and members so as to encourage their initiative and independent thinking as the science and technology revolution

develops vigorously, the world changes rapidly, and the amount of information is plentiful and diversified. The Party committees should respect their members' right to information.

The Party committees at various levels, particularly the Central Committee, need to highlight their roles in preparing the Party's work projects. When necessary, special committees consisting of several Party members may be set up and put in charge of preparing a project. Project drafts, depending on their nature and scope, must be made in consultation with lower-level Party organizations and members. For issues that are new, difficult, or controversial, several drafts should be prepared or pilot implementation should be carried out before a resolution is reached.

It is necessary to work out regulations for the Politburo's reporting to Party Central Committee plenums, the Standing Committee's reporting to Party committees' sessions, and Party committees' reporting to the Party units or agencies that elected them. It is also necessary to formulate regulations for when to conduct criticism and self-criticism and votes of confidence for Party cadres and members, from the highest level to the grassroots. For example, once a year, each Politburo member criticizes himself/herself, or the Politburo reports on its activities before a Central Committee plenum, or Party committees at various levels criticize themselves and listen to comments from the masses and lower-level committees; secretaries, deputy secretaries and standing committee members criticize themselves before the executive committee, or the executive committee members criticize themselves at their Party cell. Those who intimidate critics or take advantage of criticism to slander others and break the solidarity within the Party should be punished severely.

There should be a deadline for considering Party members' reservations. Upon such a deadline, the relevant Party unit should pronounce its conclusion about them. It can hold discussions to debate those reservations or experiment them when necessary. If there opinions are proved right in reality, they must be taken up to amend and ameliorate the Party's resolutions.

Conferences of representatives of Party units at all levels can be held between two national congresses in order to enhance their role

as supervisors of Party executive committees' activities, timely revise policies, replace cadres who fail to fulfill their tasks, and consolidate the Party committees. Ad hoc conferences can be convened when necessary or when two-thirds of affiliating Party units so demand. Resolutions of such conferences do not need to be approved by the Party committee convening the conferences.

It is necessary to work out specific criteria for every post and apply a three-age structure at Party committees. Secretaries of Party committees higher than the grassroots level and the General Secretary should not stay in the post for more than two terms or 10 years. The recommendations of the candidates for Party committees must be carried out at the grassroots level. The Party committee, which calls a conference, must not dismiss candidates recommended by the lower-level units. Any cadre appointment must be done in consultation with the grassroots level and voted by a majority. Otherwise, such an appointment won't be effected.

The system for employing managerial, technical and professional officers and civil servants through examinations should be applied extensively. At mid-term, it is necessary to reassess them. Whoever found disqualified should be dismissed immediately rather than by the end of the term. The assessment of a cadre must be definitely done in consultation with cadre management agencies, the masses, the lower-level units, and those who know and communicate with that cadre. There should be a system for rewarding those who discover and recommend people of real talent and high morality. Meanwhile, it is necessary to punish those who are bossy, factionist and deliberately violate democracy regulations in the personnel work.

Punishment of a Party member must be deliberated at the relevant Party cell. Expulsions of Party members must be approved by at least two-thirds of the members of that Party cell. After the punishment is decided, if the Party member or unit subject to that punishment disagree with it, they may request review of the decision and lodge a complaint to a higher-level body within a month. Upon receiving such a complaint, the higher-level Party cell and inspection committee must inform the addressee and conduct an investigation within a month at the latest and settle the complaint within six months.

Any members expelled from the Party can lodge their complaints to the higher-level competent bodies, including the Central Committee. Any decisions on punishing cadres and Party committee members must be communicated to the Party cell of that member. In case of wrongly made punishments, the relevant Party unit must exculpate that member and reinstate his/her legitimate rights. At the same time, responsible bodies must inspect such cases and severely punish the individuals or the units that have made the mistake.

It is necessary to design a system for leaders at various levels working directly with the grassroots level and communicate with the masses and their inferiors in an attempt to deal with urgent issues timely and resolutely.

3. Working out a mechanism for supervising, inspecting and ensuring the practice of democracy in the Party

Rules and regulations do not necessarily solve all matters related to democracy. Reality has shown that quite a few articles in the Party Statutes have not been strictly observed and even have been seriously violated. In order to enforce rules and regulations, high-ranking officials and leaders must observe them in the first place. This is quite obvious. What's more crucial is that the authorized agencies closely inspect the implementation of the rules and regulations in combination with the regular supervision by the masses and the strong struggle by public opinion.

The Party's inspection committees at various levels should be entitled to more power and assume a stronger sense of responsibility, especially with regard to the inspection of the implementation of the principles on the Party organization and operation, the executive committees' work regulations, eligibility of Party members and Party committee members, and punishment of Party members and lower-level Party units. Therefore, the congress, instead of the Party committees, should elect an inspection board. In case the board is elected by a Party committee, it is necessary to clarify its authority and function.

It is necessary to severely punish those who violate the Party's discipline and the State's laws and those who are found to be corrupt and authoritarian, and bully masses.

The masses should be encouraged to fight against malpractices. In case where the Party is in power, the combat against malpractices among high-ranking Party members cannot be effective without public opinion and the participation of the masses.

Public opinion is associated with publicity. Publicity is an effective measure to ensure the practice of democracy in the Party. Activities of the Party, Party committees and leaders at various levels should be made public reasonably according to their nature and scope. Special attention should be paid to making public financial issues, preferential treatment systems, contradictory comments and punishments. It is necessary to put an end to the practice of keeping secret issues that do not deserve being so and “internal resolution” of cases that are obviously illegal.

In this connection, the mass media plays an especially important role. It is inadvisable to prejudice against the wrongdoings of certain journalists or newspapers, because this may lead to doubts about, or denial of the effective strength of public opinion. It is unwise for anyone to be afraid of the media if he/she is innocent and impersonal. Experience has shown that only by enhancing publicity and using public opinion properly can democracy in the Party be promoted and vices in the Party and society be uncovered and punished. Lenin once said that publicity in criticism was a miraculous medicine to heal the wounds.

During the practice of democracy, it is necessary to correct extreme, deviant, opportunistic, or demagogic acts or schemes, which aim to please the masses or pretend to be democratic. At the same time, it's necessary to stop acts that are formalistically democratic such as a Party committee or authorized person only consulting the masses and his inferiors after having made a decision on promoting a cadre, or a higher-level Party committee, for form's sake, recommending its member to the grassroots level conference which in turn sends that person to attend a higher-level congress. Such practices are no longer effective in the current context.

RENOVATION OF THE MODE OF PARTY LEADERSHIP TOWARDS THE STATE¹

I. Some general issues of the mode of Party leadership

1. The concept of the “*mode of Party leadership*” was first officially used in Việt Nam at the 6th Plenum of the Party Central Committee (6th tenure) (March 1989) alongside the concept of a “*political system*”. After that, this concept was mentioned in Notice 172 of the Politburo of the 6th Party Central Committee (November 1989) and in the “*Program for national construction in the transitional period to socialism*” (June 1991). The Resolution of the 6th Plenum of the Party Central Committee (6th tenure) stipulated: “Renovating the organization and the mode of operation of the political system,” “renovating the organization and the mode of leadership of the Party, State and mass organizations” and “the Party must renovate itself in the content and mode of its leadership.”

Since the 7th Party Congress, in all the documents of the Party and State, the concept of the “mode of Party leadership” has been popularly used and become a familiar term. In the summary report on the Party building work from 1975 to 1995, it was confirmed that the mode of leadership was an important issue in Party building. Some social scientific researches at the national level done between 1996 and 2000 stated that the mode of leadership is an issue of not only professional but also perceptual characters.

“Mode of leadership” is not identical with “mode of operation”, but a basic issue of the “mode of operation” of our Party as a ruling Party. The mode of leadership is not separate from the content of

¹ A summary speech at the conference *Renovation of the Mode of Party Leadership toward the State* organized by the Central Theoretical Council in Hà Nội on 23 June 2004.

leadership and is in a dialectical relationship with the organization system, cadres, operation mode, working style and working manner of the whole system and each Party member and cadre.

The mode of Party leadership has various scopes and levels:

- *The Party leads society*: including such fields as the economy, politics, culture, society, national defense, security and foreign relations.

- *The Party leads the political system*: including the State, the Fatherland Front, mass organizations and its own organizational system.

- *The Party leads the State*: including the National Assembly, the government and judicial agencies.

- *The Party leads at central, local and grassroots levels*.

In each scope and at each level, the mode of Party leadership is different.

In Việt Nam and other countries where there is one ruling Party, the mode of Party leadership is not similar to that in the countries with a multi-Party system.

2. The mode of Party leadership towards the State is an important matter in the Party leadership in general, especially when one Party holds power. For Việt Nam, this is a difficult task because of the lack of experience. For a long time, the research on the mode of Party leadership towards the State has usually been included in the research on the general mode of leadership.

“Reforming the Working Style,” a famous work by President Hồ Chí Minh in 1947, mentioned the basic issues about the behavior and the morality of revolutionaries and about the style and mode of leaders. In Resolution 23 of the Party Central Committee (3rd tenure, December 1974), the relationship between the Party and the State was examined deeply and the missions of renovating and intensifying the Party leadership towards the State were pointed out, remedying the confusion between the functions of the Party and the State to the situation where the Party may either act as Pooh-Bah or loosen its leadership over the operation of State bodies.

For the past few years, research on the Party leadership towards the State has been considered as a fundamental but urgent subject with great theoretical and practical values.

3. In reality, the mode of Party leadership towards the State is a system of methods, mechanisms and modes that Party executive committees and organizations use to influence the operation of the apparatus of the government to make it work effectively under the ideology and the guidelines of the Party for the benefit of the masses.

The mode of Party leadership towards the State varies from period to period, region to region, aspect to aspect and level to level, despite the similar basic requirements. In the present period, when Việt Nam is speeding up industrialization and modernization, developing the socialist-oriented market economy, building a socialist law-governed state, democratizing society and internationally integrating, the renovation of the Party leadership mode towards the whole society in general and the State in particular is of great importance in order to improve the quality of Party leadership, strengthen the effectiveness of State management, bring into play the right to mastery of the masses and bolster the aggregate strength of the whole political system. At present, the research into and review of the reality of the mode of Party leadership towards the State for the previous 20 years of renovation is extremely important, which helps prepare for the 10th Party Congress. However, this is a complicated task with some unclear issues requiring revision. This is also a sensitive issue, so if sound approaches and thoughts are lacking, one can label others as “conservatives” or “opportunists”.

II. Evaluation of the renovation of the mode of Party leadership towards the State during the past 20 years

In reality, during the past 20 years, the mode of Party leadership towards the State has dramatically changed to become more democratic and effective.

Việt Nam is more deeply aware of the position, role, function, mission, content and mode of operation of each individual organization in the political system and the dialectical relationship between these organizations, and realizes the objective needs of frequent renovation of the mode of Party leadership. The Vietnamese Communist Party has repeatedly stated that there is no objective need for the multi-Party system in Việt Nam; the Vietnamese Communist Party is the only ruling Party, which is the result of over 70 years of

revolution of the Vietnamese people. The Vietnamese government is a socialist law-governed state of the people, by the people and for the people, an important tool for the people to express their right to mastery. Strengthening and renovating the Party leadership towards the State is a decisive factor ensuring the validity and effectiveness of State management for the benefit of the people. Moreover, a strong and effective State is a decisive factor to carry out all political tasks assigned by the Party and to reinforce the leading role of the Party towards the whole society. Reinforcing Party leadership and promoting the effectiveness of State management are two united aspects that are not contradictory but supplementary to each other as the condition for identifying and carrying out the correct functions of each organization and to avoid the state of "being overlapping" or the "slackening" of Party leadership.

The renovation of the mode of Party leadership towards the State for the passing time is manifested in the following tasks. First, the Party has renewed the making of resolutions, their spreading and implementation in a way to heighten the role of the State and the law. Second, the Party has paid attention to the making of laws, ordinances and the institutionalization of Party policies and guidelines. The election of deputies of the National Assembly and People's Councils at all levels is fairer; citizens have the right to stand as candidates in an election, and to choose the worthy candidate; the candidacies are introduced by the Party organizations but not imposed; there are more professional and specialized deputies in the National Assembly who meet more regularly to make new laws and decide on the use of the annual national budget and supervise the government's activities; there are public hearings at National Assembly meetings; when there is disagreement on some important issues or when the executive committees are preparing for new resolutions, the executive committees and Party organizations often ask for and listen to the opinion of the public, of the National Assembly, the people-elected agencies, Fatherland Front and other organizations.

For government and administrative bodies of different levels, Party executive committees and organizations exercise their leadership through resolutions with ideas, opinions and guidelines; when important issues emerge, the Government's Party Personnel

Bureau and administrations of various levels should actively report to the Politburo, Secretariat or Party Standing Committees of the same level. The management of the executive work is the responsibility of the administrations of various levels.

The judiciary institutions (courts, procuracies, etc.) abide by the Code of Criminal Procedure, the Code of Civil Procedure and other related laws and ordinances so that trials are conducted in accordance with the principles laid down in the Resolution of the Politburo on the reform of judiciary activities, independence in investigation, prosecution, trial and proceedings. Party executive committees can be consulted in important political cases, but they do not interfere with the determination of charges and sentences.

In other social fields, democracy is becoming more and more popular. The guideline of developing a multi-sector economy following market mechanism with Government management is institutionalized in laws and ordinances. Nowadays, all citizens are allowed to do business legally so private business is developing quickly. With the instruction of the Politburo on the elaboration of the Regulation on grassroots-level democracy, the masses can directly discuss, decide and supervise the activities related to their rights and interests. After the issuance of the laws on the press and publication, the press has developed considerably in terms of both quantity and quality with various and multi-dimensional coverage and has helped to publicize many negative cases.

After 20 years of renovation, the mode of Party leadership towards society has changed from direct leadership through resolutions and instructions to indirect leadership through the State via the institutionalization and construction of a legal system, from the mechanism in which the Party leads, manages and administers (especially at the local level) to the mechanism in which the Party provides orientations while the State manages and administers, and the people supervise, check and decide (directly or through representative bodies); the working schedules, regulations and styles have become clearer and more coordinated. The institutionalization of the working relationship between Party and State agencies has been given due attention.

However, there remain several shortcomings. The mechanism in which the Party leads, the people masters and the State manages has not been persuasively and profoundly clarified. Leadership and management is still confused in many fields. In other fields, there are only general regulations and principles without specific rules, especially in the economy, finance, culture, arts, the press and publication. There still exists the situation in which the Party executive committee covers the job of the local government and the higher authority interferes with the job of the lower one or the lower authority depends on the higher one. There is no mechanism to promote the role of the people in supervising and the role of the Fatherland Front in criticizing. The general feeling is that the Party still covers too many jobs without any reasonable delegation of responsibilities so that democracy is not yet to be brought into play.

The objective reason of that situation is the new and complicated nature of the issue, the transition to the new management mechanism and the lack of experience. The subjective reasons lie in the fact that some Party members and cadres are not determined to change their views to understand the relationship between Party leadership, the people's mastery and State management.

III. Continue to renovate the mode of Party leadership towards the State

For the time being, Việt Nam needs to bring into play the recorded achievements and experience and remedy the shortcomings to renovate in a stronger way the mode of Party leadership towards the State. To this end, Việt Nam needs to do as follows:

- It should be well aware of and grasp the purpose and the requirement of the renovation of the mode of Party leadership towards the State, so that Party leadership would become more effective; State management more efficient; the people's mastery further brought into full play; the whole political system consistent, comprehensive and powerful. Party leadership and State management should not be opposed. The Party exercises its leadership of the State comprehensively with suitable measures and mechanisms, and at the same time, the Party requires all Party organizations and Party members to respect

the authority, responsibility, regulations and working discipline of State agencies, to operate within the framework of the Constitution and laws, and to set good examples in abiding by the policies, laws and other decisions of the State. In specific fields at different levels, it's necessary to avoid the confusion between the functions of Party and State organizations which leads to the fact that the Party covers the job of the State or the leading role of the Party is underestimated. The operation of Party organizations and State agencies should not be confused or mechanically separated. The renovation of the mode of Party leadership needs to be carried out proactively and expeditiously but not hurriedly. The fundamental criteria for evaluating the correctness of the renovation process are a stronger Party and State and a better expression of the mastery of the people.

- It should renovate the mode of its leadership together with the renovation of the operation of State agencies, especially the National Assembly, government and judiciary offices, the renovation in organizing agencies, appointing cadres, improving the quality, knowledge and ability of cadres, and providing modern working tools to meet the new demands.

- It should grasp the principles and content of Party leadership. That is, Party leadership is conducted through guidelines and directions which are manifested in its resolutions and programs; the Party arranges and manages cadres; the implementation of Party guidelines and directions should be supervised; Party leadership is conducted via education, persuasion and bright examples set by Party members, and through each Party member and organization.

- The renovation of the mode of Party leadership towards the State in the current period should mainly focus on:

+ Renovating the promulgation of resolutions to avoid overlapping. The issuance of resolution should be well prepared and the resolution itself brief, clear, and easy to understand, remember, implement and supervise. The viewpoints of the Party should be expressed in specific policies.

+ Renovating the mode of learning of resolutions to make it more practical. We should categorize those who learn to apply to practice

and those who just learn to understand and cooperate. The process of resolution-learning is also that of discussing, making plans and proposing the implementation thereof.

+ Renovating the direction of the implementation of resolutions. This has been the most decisive but weakest working link for many years, which may cause the situation in which the resolution is right but cannot be applied to practice. To implement resolutions effectively, State agencies need to institutionalize them into specific plans and policies. Party committees at all levels must choose the key link, identify the focus at certain times and direct the administration to make plans for each field, to appoint leaders, to set deadlines, to ensure spiritual and material conditions, mechanisms and finances to solve each problem at a time. There need to be mechanisms to evaluate the ability and quality of cadres with a strict and clear reward and punishment system and a clear and fair policy to utilize them.

+ Renovating the working style and consider it an important content in the mode of Party leadership. It is necessary to create a specific, democratic and disciplined style in which cadres must match their words with their deeds under close supervision and examination.

+ Building regulations on the working style and working process on the basis of identifying the functions and responsibilities of each organization, assigning cadres to appropriate positions with clear and suitable delegation of authority and responsibility. For example, it is important to determine which needs to ask for the opinions of the Politburo or Secretariat (or the Standing Committee of the Party Committee at local levels) and which can be solved by local administrations. The direction and instruction of the Central Committee for Ideology and Culture should be differentiated from the State management of the Ministry of Culture and Information in the field of culture, the press and publication.

SPEEDING UP THE RESEARCH, STUDY OF HỒ CHÍ MINH THOUGHT AND ACTING UPON IT¹

The Vietnamese Communist Party and the Vietnamese people are implementing Instruction 23-CT/TW of the Secretariat of the Party Central Committee (9th tenure) on the promotion of the study, communication, and education of Hồ Chí Minh Thought. This is a meaningful task not only on the occasion of the 113th birth anniversary of President Hồ Chí Minh but also for a long time to come.

When thinking about President Hồ Chí Minh, every Vietnamese person cannot help feeling moved, missing him and being thankful for his great contribution as a hero of national liberation, a great man of culture, an indomitable international communist, the founder, leader and trainer of the Vietnamese Communist Party and State, a crystalized symbol of Vietnamese intellect and mettle, and the man who has brought honor to the Vietnamese country.

Born into a patriotic and poor Confucian family and living close to the working people in a region heroic and rich in cultural tradition, as an intelligent person, President Hồ Chí Minh soon acquired such qualities as industriousness, sacrifice and compassion. He hated all forms of oppression and was determined to find ways to save the people and the country. He soon realized the power of the people and the impasse of the patriotic movements at the time.

On a summer day in June 1911, he was determined to go abroad to find a way for national salvation. His belongings included his profound knowledge of Vietnamese culture and his endless love for the country and the people. During his journey through thick and thin, he was working, learning, observing and researching

¹ Article in *Cộng sản Review*, Issue 19, July 2013.

the theory and experience of other revolutions, taking part in the activities of the French Socialist Party and joining the French Communist Party. He then drew valuable lessons about the choices his country could make during a revolution. In December 1920, he became one of the founders of the French Communist Party and the first Vietnamese communist.

On that journey, he also found out that the origin of the people's sufferings was the oppression and exploitation by the capitalist and imperialist countries. His awareness of social classes emerged. As a historical necessity, he casually came to Marxism and Leninism. When he read the first draft of the thesis on national and colonial questions by Lenin, he found fundamental issues of the guideline for national liberation and emancipation of the classes; national independence and socialism, the working class must seize the national flag and that the national revolution of each country should be connected to the international proletarian revolution.

In December 1924, under the instructions of the Communist International, he went to Guangzhou (China) to directly manage the preparations for the establishment of the Vietnamese Communist Party. Here, he introduced Marxism-Leninism to Việt Nam, trained some core members and continued to prepare ideologically and organizationally for the foundation of the Vietnamese Communist Party. His documents were heartily welcomed by the Vietnamese working class and people, and patriotic Vietnamese were attracted to follow the road of proletarian revolution, kindling a great surge of struggle across the country. The struggles of the working class and people strongly developed.

In the spring of 1930, at a meeting chaired by Nguyễn Ái Quốc (the name of President Hồ Chí Minh at that time), communist organizations in Việt Nam (the Indochinese Communist Party, the An Nam Communist Party and the Indochinese Communist Federation) were merged into one party named the Vietnamese Communist Party. At that meeting, the *Abridged Political Program*, *Abridged Tactics*, *Brief Program* and *Brief Regulations* of the Party drafted by Nguyễn Ái Quốc were discussed and approved. These documents were considered the first political program of the Party, which reflected the creative application of Marxism-Leninism and international experience to the Vietnamese situation, the

connection between national independence and socialism, the harmony between patriotism and true internationalism, and the relationship between the developments of the Vietnamese revolution with the international revolutionary movement. At this point, the Vietnamese revolutionary path was fundamentally formed, and the way for national salvation identified.

The correctness of Hồ Chí Minh Thought was proved by the developments of the revolution, and during this process, it was gradually supplemented, developed, and completed, and it, alongside Marxism-Leninism, became the torch lighting the path for the Vietnamese revolution.

President Hồ Chí Minh was a great practical revolutionary, a talented organizer, a brilliant theorist and a fabulous strategist for the Vietnamese revolution. The special aspect is that Hồ Chí Minh Thought is theoretical but not dogmatic and closely related to reality. His reasoning is not sophisticated but plain, understandable, memorable, straightforward and practical. In other words, President Hồ Chí Minh was a realistic and experienced revolutionary theorist and a realist rich in scientific theory. There is the realization of the theory and the theorization of the reality in his thought. Since its 2nd Congress in 1951, the Vietnamese Communist Party has confirmed the great role, significance, and influence of Hồ Chí Minh's Thought, morality and lifestyle. At its 7th Congress in 1991, the Vietnamese Communist Party reconfirmed that Marxism-Leninism and Hồ Chí Minh Thought were the ideological basis of the Party and the guidelines for revolutionary actions.

At the 9th Party Congress (in 2001), the foundation and the main contents of Hồ Chí Minh Thought were briefly but completely presented. The Congress confirmed that: "Hồ Chí Minh Thought lights the way for the Vietnamese struggle to come to victory and is the great spiritual asset of the Party and the people." Hồ Chí Minh Thought is a system of complete and profound views on the fundamental issues of the Vietnamese revolution. These are the ideas of national liberation and class emancipation, of the emancipation of the people and the close relation between national independence and socialism, of the combination of national strength with the epoch's strength, of the power of the people and national unity, of the mastery of the people

and the construction of a state of the people, for the people and by the people, of national all-people defense and the building of the people's armed forces, of cultural and economic development and the continuous improvement in the material and spiritual life of the people, of the revolutionary moral values such as "hardworking, thriftiness, integrity, uprightness, public-spiritedness and selflessness," of the training of the next revolutionary generation, and of the construction of a transparent and strong Party in which Party members are both the leaders and also the loyal servants of the people.

President Hồ Chí Minh had thoroughly grasped the nature of the revolution and the science, dialectics, and humanity of Marxism-Leninism and creatively applied it to the reality of Việt Nam. He also inherited and promoted patriotism, national traditions and the world's cultural quintessence. In solving the problems of the Vietnamese revolution, he contributed to developing Marxism-Leninism in many aspects, especially in the theory of national liberation and socialist orientation in a colonial and dependent country. His thought was and has always been lighting the way for the Vietnamese revolution to final victory and has become a sustainable value of Việt Nam that has been spreading to other countries in the world.

President Hồ Chí Minh is a great person who left his influence on national and international history in the 20th century. Hồ Chí Minh's morality and thought eternally lights the path for the Vietnamese revolution to all victories. His thought is not only valuable in the 20th century or 21st century but ever after.

Under the banner of Hồ Chí Minh Thought and the leadership of the Vietnamese Communist Party, the Vietnamese people completed the mission of democratic national revolution and moved on to the transitional period to socialism. The renovation process during the past 20 years has recorded major and important achievements. The descendants of President Hồ Chí Minh have been trying hard to complete his will to strive for a Vietnamese country to be peaceful, united, independent, democratic and wealthy, and capable of contributing a significant part to the world's revolution.

Given the success of the renovation, Việt Nam is now speeding up the process of industrialization and modernization in a different position and with a different strength. However, it is still one of the developing countries, while the scientific and technological revolution is growing at an incredible speed all over the world. Some developed countries have moved on from an industrial economy to a knowledge-based economy and the global information society. The world is changing fast in a complicated way. The socialist and international working class movement has had to face many difficulties; the class and national struggle in the world is severe; and hostile forces are trying to destroy the Vietnamese revolution. That context is presenting Việt Nam with new opportunities and challenges and requiring the Vietnamese Communist Party to be really strong in its political standpoint, united in will and actions, transparent in lifestyles and strict in organization.

Therefore, an important task in this period is to effectively implement the resolutions on Party building, especially the Resolution of the 6th Plenum of the Party Central Committee (2nd time, 8th tenure) and the Conclusion of the 4th Plenum of the Party Central Committee (9th tenure) to speed up the movement for Party building and rectification, the education and training of revolutionary moral values, and the fight against individualism, corruption, bureaucracy and wastefulness. The Party must promote democracy, uphold discipline and principles, renovate the mode of leadership, and pay attention to creating a strong pool of cadres to inherit and develop the glorious career of the Party. Besides persistently upholding, creatively applying, and strongly developing Marxism-Leninism, Việt Nam needs to expedite researching, studying, and spreading Hồ Chí Minh Thought, and to apply it creatively to the renovation and construction of the country.

Following Hồ Chí Minh Thought, Việt Nam is determined to bring into play the power of national unity, effectively implement the resolutions of the Party Central Committee, successfully complete the task of economic development and actively integrate into the global economy. Việt Nam must heighten revolutionary vigilance, defeat all schemes and tricks of its enemies, defend national independence and socialism, combine true patriotism with pure internationalism, and reinforce the international unity

for peace, stability and development. Việt Nam should also assert the fundamental principles of Marxism-Leninism and Hồ Chí Minh Thought and their creative application by the Vietnamese Communist Party as well as effectively fight against hostile allegations, reject wrong opinions distorting Marxism-Leninism and Hồ Chí Minh Thought, and protect the revolutionary ideal and the way to socialism under the leadership of the Party.

Since the 7th Party Congress, the research on Hồ Chí Minh Thought has gained some important achievements and the education of Hồ Chí Minh Thought has recorded some progress, thus encouraging the masses to live, struggle, work and study following Uncle Hồ's example. However, the education of Hồ Chí Minh Thought is superficial and the result is limited. The education form and the method are not vivid and there is a lack of connection between the education of Hồ Chí Minh Thought and the solution of some practical problems in reality, and it is not possible yet to create a wide and deep movement of educating and following Hồ Chí Minh Thought. The defense of Hồ Chí Minh Thought is not timely and effective.

According to the instruction of the Politburo, the study and education of Hồ Chí Minh Thought is an important task in the ideological work and needs to be implemented seriously and effectively. The education of Hồ Chí Minh Thought means learning about its fundamental content and the core principles in both general and specific aspects, and in both standpoints and thinking methods. It is of special importance to grasp the ideas about the revolutionary target and ideals, the specific tasks and the way forward for the country. It is also important to keep to the target of national independence closely related to socialism, and the motto of "nothing is more valuable than independence and freedom" because only in socialism can nations be freed from oppression and exploitation. Despite the difficulties, it is necessary to build Việt Nam into a wealthy people, strong country and an equitable, democratic and civilized society. To build a socialist country, it is important to have socialist people. Therefore, national unity should be brought into play by creating an alliance of the working class with the peasantry and the intelligentsia under the

leadership of the Vietnamese Communist Party. Việt Nam must frequently construct, renovate and rectify the Party and the whole political system, making the Party transparent, strong and closely attached to the people. Additionally, it must heighten the sense of independence and self-reliance and expand international solidarity and cooperation. The education of Hồ Chí Minh Thought also includes the study and training of the revolutionary moral values and the lifestyle of Hồ Chí Minh.

The research and study of Hồ Chí Minh Thought should create powerful changes in each person, each sector and at each level, stir up a movement in implementing the political tasks and in practicing the revolutionary values, following Hồ Chí Minh's example, and help hold back the degeneration of moral values and lifestyles in society. Each Party member has to truly live for the Party and the people and deserve their trust and love.

The research and study of Hồ Chí Minh Thought must become a widespread political program in the Party and the people and also a self-aware and frequent daily activity relating to the movement of implementing Uncle Hồ's will, the guidelines and policies of the Party and the laws of the State to create a remarkable change in fulfilling specific and practical tasks and promoting socio-economic development and the struggle against bureaucracy, corruption and other social evils. There should be an annual review on the occasion of Uncle Hồ's birthday anniversary to timely praise good individuals and communities and criticize bad ones.

The research, study and acting upon Hồ Chí Minh Thought are an important and necessary task, especially in this current period. If each Party committee and each Party member grasp the content of Hồ Chí Minh Thought and train and improve themselves based on his advice, the Vietnamese Communist Party will become more transparent and stronger, do away with the risks facing a ruling party, conserve its good nature and tradition and continue to be loved and supported by the people. The Party will forever be a Communist Party—a party of President Hồ Chí Minh, the judicious and trust-worthy leader of the whole nation.

THE IDEOLOGICAL STRUGGLE IN THE CURRENT SITUATION¹

Ideological struggle is a part of the national struggle and class struggle and also reflects these struggles. Ideological struggle includes struggles about the theoretical view, political idea, program, and strategy, which take place in all fields such as the economy, politics, culture, education, military, diplomacy, etc., in many forms (open, legal, semi-open, secret), through many means (newspapers, publications, cultural activities, seminars, face-to-face meetings, oral communication).

Ideological struggle is a regular job, despite ups and downs generating from the political situation and balance of power. This is a bloodless but extremely tense, complicated, and fierce battle. This battle requires a certain theoretical level, knowledge, and strength from the whole nation. It plays an important role not only in the consolidation of daily ideology but also in strategic contribution to the protection of the ideological foundation of the Party, the State and the regime, the construction and protection of the theoretical foundation, revolutionary policy line, and directions to lead the people and to defeat all the schemes of the hostile forces.

While the national and international context is rather complicated and hostile forces are trying to destroy the Vietnamese revolution, Việt Nam is carrying out a comprehensive renovation, developing its market economy, implementing an open-door policy, integration, cooperation and struggle in peaceful co-existence. In this context ideological struggle is becoming more and more important.

¹ See *Xây dựng và chỉnh đốn Đảng: Một số vấn đề lý luận và thực tiễn* (Party Building and Rectification: Some Theoretical and Practical Issues), National Political Publishing House, 2012, p. 280.

The basic and long-term scheme of the hostile forces is to demolish socialism, the leadership of the Communist Party, Marxism-Leninism and Hồ Chí Minh Thought in Việt Nam. To this end, the hostile forces have applied different strategies in different campaigns. They have done this patiently and firmly. “Peaceful evolution” is one of the anti-revolutionary strategies carried out by the imperialists since 1940, which includes “peaceful tricks to gain success.” Many experts and politicians in the West called it by different names such as “peaceful transformation,” “peaceful modification,” “peaceful competition,” “peaceful revolution,” or “velvet revolution,” or “street revolution. In this strategy, the ideological and cultural activity is considered a “breakthrough,” “a bridge to the battlefield,” a key factor to cause disbelief, theoretical and ideological chaos and a space to introduce bourgeois ideas and gradually demolish socialist ideas. It is said that imperialism’s strategies usually include two major ways: the invasion of one country by economic and military activities and the disintegration of one country through ideological and cultural activities. In the former way, they use the strength of the invaders and the latter is based on cunning tricks, which involves inciting internal divisions.

Recently, some waves of protest against Vietnamese political ideology have arisen. It could be because of the new development in the world and in the region, some difficulties and challenges in Việt Nam’s economy, the increase of social evils such as corruption, embezzlement, drug-related crime, prostitution, and the growing gap between the rich and the poor. In some areas, bureaucracy and lack of democracy lead to mass demonstrations. The hostile forces and opportunists think that it is a good time for them to push for changes in the politics of Việt Nam, so they carry out a lot of activities with new schemes and strategies.

This powerful attack on Vietnamese ideology and cultures is considered to be a key strategy by both outside and inside forces. It also creates internal opposition in the Party and in society, which step by step can develop an internal opposing factor to destroy Việt Nam from the inside out. The strategy “extermination of the enemy” has been researched since 1992 and began to be applied in 1996 to replace the strategies “pre-emptive measures” and “blockade and

embargo." The leading principle of this strategy is the use of the methods of "interference," "approach," "inducement," cooperation, and integration.

The inducement policy is carried out through allied powers, non-governmental organizations, cultural, educational and scientific exchanges and cooperation activities to penetrate and gather intelligence information in order to change the ideology or politics, to bribe cadres, and to infiltrate agents. Contacts with discontented individuals, opportunists, intelligence agents, or people, who are working and studying abroad, are also established. Some people with radical ideas are chosen to take part in seminars and study programs abroad; teachers and students from their own country are sent to Việt Nam to study, do research, and hold exchange for practical purposes.

Religious and national activities are opportunities to interfere with Việt Nam's domestic issues and to carry out illegal missionary work. Open forums such as meetings and seminars have been corrupted to propagandize for "freedom," "democracy," "human rights," individual and extremist opinions, practical and decadent lifestyles and to slander us for violating democracy and human rights. The theoretical agreement that "human rights are more important than sovereignty" is used as a reason to interfere in other countries.

Some ideological-destroying centers increase propaganda activities against Việt Nam. They make use of the media and oral communication. There are tens of radio and television stations, hundreds of newspapers and magazines in Vietnamese (some of them are very reactionary) that propagandize against Việt Nam. They also organize meetings, interview the people with the same point of view and supply Việt Nam with a lot of documents, books, leaflets, videos, and CDs with reactionary contents. They also use the internet and help anyone who wants to get access to misleading information they post on the internet. They use telephones to interview, incite, extol, and induce some people with erroneous opinions.

Some reactionary organizations of Vietnamese exiles continue to use the mask of anticorruption, prodemocracy, and human rights

to propagandize, and incite internal division. Some organizations change the methods by colluding with some discontented people in Việt Nam and call upon overseas Vietnamese to rally support for the internal forces. They also speed up cultural, educational, and research exchanges, seminars, visits, and repatriations to realize their intentions.

Some reactionaries under the disguise of religion try to propagandize, mobilize and incite people to follow a certain religion, to struggle for influence and to break out of the government's control. Some religious dignitaries carry out illegal missionary work and excite followers to oppose the policies of the Party and State. For example, they incite their followers neither to enter the army, nor grow long-time industrial plants, nor obey the family planning policy. They actively develop religion in the remote areas, the former revolutionary bases, and the border areas. They induce followers including Party members to take part in superstitious activities.

Some opportunists and discontented people in Việt Nam take advantage of forums and their relationships to publicize their wrongful opinions. They keep writing petitions to slander the Vietnamese government, to induce people, especially the youth, students, artists, intellectuals, to overthrow the Vietnamese government.

All the above-mentioned activities with their different manifestations, characteristics, scopes and degrees aim at attacking the leadership of the Vietnamese Communist Party, requiring the abolition of this leadership and socialism in Việt Nam. There is nothing new in their opinions. They are all the ideas that the anticommunists used to criticize Marxism-Leninism. These ideas are as follows:

- Deny the achievements of the revolution and the renovation. Exaggerate the drawbacks of Việt Nam; paint a gloomy picture of the reality, scatter disbelief, and destroy the faith of the people and the cadres. They lay the blame at the wrong policies, the weak leadership and management of the Party and State.

- Deny Marxism-Leninism and Hồ Chí Minh Thought logically from low to high, from outside to inside, from phenomenon to the

essence. At first, they criticize and exaggerate the shortcomings in society and then blame them on the false political system, which is in turn caused by the wrong theory originating from Marxism-Leninism and Party leadership. For Marxism-Leninism, at first, they rejected proletarian dictatorship, class struggle; and then, gradually they deny the historic mission of the working class and deny the theory of socialist economy (historical materialism), and deny the doctrine of surplus value (the cornerstone in Marx' economical doctrine). Then from denial of some theoretical points (but still recognizing dialectics and methodology), they gradually deny both the methodology and dialectics (dialectical materialism), which is the spirit of Marxism.

- Deny socialism and socialist orientation and try to prove the eternity of capitalism. They claim that a market economy is not compatible with socialism and that only by privatization and complete integration into capitalism can Việt Nam become rich.

- Deny or underestimate the leading role of the Communist Party. Criticize and blame the Party for being like an obstacle to the development of the country and support the multi-party system.

- Deny the principle of democratic centralism and require limitless democracy without paying attention to the economic foundation or intellectual standards of the people in Việt Nam. They claim that democratic centralism is dogmatic and Party-oriented. They ask to publish private newspapers and establish private publishing houses.

- Incite internal division by claiming the existence of factions in the Party, the Party Central Committee and the Politburo. They also distort history, falsely accusing and smearing the senior leaders of the Party.

The points of the hostile forces and the opportunists, though not new, are seriously harmful when they are raised in this critical period. There are certainly some social foundations for these wrongful viewpoints to be developed. What is noticeable is that there seems to be harmonious cooperation between the inside and outside forces with different tongues, for the same purposes of consistently, drastically, and cunningly attacking the ideological system, policies,

programs and regulations of the Party, the Constitution of the State, and Party organizations and members.

Realizing the importance of ideological education, the Vietnamese Communist Party and State pay much attention to the struggle to protect the ideological foundation, the policies and programs of the Party and to defeat the schemes of the hostile forces in this field. In many resolutions, the Party Central Committee have pointed out the risks in the new period, including the "peaceful evolution," and heightened the importance of ideological and political education within the Party, firmly fought against the vague, deviatory ideological tendency, criticized and rejected the erroneous viewpoints and timely disciplined the members, even senior leaders whose political viewpoints wavered and who spread these wrongful ideas.

The Central Theoretical Council and some scientific organizations have researched and discussed some theoretical and practical issues to raise the awareness of the Party members and fight against the wavering viewpoints. Some political course books and textbooks, as well as lots of specialized books are published to confirm the scientific and revolutionary characteristics of Marxism-Leninism and Hồ Chí Minh Thought. The teaching and study of the political theory in the Party, in universities and colleges has been reorganized. The Central Theoretical Council has carried out some separate scientific research to appeal against the erroneous viewpoints.

In newspapers and other means of media, there are articles which directly criticize the vague and wavering awareness, and rejected the hostile opinions. A system of speakers is responsible for the oral communication of the sound viewpoints to Party members and the people, and raising their vigilance over the schemes and tricks in the "peaceful evolution" by the hostile forces.

Our foreign relations have been extended; the radio and television net expanded and the relationship with the foreign press enforced. Party committees of various levels pay attention to the ideological education and require all the Party members to obey the principles of the Party and not to keep or spread illegal documents, be watchful for erroneous opinions and protect the fundamental ideological foundations, the programs, policies and regulations of the Party.

Some people with wrongful viewpoints, who violate the Party discipline and spread illegal documents have been patiently convinced, warned, made aware, and sensibly educated; if they still deliberately violate set principles, they will be punished.

Besides the achievements, there are several drawbacks in the Vietnamese ideological struggle. Some Party members and a part of the masses are not fully aware of the nature of neo-colonialism and are not vigilant against some schemes of "peaceful evolution." Some of them only pay attention to their professional knowledge and ignore political issues. A portion of Party members have unstable political views, fading ideals and wavering belief. The ideological combativeness in many grassroots Party organizations has decreased.

There are some loopholes in economic, foreign relationship, scientific, cultural, newspaper and publication activities which the hostile forces can exploit to elicit national secrets. The management of the import and export of cultural products, especially films, music CDs and videos, books, and the cultural, educational and scientific-technological exchanges with other countries is still lax, which has caused some serious consequences in circulating virulent publications.

Meanwhile, our ideological struggle is carried out not frequently, timely, and efficiently. There is lack of powerful and persuasive articles in newspapers. The coordination and cooperation in the ideological struggle among the sectors and levels of administration are limited and sometimes inefficient. The advisory and planning-making bodies lack somewhat acumen and thoroughness.

In some localities, it is thought that the struggle against "peaceful evolution" is the job of the Party Central Committee, of the higher-level cadres. Some people do not realize that the hostile forces' activities are affecting the people in all regions, even the remote and mountainous areas, in a lot of fields. The lack of democracy at grassroots level leads to lengthened and overstepped legal proceedings; bureaucracy and corruption are not restricted; other social evils are occurring uncontrollably. All these problems can weaken our combativeness against the peaceful evolution of the hostile forces and increase their ability to build up an inner source to attack us from inside.

Reality shows that in any circumstances, the scheme and the purpose of the hostile forces will keep unchanged. Their final purpose is to demolish the Communist Party and overthrow socialism but their methods may be different. In the new situation, their method is to continue with the "peaceful evolution" combined with the use of disturbances to topple the government and the threat of military attack. The hostile forces' scheme is wicked and their ambition great, but whether they can achieve their goals depends on Việt Nam. They cannot do anything they want if Việt Nam stays vigilant.

At present, Việt Nam is carrying out the renovation process, developing its market economy, integrating with other countries, speeding up industrialization and modernization for the purpose of building a wealthy people, strong country, and equitable, democratic and civilized society and gradually striving for socialism. Besides the advantages and opportunities, Việt Nam also has to face lots of difficulties and challenges. There is a mix of advantageous and complicated factors in both the national and international contexts. Việt Nam has to deal with some seemingly contradictory relationships so the ideological struggle must be persistent and drastic.

The hostile forces will learn from experience and gradually perfect their strategy and tactics against Việt Nam. They once said that it was not effective to attack Việt Nam from outside but it might be best to let the Communist Party break up itself, so they will think of more cunning and sophisticated schemes. They will find all the ways to transform our political ideas, development intentions, and promote the process of "self-transformation" within the Party. They will continue to argue the issues of democracy and human rights to attack Việt Nam, and take advantage of the struggle against bureaucracy, corruption, and other problems to smear the Party, the State and induce extremists to create divisions between the Party, the State and the people. They show concern to the youth, students, artists, journalists, and State employees to gather and induce them to spread opinions against Việt Nam and take advantage of the drawbacks in socio-economic development and the dissatisfaction of the people in some "hot" areas.

Therefore, Việt Nam needs to realize the schemes and tricks of the hostile forces and continue their ideological struggle with the purpose of being consistent with Marxism-Leninism and Hồ Chí Minh Thought, inheriting and bringing into play the national identity, accepting the cultural essence of humankind, keeping the ideal of national independence and socialism, protecting the leadership of the Party, the State, the regime, and revolutionary achievements, defeating all the sabotage schemes of the hostile forces in the ideological and cultural fields, and eliminating the reactionary opinions and evil cultural activities.

To this end, it is necessary to:

+ Clearly understand the relationship between the subjective factors and the objective influences, between the inside and outside factors. The development dialectics have proved that the subjective and the inside factors play a decisive role. The wholesomeness of the Party, the State, the people and the whole political system themselves is the decisive factor; if the internal side is strong, all the sabotage schemes and actions from outside will be defeated. Việt Nam must continue to widen foreign relationships, not to isolate itself just to fight against “peaceful evolution.” However, we must remember to keep to the principle of both cooperating and struggling at the same time in foreign relations.

+ Be deeply aware that the struggle against “peaceful evolution” is the task of the whole Party, the people, the armed forces, the sectors and levels under the Party leadership. There needs to be comprehensive measures and cooperation between all sectors, levels, and regions to define suitable methods and implement them effectively. Hostile forces usually attack the shortcomings of cadres and people such as unequal standards of the spiritual life of the people, individualism, localization, and loose principles. Therefore, ideological, cultural solutions must go with socio-economic solutions. For example, it is necessary to check corruption and other social evils so that hostile forces cannot take advantage of them to attack the internal side of the country.

+ Vigilantly analyze the objective and scientific side or the nature of the matters not ending up with just simple and unilateral

reasoning. Discriminate specific subjects and situations; not generalize all of them. Việt Nam should distinguish the ring-leader from the camp-follower with vague perception, constructive enthusiasts from hostile elements, friendly political exchanges from actions of sabotage, normal cultural exchanges from the spread of evil and reactionary cultural works, as well as friendly economic exchanges and normal business activities from politics-oriented economic activities.

+ All Party committees, organizations, State agencies and other mass associations need to realize the situation, the risks as well as the schemes of hostile forces, and educate Party members, cadres and the people to be vigilant and willing to defeat all of their schemes. Việt Nam must carry out education programs about the schemes, tricks, and purposes of hostile forces to help the people understand the unchanged purpose of imperialism, raise their awareness, awaken their patriotism, and increase their vigilance in order to defeat all the schemes and activities against Việt Nam from all sides. Oral education and internal notices are of great importance, so Party committees of all levels should pay attention to this means of education. Do not underestimate its importance in this era of the mass media.

+ Speed up theoretical research and review practice to make the whole Party clearly understand Marxism-Leninism and Hồ Chí Minh Thought, be patient and creative in developing them, clarify the development path to socialism in Việt Nam and be able to solve other problems in reality. It is necessary to heighten the struggling and convincing power in theoretical activities and timely fight against reactionary points of hostile forces. Theoretical research bodies, political institutes, and ideological education organizations should include ideological struggle in their lectures.

+ Increase the effectiveness of Party building and renovation according to the resolution of the 6th Plenum of the Party Central Committee (2nd time, 8th tenure) to make the Party more transparent and stronger, increase the Party's unity and combativeness, and drive back four challenges including the challenge of “peaceful evolution.” Meanwhile, Việt Nam should continue to implement the resolutions of the Party Central Committee on the construction and development

of an advanced Vietnamese culture imbued with national identity. Việt Nam must pay special attention to rejecting the poison of reactionary culture, non-conformity, depraved, and self-indulgent lifestyle, especially among the youth.

+ Effectively carry out the education programs to shape the thought of cadres, Party members and people about the Party's guidelines. The mass media needs to have a special program to lay bare reactionary allegations of hostile forces. Việt Nam needs to promote foreign relations and find ways to bring publications, videos, and pictures of Việt Nam as a beautiful country to other countries, and promote its visibility, and the policies of the Party and the State to foreigners, so that they can have a correct understanding of Vietnamese society. The government must organize better exchanges with over 4 million overseas Vietnamese all over the world.

+ Effectively carry out the policy of the Party and the State on greater unity, unifying religious and ethnic groups in order to reinforce the great bloc of national unity to defeat all the schemes to make use of religions and ethnic affairs to harm national construction and protection. Việt Nam should pay attention to the mobilization of different walks of life, especially religious and ethnic groups. In the struggle against "peaceful evolution," the people play a decisive role. Việt Nam should bring into play the role of mass organizations and renew their operational method, as well as build up a pool of cadres and encourage the people to take part in the struggle. Concerning opportunists, Party committees, social and political organizations, and mass associations need to educate, manage, mobilize and convince them.

+ Restore order; construct and complete the coordinating mechanism in the fields of ideology, culture, literature and arts, education, science, physical education, sports, and mass media; increase State management over these fields, especially the press, publishing, radio and television; prevent any intentions to bring bourgeois ideology and lifestyle into Việt Nam in order to politically transform the Vietnamese. We should import high-quality cultural works and prevent the penetration of reactionary, depraved, violent newspapers, movies and other cultural products into Việt Nam.

+ Direct, instruct and closely manage the operation of clubs and seminars following the instructions of the State. We must watch out for the tendency to take advantage of seminars and change them into forums for spreading erroneous views. We should encourage free discussions but avoid being distracted by hostile forces. We must strictly abide by the regulations of keeping secrets of the Party and the State, especially in the advisory bodies, and the organizations responsible for research, consulting, and drafting macro policies for the Party and the State.

The Vietnamese Communist Party has gained numerous experiences in the revolution. The Vietnamese people are resilient, and Việt Nam has sufficient determination and resources to defeat all the schemes and actions in this struggle.

VIEWPOINTS AND LESSONS OF EXPERIENCE FROM CADRE BUILDING IN THE PERIOD OF RENEWAL¹

The term “cadre”, in its most fundamental meaning, refers to individuals who lead the masses and organize and manage all tasks. They are the nuclei of an organization and the key force of a movement. Therefore, they play a decisive role in any revolutionary stage, field and locality. They are not only a key factor in Party building, but also an important link in all activities of the Party and a determinant of the success of the Vietnamese revolution. It is not accidental that Hồ Chí Minh started his preparations for the founding of the Party and the launching of mass movements with cadre training. As early as in the mid-1920s, he directly held classes in Guangzhou (China) to train the first Vietnamese revolutionary cadres and later sent some of them to training courses in the Soviet Union. He prepared and sowed the seeds of revolution in Việt Nam. He firmly stated, “Cadres are the root of a work. Whether the work succeeds or fails depends on whether cadres are good or bad.”

After undergoing secret and public, legal and illegal activities, political and armed struggles and large-scale and profound revolutionary campaigns during the democratic national revolution, the Communist Party of Việt Nam trained a generation of cadres who were able to assume the country’s great tasks. They were initially political cadres working at factories and in rural areas, and have gradually developed into a great force, including Party leaders, State managers, military officers, diplomats, production and business

¹ See *Xây dựng và chỉnh đốn Đảng: Một số vấn đề lý luận và thực tiễn* (Party Building and Rectification: Some Theoretical and Practical Issues), National Political Publishing House, 2012, p. 414.

managers and scientists. They work in all fields of social life. They are a great achievement of the revolution and an extremely valuable property of the country. Although they have limitations and defects, Việt Nam still has the right to be proud of them and the Party’s achievements in cadre building during the arduous and heroic years of the national revolutionary struggle.

In the new context and before new challenges after liberation (April 1975), Vietnamese cadres have incessantly grown up; more and more achievements and experience have been gained in cadre work.

Here is an overview of the process of cadre building and development in Việt Nam in the period from 1975 to the present day. Through this overview, some basic issues on cadres and cadre work will be clarified, and some lessons of experience as contributions to the direction of cadre work in the present period will be presented.

1. Review of Cadres and Cadre Work from 1975 to the Present Day

Over the past thirty years, Việt Nam has passed two periods of development: from 1975 to 1986 and from 1986 to the present day. In each period, cadre work has particular characteristics and cadres gain particular steps of development, equivalent to particular political requirements and tasks.

1.1. From 1975 to 1986

During this period, Việt Nam focused on socialist construction, following the model of bureaucratic centralism and State subsidization. The country had to overcome the aftermath of the 30-year war and cope with two wars in the southwestern and northern border areas simultaneously. The socio-economic situation was full of difficulties. In the early 1980s, the country fell into a socio-economic crisis that became most serious in 1985. The cadres and cadre work during this period faced many challenges and had many noticeable changes and features.

In the early years after liberation, there was a serious shortage of cadres in the South. (The South suffered heavy losses in the war waged by American imperialists and the Vietnamese puppet government: many Party bases had been ruined; hundreds of thousands of cadres and Party members had been killed or imprisoned.) Many areas, especially those in cities, towns, religious regions and ethnic minority regions, lacked cadres; the Party bases were totally frozen. The Party Central Committee immediately sent nearly 100,000 cadres, first and foremost key leaders, to some provinces, cities and border districts in the South. The Southern Regional Party Bureau and regional Party committees also sent cadres to local Party bases. According to statistics provided by the Central Organization Department, a total of 33,163 cadres from 33 ministries and general departments were appointed to the South. They included 3,997 leaders and managers, including some vice ministers; over 100 department-level cadres; over 300 heads and vice heads of services; 8,677 university-level cadres; 9,529 middle-level cadres; and more than 5,000 professional and civil-servive cadres. Thanks to this supply, after a short period of time, the South was quickly equipped with a large and powerful cadre force and its situation in all aspects was quickly stabilized. This would not have happened if the Communist Party of Việt Nam had not cared about cadre training during the years of war (including the moving of cadres and their families from the South to the North and the sending of students and cadres abroad for study).

During the years from 1976 to 1982, the 4th Congress of the Communist Party of Việt Nam determined to develop the country quickly, strongly and firmly towards socialism. It also put forward the target of completing the building of material and technical facilities for socialism in fifteen to twenty years. This political task required changes in organization (such as the division of ministries, the merging of provinces and districts and the expansion of communes and co-operatives) and the building of an equivalent cadre force. The Communist Party of Việt Nam made a lot of efforts in this field. Many resolutions adopted by the Party and State highlighted the necessity of "quickly cultivating and improving the qualification and capacity of different types of cadres, first and foremost leaders and managers."

In reality, some mistakes were unluckily made in the implementation of this task. For example, cadres who had experienced the resistance were not sent, actively and in a timely manner, to training courses organized in a planned and methodical way. Besides, cadres were selected and appointed based mainly on their enthusiasm, will and employment history rather than their qualifications, scientific knowledge, work quality and efficiency. Moreover, the structures of the then Party Central Committee and provincial and municipal Party committees had not reflected the inheritability and requirements of the new period. Nearly 100 percent of the Party Central Committee's members were accepted into the Party before and during the anti-French resistance; over 90 percent of the provincial and municipal Party committees' members before the anti-American resistance; more than 62 percent before 1954. The size of organization was too great. Cadres were assigned to very heavy tasks, while their knowledge and management capacity were still limited.

During the years from 1982 to 1986, the consequences of subjective and voluntarist mistakes in our economic leadership and cadre assignment became obvious. Thanks to this, the leadership realized that it was impossible to rely only on enthusiasm and will to do business, and thence started to make modifications in the strategic direction. In cadre work, Việt Nam started to pay attention to the recruitment and utilization of cadres with qualifications, knowledge of science and technology and professional skills (such as carrying out a reshuffle of cadres in the direction of intellectualization, promoting many professors and PhD degree holders to the posts of minister and vice minister, and highlighting the issue that cadres should study continuously). However, Việt Nam also made some mistakes: purely emphasizing cadres' degrees and qualifications without paying full attention to their true levels, leadership and management capacity and training and testing process at work; failing to pay proper attention to the issue of class policy in cadre work; and unilaterally heightening individual responsibilities (abolishing the Party Personnel Bureaus and Party Member Groups) without specific regulations.

It can be said that these years witnessed the Party's considerable concern about the search for policies and solutions for improving the

socio-economic situation. These years also witnessed the most cadre reshuffles ever in history.

In general, during the period from 1975 to 1986, most of the Vietnamese cadres (first and foremost key leaders and managers), who had been trained and tested and had grown up during the two resistance wars, were well-equipped with political qualities and revolutionary morals and initially showed their economic leadership and management capacity. The supplement of some young cadres helped to increase the academic standards, brainpower, dynamism and acuteness of the leadership at all levels. However, in the centralized, bureaucratic and State-subsidized mechanism, cadres were unable to escape from a shortage of flexibility and creativity. As a result, many of them still relied on instructions from their seniors and passively followed them.

1.2. From 1986 to the Present Day

The 6th Congress of the Communist Party of Việt Nam (December 1986) was a breakthrough that opened up a new period for national development—the period of comprehensive renewal. Việt Nam has changed to a market economy, widened international exchanges and implemented social democratization. While the world and the country are undergoing many swift and complicated changes and developments, the Vietnamese cadre force has to overcome a great many difficulties and challenges to lead the revolution solidly forwards. The renewal cause for socialism has been implemented more and more comprehensively, intensively, extensively and synchronously. Many great and significant achievements in this cause have been made, creating a new standing and strength for national development.

Beside advantages and achievements, Việt Nam also has to struggle with many difficulties that seem to be impassable. Noticeably, the national socio-economy is still in a serious crisis; war aftermath has not been overcome completely; consequences of the mistakes made in the State-subsidized period are being revealed profoundly; the economy has not escaped from regression with three-digit inflation rates for three consecutive years (the highest rate reached over 770

percent). In early 1988, many areas were stricken by starvation and the inflation rate was 393.8 percent. The people who lived on salary and social allowance suffered a drop in their living standards. Many State-owned enterprises and co-operatives in small-scale industries came to a standstill, suffered heavy losses, operated perfunctorily, or even had to close down. Hundreds of thousands of workers had to leave production lines. Tens of thousands of teachers had to quit their jobs. Many credit funds went bankrupt.

The Vietnamese situation worsened due to foreign blockades and embargoes, great expenses for national defense and continuous border and island conflicts.

In addition, the collapse of socialism in the Soviet Union and other Eastern European countries has had a great impact on Việt Nam. The economic relations between Việt Nam and its traditional markets have been upset. Real worry is pervading the population; many laborers are growing doubtful of the future of socialism.

Meanwhile, hostile forces are incessantly sabotaging the revolution with new malicious and violent tricks. Some domestic reactionary forces intend to grab this chance to raise their heads.

In the context full of complicated developments and challenges, the pool of Vietnamese cadres is still developing in all aspects, such as politics, economics, science, education, culture, society, national security and foreign affairs. The present political system of Việt Nam consists of a total of 1,312,570 in-service cadres. They include 69,763 cadres working in Party committees and organizations (5.3 percent); 194,316 cadres working in State management bodies (14.8 percent); and 1,048,491 cadres working in civil-service agencies including education and training, health, science, culture and arts, journalism, sports and others (79.9 percent).

There are approximately 4 million technical workers throughout the country. They include over 1,200,000 workers at intermediate level, more than 900,000 at graduate level, over 10,000 at post-graduate level, 800 professors and 3,200 associate professors.

In general, the Vietnamese cadre force, key figures of which are leaders at all levels, has been trained and tested in the long and

difficult revolution, so its majority has a firm political mettle and a strong sense of independence and self-control, holds fast to the goal and ideal of socialism, leads the renovation and sets a good example for the effective implementation of this cause.

Việt Nam is still poor and its people's life is still difficult. Despite the negative impacts of the new context, most of its cadres still maintain a healthy lifestyle and always look after the common cause.

They have made much progress in their knowledge, level and capacity of socio-economic management, especially in economic renewal and in the widening of foreign relations. They have gradually adapted themselves to the management of the multi-sector commodity economy, which operates in accordance with the market mechanism and under State management. Their academic standards (including those in foreign languages and information technology) have increasingly improved. Of the members of the 8th Party Central Committee, 84.7 percent have received graduate- and post-graduate-level education (compared with 43.3 percent of the 6th Party Central Committee and 65 percent of the 7th Party Central Committee). Of the members of the 10th National Congress, 91.33 percent have graduate- and post-graduate-level academic standards. Of 143 high-ranking cadres (ministers and vice ministers and their equivalents), 41.5 percent have post-graduate-level academic standards; 53.8 percent have graduate-level academic standards. Cadres at provincial and municipal levels with graduate- and post-graduate-level academic standards make up 55.9 percent. District-level cadres with intermediate- and graduate-level academic standards occupy 46.7 percent; commune-level cadres with the same academic standards 12.9 percent.

The achievements of renewal show that Việt Nam has a firm and intelligent cadre force. It is through the renewal that the Vietnamese cadre force has become increasingly mature in both quality and quantity.

Facing new requirements and tasks in the situation of new challenges in the new period, the Vietnamese cadre force has revealed many weaknesses, apart from the afore-mentioned strengths and achievements. Noticeably, a considerable number of cadres have

displayed phenomena like political instability, oscillation, decrease in belief, vague awareness of Marxism-Leninism and socialism, divergence from ideals and doubt of the Party's policies. Some of them are even so discontented that they have betrayed the Party's ideals and the people's interests and caused serious consequences. Some others have degenerated in morality and lifestyle, making corrupt use of authority and loopholes in mechanisms and policies to commit corruption, smuggle, get rich illegally or waste public property. It seems that individualism is rising in the new context. Money and individual ambitions are controlling the thought and action of many cadres.

One of the popular negative phenomena is that leading cadres rarely conduct self-criticism and do not like to be criticized by others. Another popular phenomenon in the Party is that cadres avoid speaking frankly their mind to each other out of having regard for each other. Comradeship is sometimes controlled by position, rank, benefits and money. Therefore, many negative phenomena have not been checked and work is being slowed down. Serious and prolonged disunity has occurred in some places.

Though large, the Vietnamese cadre force is not synchronous yet. As a result, both shortage and excess of cadres are still rather prevalent. Cadres' knowledge and capacity of leadership and management have not met the new requirements and tasks, especially those in the management of the market economy, society and law.

Beside the afore-mentioned common characteristics, each type of cadres has its own features as follows:

Party, State, and organization leaders: In general, these cadres have the mettle and experience in political leadership and mass mobilization and are steadfast and firm in the renovation. Their qualifications in all fields are increasingly improving. However, they are only slowly provided with updated information in the fields of economics, culture, science and technology. Their management capacity is still limited in comparison with the requirements of new mechanisms and modern sciences. Some key leaders show expressions of subjectivism and a lack of democracy. Bureaucracy, corruption and waste have become worse among a part of the cadres.

Armed forces leaders: These cadres have good political standpoints and senses and are determined to safeguard the Party and socialism. Many of them are actively involved in self-training and self-cultivation; their knowledge and qualifications are increasingly improving. They always heighten vigilance in the context of the open-door market mechanism. However, some of them, especially those in charge of doing business, preserving social security and order and protecting the law, have made corrupt use of their positions, authorities and professions to indulge in corruption and smuggling.

Scientists: These cadres are increasing rapidly; many of them who are enthusiastic and creative have received new technologies. However, their percentages are still low in comparison with those in the region. Moreover, their quality is not high yet and their practical capacities are still weak. There is a shortage of good specialists.

Business managers: These cadres have made much progress in their knowledge, level and capacity of management. Many of them are dynamic and able to quickly adapt themselves to new mechanisms. However, they also have limitations in knowledge of the market economy, laws and foreign languages.

Since 1986, there have been many considerable renovations in cadre work for the completion of political tasks in the light of the renewal policy.

Together with staff reshuffles to cut down intermediate links in the organization, Việt Nam has made a lot of changes, such as rearranging cadres to meet the requirements of new management mechanisms. Apart from senior cadres, who are experienced and politically firm, Việt Nam has paid much attention to the training and utilization of cadres who are innovative in thinking, dynamic, enterprising, bold enough to take responsibility, well equipped with knowledge of science, economy and law, and minded for business. The assessment and utilization of cadres are conducted more democratically and collectively and are mainly based on criteria and work efficiency. Cadres are gradually being standardized.

Hundreds of thousands of cadres have been trained and educated in terms of political theory, Party viewpoints and policies,

administrative and economic management and professional skills and knowledge. Many forms of cadre training and cultivation and information supply have been offered. Many Party committees and organizations at different levels have paid attention to the training of reserve cadres and putting cadres on trial while in successive positions to be trained. There are sharp increases in the numbers of cadres sent to training courses, compared with those in the previous years. These numbers have increased by five or six times in some places. The number of cadres attending long-term and short-term training courses at the Hồ Chí Minh Academy of Politics and Public Administration and the National Academy of Public Administration alone has amounted to 27,000 annually for the last four years.

In cadre assignment, Việt Nam pays attention to the combination of different age groups and cadre types and is against simultaneous renewals and any formalistic rejuvenation of the pool of cadres.

Việt Nam has promulgated and implemented some policies in accordance with the new context (including the policy of looking after meritorious people). Việt Nam has also studied and promulgated some regulations concerning cadre management and the process of selecting, promoting, electing, commending rewarding and punishing cadres in the direction of increased democracy. The combination of democracy and centralism has also been applied to cadre work.

Nevertheless, there still exist many limitations and defects in cadre work. The biggest limitation is the lack of a fundamental and long-term strategy on cadres and cadre building for the completion of revolutionary tasks in the new period.

There also exist many irrational, prolonged and inconsistent points in cadre policies, especially those on salary, working conditions and accommodation. Therefore, these policies fail to motivate cadres, especially talented ones, to strive for higher work efficiency, or encouraged those working in bases in difficult and remote areas.

Achievements and limitations in cadre work in the past decades have made Việt Nam better aware of the importance and complexity of this work. To achieve better results and overcome limitations in cadre

work, Việt Nam should incessantly attach importance to summing up reality, drawing lessons from experience and supplementing viewpoints and measures for the effective implementation of this work in a timely manner.

2. Some Issues Related to the Viewpoint and Lessons of Experience

Some issues on the viewpoint and lessons of experience can be drawn from the reality of cadre building from 1975 to the present day as follows:

2.1. Cadre work is regulated by political guidelines and is in the service of political tasks, so it is vital to prepare sound political and organizational guidelines and cadre strategies at the same time.

It is once again proved by the afore-mentioned arguments that each political guideline requires cadres with equivalent qualifications, qualities and capacities. A sound political guideline will lay the foundations for a sound organizational guideline and a sound cadre guideline. On the contrary, a wrong political guideline will unavoidably result in a wrong organizational guideline and a wrong cadre guideline. However, a country cannot have a sound political guideline if it does not frequently care about the building, training and cultivation of cadres, especially key ones at macro-strategic level, as well as the improvement of their mettle, qualifications and brainpower. In other words, there is a dialectical and causal relationship between the political guideline and the cadre guideline. The former is the premise of the latter and vice versa.

Therefore, preparations for the political guideline and socio-economic strategies should be made at the same time as the organizational guideline and cadre strategies. The cadre guideline should be built on fundamental principles to avoid inconsistency, one-sidedness and a shift from one extreme to another. Also, it should be applied appropriately to fit the political requirements and tasks at each stage. It is impossible to preserve old cadres for new tasks, but it is necessary to comply with the principle of inheritance and development. Accordingly, Việt Nam should actively cultivate,

use and retrain available cadres and simultaneously retrain new ones. Even cadre work should take one step ahead, forecast the development tendency of the situation, and wait in front for chances and challenges to prepare cadres and avoid being passive or puzzled.

Cadres have organic connections with the organization, as well as the mode and mechanism of operation of the machinery. Therefore, together with the arrangement of the machinery and the training and arrangement of cadres, Việt Nam should care about the building of appropriate mechanisms, policies and working styles and modes. These complicated tasks require cautious investigations and summations, as well as active and prompt working attitudes. However, it is necessary to avoid hastily making decisions on cadre organization without careful considerations.

Special attention should be paid to the building of strategic-level cadres who have the firm skills and spirit to assume strategic-level tasks, as well as smartly and effectively deal with complicated situations related to the development of the country and the survival of the regime. Reality shows that in any situation, especially at the decisive or turning-point time, the fate of the country is in the hands of strategic-level cadres. The collapse of socialism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, as well as the disintegration of communist parties in these countries, was caused by many factors, one of which was the irrational arrangements of some strategic-level leaders.

One of the important contents of cadre strategies is the building of reserve cadres—setting up cadre projects and caring about the training and cultivation of cadres. The most important point in this content is the planning and building of key cadres for the political system.

The Communist Party of Việt Nam has advocated cadre building and planning since very early. Since the late 1960s, many localities in the North have implemented this policy. Some of them have achieved specific results, creating the fundamental foundations of cadre work. It is unfortunate that some have not done it frequently while some others have understood the policy differently and implemented it formalistically. Many Party committees have not fully understood the significance of cadre planning and thus have

not been actively involved in the building of cadre reserves. This is the main reason for the shortage and inconsistency of cadres at many levels and in many branches.

There should be an emphasis on the necessity of cadre planning. Planning reflects the Party's role in leadership, initiative taking and orientation, which is closely connected to political tasks and socio-economic strategies. The deeper the country goes into the market economy, the more firmly the Party should grasp the cadre-related issues in making plans for cultivating cadres and building cadre reserves. The effective and practical implementation of cadre planning requires a sound understanding of its content and method of implementation.

The content of cadre planning includes the discovery, selection, training, cultivation, arrangement and utilization of cadres, as well as the preparation and creation of cadre reserves. Cadre planning does not only mean sending cadres to training courses.

The method of implementing cadre planning involves many steps. They are: forecasting the country's development tendency in the imminent years and in the long term, based on a thorough grasp of political and socio-economic tasks; surveying, analyzing and assessing the available cadres; forecasting changes in the cadre force in the coming times; detecting, prospecting and selecting reserve cadres; and defining the contents, requirements and training plans for each type of cadre.

Although cadre planning is done by all levels of administration, sectors and units, it should be implemented under consistent directions according to a common strategy.

Cadre planning lays the foundations of the practical implementation of cadre training and retraining.

The content of cadre training should follow cadre planning. Specifically, it should focus on what cadres need and lack. Theory should be closely associated with practice, professional skills and knowledge and practical requirements. The contents of the knowledge and viewpoints provided by schools, sectors and localities should be consistent and in accordance with the national

standard syllabus. The situation that the teaching syllabus and viewpoints of a school are different from, or even contrary to, those of another should be avoided.

The method of cadre training should involve the following points:

First, study at school should go together with training and trial in reality. Importance should be attached to training via the reality of work and mass movements.

Second, self-study, self-training and self-cultivation are primary; study at school is important. Self-study and self-cultivation should be considered as compulsory requirements and indispensable qualities for present leaders and managers.

Third, key leaders should have a thorough grasp of basic knowledge and should be rotated to different positions in different fields and localities. Cadres should deepen their professional skills and knowledge. Cadre rotation is very important, but it should be carried out according to a plan.

Last, cadre training and cultivation should be combined with the requirements of the work arrangement so that cadres can promote their abilities after accepting new tasks. Cadres should not be promoted to new positions before being sent to training courses.

The training conditions and policies should meet the following requirements:

First, the Party and State should have satisfactory investment policies, considering investment in cadre training as that in the human strategy—the strategy of all strategies. The State should have a united policy on budget management and grants. Administrations at all levels and in all sectors should have their own training funds.

Second, there should be appropriate and united policies on grants awarded to cadres sent to training courses, especially female cadres and cadres from minority groups, at grassroots level and from difficult areas.

Last, Party schools, administrative schools and schools owned by organizations at all levels should be arranged reasonably and managed consistently to avoid repetition, overlapping and inefficiency.

Viet Nam is implementing the tasks of industrialization and modernization for the goals of a rich people, a strong country and an equitable, democratic, and civilized society gradually advancing to socialism. This cause is great but very difficult and heavy. It occurs in complicated international and domestic situations, which contain both advantages and difficulties, opportunities and risks, and many other unexpected and unpredictable factors. The political tasks of the new period pose many new issues in cadre work and require the proposal of corresponding cadre strategies on building a strong and compatible cadre force. Only by proactively building and perfecting such a cadre pool can the Communist Party of Viet Nam lead and organize the entire people to successfully carry out the cause of industrialization and modernization and satisfactorily prepare revolutionary cadres for the next generations.

2.2. There should be a policy on widely uniting and gathering different types of cadres and using talents, based on a thorough grasp of class viewpoints in cadre work.

The thorough grasp of class viewpoints in cadre work is a matter of principle. Any class or social regime has its own cadre guideline; it selects, trains, and uses cadres in accordance with its class viewpoints and for the interests of its class.

The Communist Party and the Socialist State view and implement cadre work from the standpoint of the working class themselves and for the interests of the working class themselves and laboring people. It means that it is necessary to select, train and use those who are really loyal to the working class's ideals, the nation's interests and socialism. It is also necessary to prevent opportunist and reactionary elements from infiltrating into the ranks of leaders to sabotage the revolutionary cause. Those who are placed in the Party and State leading positions should be, first and foremost, people who have been trained and tested among the working class, peasantry and revolutionary intelligentsia, and will whole-heartedly strive for the interests of the working class and laboring people. This is absolutely in accordance with the nature of the Vietnamese regime and the requirement of the Party's enhanced leadership role and working-class nature.

During the implementation of the multi-sector economic policy, the class view in cadre work is also expressed in the satisfactory promotion and utilization of cadres who meet all criteria for working in economic sectors without any discrimination.

Each era or social regime should build an equivalent model of cadre for its cause. Each political task in a revolutionary stage requires corresponding qualities, qualifications and natures in cadres. The general criteria for Vietnamese leaders and managers in the present stage of national construction and defense are: firm political mettle, steadfastness to the socialist target and path and determination to successfully implement the Party's lines and policies; knowledge and capacity for participating in collective decisions, organizing realities and working effectively; pure revolutionary morality, straightforwardness, righteousness, determination to struggle for the Party's viewpoints and lines, a sense of organization and discipline, industry, thrift, uprightness, public-spiritedness, selflessness, determination to preserve solidarity within the Party, attachment to the masses and the acquisition of the population's trust.

Thus, the general criteria for a cadre are classified into three categories: political qualities such as will and loyalty to the national cause; revolutionary morals and healthy lifestyles; qualifications, abilities, brainpower and capacities for task completion. These three categories are mutually related and equally important. They should be further specified for different types of cadres, including cadres working for Party committees, administrations and organizations; and those working in different fields such as the economy, science, education, health, foreign affairs, culture and letters and arts.

Regarding the relation between cadre criteria and cadre structure, reality shows that cadre arrangement and utilization should not be separated from cadre structure. A reasonable and scientific structure is a necessary condition for the Party's comprehensive leadership of all areas and fields and the promotion of the whole cadre force's strength. The structure herein includes: sectoral structure, regional structure, central structure and local

structure; gender structure (male and female); age structure (young and old); social class and stratum structure (working class, the intelligentsia, ethnic minority groups, religions, Party members, non-Party members and overseas Vietnamese).

Different levels of leadership, or different types of organization, have different requirements for their structures. For example, the structure of the Party Central Committee is different from that of local Party committees; the structure of the Party is different from those of the National Assembly, Fatherland Front and other organizations.

2.3. Cadre work should be implemented on the principle of democratic centralism.

The cadre issue is a human issue. The assessment, arrangement, utilization and treatment of cadres are related to the psychology, interests, honor and sentiments of human beings; so they are very complicated and sensitive. Therefore, cadre work should be implemented according to the principle of democratic centralism, with great caution, and in a truly democratic manner.

Cadre work should guarantee collectivity and democracy and simultaneously promote full individual responsibility. Important decisions on cadre policies, lines and structures should be collectively decided by competent groups. Individuals are responsible for preparing proposals before submitting them to competent groups for collective consideration and decisions and for the satisfactory implementation of these collective decisions.

In the present context, democracy is a key phase of the renewal of the cadre force and cadre management mechanism, and is a necessary condition for the effective implementation of cadre work. Lack of democracy, the inappropriate combination of centralism and democracy, and formalistic democracy may result in inaccuracy and injustice in cadre evaluation, assignment and utilization. They can also cause worries, even disunity, among cadres. It is time to raise the issue of democracy more strongly and seriously.

It is necessary to clearly stipulate the following points in cadre evaluation. *First*, cadre evaluation should be based on cadre criteria,

including general criteria and specific criteria for each working post. *Second*, cadre evaluation should be based on the cadre's working results and practical and specific contributions, such as the amount, quality and social, economic and political efficiency of the work. *Third*, cadre evaluation should be based on the masses' trust. *Fourth*, cadre evaluation should be conducted in an environment with specific conditions; in a dialectical relation with the lines, policies, organization, and operation mechanism; and in reference to the review of the cadre's personal developmental records. It is also necessary not to separate the work results from the objective based on self-evaluations and the cadre supervisor's and organizational unit's assessments. It should also be conducted in consultation with related individuals, such as: same-level cadres and fellow-cadres; related population and inferior cadres; related superior cadres, Party committees and mass organizations; and local cadres and people. Regular evaluations should be combined with periodical ones. Different sources of information for cadre evaluation should be combined and filtered. It is vital to avoid reaching conclusions when there has not been enough necessary information. It is best to have direct contacts, exchanges and meetings with cadres for a certain period of time. Cadre evaluation should not be based on public opinion or others' comments only.

Procedures for cadre selection and promotion should also be specified in cadre regulations. It should involve the following steps: first, the requirements, criteria and numbers of candidates are clearly defined before an official notice on cadre selection and promotion is made public. Next, recommendations and self-recommendations are made by Party organizations, authorities, mass organizations and individuals. This should be done via secret votes or talk to competent individuals. After that, a vote of confidence is conducted. Some vacancies for managers and specialists require examinations. After the collection of enough necessary information, all-side verifications are conducted; direct meetings and exchanges with candidates are held; a list of candidates who have met all the basic criteria and won the trust vote is made for election or submission to the competent authorities for promotion, appointment or inclusion in training and use plans.

2.4. There should be a consistent and just policy on cadre training, cultivation, assignment, utilization and treatment.

Reality shows that the cadre policy is an extremely important tool in the creation of motivations for cadre building and development.

In cadre training and cultivation, attention should be paid to excellent Party members and cadres, persons from revolutionary families that have rendered services to the nation, and those from minority groups. There should be policies on scholarships and tuition remissions, and favorable conditions to be offered to these cadres during their study.

Cadre training and cultivation should be closely associated with the requirements and plans for work arrangement so that cadres can promote their abilities right on having received new tasks. Cadres should not be promoted before being trained.

In order to select many talents for the country and build up a powerful force of cadres, Việt Nam should pay enough attention to the building and cultivation of reserve cadres while they are still studying at universities or colleges.

Beside the set criteria, the assignment and use of cadres should meet the following requirements: First, cadres should be assigned appropriately according to their positions and strengths. Second, the assignment and use of cadres should guarantee the continuity and inheritance between, as well as the harmonious combination of, different types of cadres from different age groups and with different lengths of service. Third, the promotion and appointment of cadres should be conducted at the right time and according to their capacities. Cadres should be encouraged to make endless efforts to assume more requiring tasks. Finally, regulations on term-based elections and appointments should be implemented.

Despite difficulties in the new stage of revolution, the Party and State of Việt Nam made a lot of efforts in the implementation of cadre treatment policies. However, these policies were still influenced by State subsidization and egalitarianism. In recent years of the renewal, this issue has been taken into consideration.

As a result, many new policies have been promulgated, such as the treatment policy for cadres who had worked before the 1945 August Revolution occurred and, the allowance policy for cadres who are in charge of Party affairs at government agencies and schools. State subsidization in the policy system has been gradually overcome. Since Việt Nam changed to the new mechanism, however, many new issues have emerged. For example, many policies have become inappropriate or revealed irrational points. Consequently, many cadres have been discouraged.

Therefore, in the building of cadre treatment policies and regulations, Việt Nam should be fully aware of the viewpoint of combining responsibilities with benefits, ideals with interests, and quality education and cultivation and required exemplary sacrifices with the satisfactory and just implementation of treatment policies. This should be considered as the motivation and law of cadre work in the present context.

Besides, Việt Nam should guarantee the correlative relations between cadres of the Party, State, organizations, regions and sectors; encourage effective cadres and favor talented ones; and overcome egalitarian distribution and great income disproportions between types of cadres. Cadres with good deeds should be spiritually and materially rewarded in a timely manner; those with bad deeds should be strictly and clearly punished. There should be satisfactory treatment policies for local cadres, cadres from ethnic minority groups, lowlanders dispatched to highlands for work, veteran revolutionaries and those who have experienced the two resistance wars.

In addition, Việt Nam should have some policy to promote moral strength in an appropriate and timely manner. For example, heroic mothers, talented people and those who have contributions to the national revolution and renewal should be continuously honored. Cadres should be encouraged to incessantly enhance enthusiasm towards the revolution, patriotism, love and passion for work, self-training, qualifications in all aspects and moral qualities. Those with great achievements in production, management and activities in all aspects of life (such as science, culture and art) should be praised

and rewarded. Senior and retired cadres should also be facilitated to make further contributions to the revolutionary cause according to their abilities and strengths.

2.5. The Party should unanimously lead cadre work and directly manage cadres.

It should be done by any leading party. One of the requirements for a leading party is to directly lead cadre work. It involves the building of cadre lines and policies and the making of decisions on cadre arrangement and management within the Party and the entire political system. It is a matter of principle. However, during the implementation of this principle, there should be clear division of management and close coordination between Party organs and member organizations of the political system. The roles and responsibilities of government bodies and mass organizations should be promoted as well.

The Party should implement cadre lines and policies and inspect the implementation via its members and organizations in government bodies and mass organizations.

The Party should apply decentralized administration of cadres to its local committees and organizations. Party committees at all levels should effectively manage their cadres in key leading positions.

The Party committee's leadership is a determinant of successful cadre work at any level and in each sector. The view of cadre evaluation and the method of implementing plans for cadre education, cultivation, assignment and utilization are dependent on the role of Party committees. Once a Party executive committee, first and foremost its leader, has a sound, democratic and objective view of renewal, it will certainly achieve satisfactory results in cadre planning, selection, education and building.

In addition, there should be a clear definition of responsibilities and on authorities between levels of cadre administration. Authorities should be closely attached to responsibilities. The level of administration that is in charge of cadre arrangement and utilization should be responsible for the evaluation and implementation of

cadre policies and regulations. The cadre appointment, promotion, rotation, commendation and punishment in a government body should be collectively considered and decided by the Party executive committee that directly controls it. Each Party executive committee, its members and leaders of the bodies under its umbrella should take responsibility for their cadres before the Party executive committee and leader at a higher level.

Each Party committee or cell should be responsible for the management of its members, including senior cadres, in terms of organization and discipline, policy and law compliance, morality and relationship with the masses.

To assist Party committees and organizations in cadre work, Việt Nam should pay attention to the building of consultative agencies and staff in charge of cadre work. The functions and tasks of these agencies, as well as the work relations between them, should be clearly defined so as to avoid overlapping, dispersion and vague perception of responsibilities and competencies. Special importance should be attached to the improvement of the qualities, qualifications and capacities of the staff in charge of cadre work; the enhancement of the quality of research and summarization; and the step-by-step building of science on cadre work.

Cadre work also involves cadre protection. In the present context of peace, Việt Nam has a lot of favorable conditions for its national construction, economic development, open-door policy implementation and cooperation with other countries. However, due to the complicated social environment, Party members and cadres in high positions are easily seduced by material interests. In addition, hostile forces are trying all means to realize their plot of "peaceful evolution", corrupting cadres and planting their agents to undermine Việt Nam. They want to take advantage of Việt Nam's transition to an open-door market economy and the shift of generations of leadership. Therefore, there should be frequent measures for cadre protection.

The content of cadre protection should include the following points: safeguarding cadres' political qualities, viewpoints, morals

and lifestyles; keeping them honest and loyal; preventing them from degradation and joining hands with enemies; managing and preserving cadres' profiles; verifying politically suspected cadres and issues related to political activities; and heightening vigilance over enemy plots to cause internal splits and mutual suspicion such as spreading false information, profiles and documents to arouse internal contradictions.

Cadre protection should be based mainly on prevention. Any occurrence should be investigated, verified and concluded quickly, definitely and clearly to avoid mutual suspicion and internal instability.

Effective cadre protection requires the building of and compliance with regulations (for example, economic activities, transactions and contacts with foreign partners, outbound business trips, and receptions of gifts and letters should be subject to Party organizations' examination), regular implementation of criticism and self-criticism and annual cadre assessment, and the close combination of security and internal affairs agencies in the struggle against corruption and smuggling.

What have been presented above are some issues drawn from the reality of cadre work from 1975 to the present day—the period of socialist construction and national defense, after national unification, with so many ups and downs, difficulties and challenges that the Vietnamese nation has had to overcome to move forwards. Together with the general lessons of the revolution, Việt Nam has gained particular lessons on Party building and cadre building. These lessons may not be comprehensive or profound enough, but they have at least suggested some first basic thoughts and made an outline sketch of the orientations and measures of cadre work in the coming times, for our joint research, consideration, summarization and perfection.

What is important for the time being is that Việt Nam should reach a consensus on some issues of the perception of cadres and cadre work. Some basic issues are: the relation between the political line and cadre policies; the class view and national policy on widely uniting cadres and satisfactorily using talents; the relation between

criteria and structures, morality and talent, the united management of Party committees at all levels and the promotion of responsibilities of government bodies, mass organizations and economic organizations; the planning and building of reserve cadres; motivations in cadre work; the relation between ideals and interests, responsibilities and rights in cadre policies; the renewal of thought and perception of cadre work; and the prevention of the tendencies of deviation from principles, loosened leadership and lowered criteria for cadres, as well as the conservative, perfectionist and narrow-minded tendency in cadre work.

YOUNG CADRE TRAINING AND CULTIVATION¹

In the old days, Trưng Trắc² raised the flag of revolt when she was only 26. Triệu Thị Trinh³, with the famous words “I want to straddle big winds, tread on ferocious waves, chase away the Chinese Wu aggressors, liberate the country, build national independence, doff the yoke of slavery”, followed his older brother to recruit troops at the age of 19 and became leader of an uprising against the Chinese feudalists at the age of 22. Đinh Bộ Lĩnh⁴ unified the country when he was still young. Lê Hoàn⁵ defeated the Chinese Song invaders when he was 30. Trần Nhật Duật⁶ achieved a great feat in Hàm Tử⁷ when he was only 27. Too young to be invited to the Bình Than Conference⁸, Trần Quốc Toản⁹ was so angry that he

1 See Nguyễn Phú Trọng, *Đảng Cộng sản Việt Nam trong tiến trình đổi mới đất nước* (Communist Party of Việt Nam in the process of national renewal), National Political Publishing House, 2002, p. 642-646.

2 Trưng Trắc (?-43): female Vietnamese leader of an uprising against the Chinese, 40-43 AD.

3 Triệu Thị Trinh (225-248): female Vietnamese leader of an uprising against the Chinese feudalists, 3rd century AD.

4 Đinh Bộ Lĩnh (924 - 979): founder of the short-lived Đinh Dynasty (968-980).

5 Lê Hoàn (941-1005): founder of the Anterior Lê Dynasty (980-1009).

6 Trần Nhật Duật (1255-1330): Emperor Trần Thái Tông's sixth prince, who commanded the Đại Việt (present-day Việt Nam) army to defeat the navy of Mongolian General Sogetu in the Battle of Hàm Tử, one of the biggest victories of the Trần Dynasty (1225-1400).

7 A commune in Khoái Châu District, Hưng Yên Province, named after a famous historical site, Hàm Tử Gate, where the Vietnamese army and people's battle against Mongolian invaders took place in late May 1285.

8 A military conference convened by Emperor Trần Nhân Tông in 1282 to discuss the direction of resistance against the second Mongolian invasion of Việt Nam.

9 Trần Quốc Toản (1267-1285): a marquis of the Trần Dynasty who was well-known for his active role in the second war of resistance of Đại Việt (present-day Việt Nam) against the Mongol invasion.

crushed an orange with his own hand unheeded and then gathered insurgent troops to fight against invaders. Lê Lợi¹ gathered troops when he was only 20 and launched a revolt against the Chinese Ming aggressors when he was 32. Nguyễn Huệ² joined the Tây Sơn movement at the age of 23, achieved a great feat in Phú Yên³ at the age of 23, led an army to liberate Gia Định⁴ at the age of 25, drove off about 20,000 Siam (Thai) troops at the age of 33, and defeated about 20,000 Chinese Qing troops and totally liberated the country at the age of 36.

Obviously, many talented leaders and brilliant heroes in the history of Việt Nam achieved glorious feats when they were still very young. It proves that the youth are an important part of, and representative of, the national strength. The nation is powerful only when its youth is powerful. In other words, the strength of the nation comprises that of its youth.

Over the past fifty years, Vietnamese youth have played a particularly important role. The Việt Nam Revolutionary Youth League (*Thanh niên Cách mạng Đồng chí Hội* or *Hội Việt Nam Cách mạng Thanh niên*)⁵ was the forerunner of the Communist Party of Việt Nam. “It means that there was a period when the youth played as the initiator of the revolutionary movement in Việt Nam.”⁶ Trần Phú (1904-1931) became the first General Secretary of the Communist Party of Việt Nam when he was only 24. Nguyễn Văn Cừ (1912-1941) held the same position at the age of 26. Lê Hồng Phong⁷, Nguyễn Thị

1 Lê Lợi (1385-1433): initiator of the Lam Sơn uprising against the Chinese Ming invasion and first emperor of the Later Lê Dynasty (1427-1789).

2 Nguyễn Huệ (1753-1792), also known as Emperor Quang Trung, was the second emperor of the Tây Sơn Dynasty (1788-1802).

3 Phú Yên: a coastal province in the south of Central Việt Nam.

4 Gia Định used to be a province in Southern Việt Nam and is now part of Hồ Chí Minh City and the provinces of Bình Dương, Long An, and Tây Ninh.

5 A radical organization founded by Hồ Chí Minh in 1925, whose operation was aimed at struggling against French colonialism and popularizing Marxism-Leninism.

6 Lê Duẩn: *Ta nhất định thắng, địch nhất định thua* (We will Certainly Win, the Enemy will Certainly Lose), *Sự thật* (Truth) Publishing House, Hà Nội, 1965, pp. 48-49.

7 Lê Hồng Phong (1902-1942): the second General Secretary of the Communist Party of Việt Nam.

Minh Khai¹, and Hoàng Văn Thụ² also became the brilliant leaders of the Party when they were in their youth. During the August 1945 Revolution, the nine-year anti-French resistance, and the cause of anti-American resistance and socialist construction, the youth, in any place and any field, proved themselves brave, intelligent and creative vanguard revolutionary fighters, and achieved many heroic legends and glorious victories. The Vietnamese people will always remember Lý Tự Trọng³, La Văn Cầu⁴, Nguyễn Thị Chiên⁵, and Phan Đình Giót⁶—among many examples of the resilience, indomitability, courage, and heroism of the young generation before the August 1945 Revolution and that during the anti-French resistance. Any Vietnamese person must have heard of Nguyễn Việt Xuân's intrepidity expressed in his heroic saying, "Fire at the enemy!"; Phan Hành Sơn's bravery and strength reflected in his glorious victories over the enemy; Nguyễn Văn Trỗi's fierce attack on the enemy during the last nine minutes of his life; Võ Thị Thắng's supercilious and proud smile at the enemy; Lê Mã Lương's determination to "keep on fighting against enemies if there are still any of them in the country"; Nguyễn Thị Kim Huế's resoluteness manifested in her saying, "My heart may stop beating, but the country's traffic cannot stop circulating"; Nguyễn Văn Thợ's persistence in disseminating the Party's progressive ideas to the highland people to save them from poverty and backwardness, despite

1 Nguyễn Thị Minh Khai (1910–1941): wife of Lê Hồng Phong.

2 Hoàng Văn Thụ (1909–1944) was a great contributor to the Vietnamese revolution and a revolutionary poet of Việt Nam before the August 1945 Revolution. He was sentenced to death and shot by French colonists. Before execution, he would give his rations to fellow prisoners. He explained to them, "You should take them to be strong enough to fight. If I take them now, it is just good for the trees."

3 Lý Tự Trọng (1914–1931) was imprisoned and sentenced to death by French colonists when he was only 17.

4 La Văn Cầu, born 1932, was an officer of the Vietnamese People's Army. In the Đông Khê battle of the 1950 Border Campaign, he was shot in his right hand. He asked his comrades to cut the wounded hand to keep on fighting.

5 Lê Thị Chiên, born 1930, was a lieutenant-colonel and the first woman to be awarded the title of Hero of the People's Armed Forces of the Vietnamese People's Army.

6 Phan Đình Giót (1922–1954) was famous for his sacrifice in the 1954 Điện Biên Phủ campaign. In the opening battle of the campaign, he bravely stopped an enemy loophole with his body, helping the Vietnamese troops attack and occupy the entrenched fortification of Him Lam. For this sacrifice, he was posthumously awarded the title of Hero of the People's Armed Forces.

hardships and sacrifices; Nguyễn Văn Hiệu's diligence in study, passion for scientific research, bravery, and creativity; the young Vietnamese generation's heroic and great nature. The Vietnamese people are so proud of their young generation—the heroic generation of a heroic nation. That generation has terrified all their enemies, been trusted by the whole Vietnamese people, and been admired by friends all over the world. That generation is the guarantee of Việt Nam's victory today and tomorrow. Whenever mentioning Việt Nam's young generation, the beloved Hồ Chí Minh felt excited and proud as if he had grown young again. He saw in them a firm and glorious future for the Vietnamese nation.

Some people failed to correctly perceive the role of Vietnamese young people and consequently failed to love them enough and actively participate in the training and cultivation of young cadres. It was because they had not had a really sound, objective, and revolutionary view of the Vietnamese youth. Only through certain negative phenomena found among some young people, they hastily came to untrue conclusions of the Vietnamese youth's fine and revolutionary nature. They explained that the Vietnamese young people had not experienced any trials and were therefore immature. Consequently, they lacked trust in the youth and did not actively take part in the training and cultivation of young cadres. They did not see that the young Vietnamese generation had actually made lots of sacrifices and experienced lots of trials to achieve glorious victories that could be seen later.

There goes the saying that "When drinking the water, remember its source." All Vietnamese should engrave forever on their hearts the preceding generations' services rendered to the country, which laid the foundations for future society. Simultaneously, to keep the revolution moving forwards, the Party asserts that the task of building socialism and communism should be assumed by the young generation. It is because, as Lenin said, the preceding generations could only break the foundation of the old social order and create conditions for the building of a new society, however talented they might be. It is the Vietnamese youth's task to build socialism and communism in Việt Nam. It is a completely new and extremely heavy and difficult task. For the accomplishment of this task, Việt Nam should have a generation of people who not only are highly enthusiastic but also have good

qualities, knowledge in all fields, and abilities in economic organization and management. In summary, Việt Nam should have socialist and communist people. Young people who are born and grow up along with the incessant changes of the revolution, receive a good education under the socialist regime, are in good physical condition and have knowledge in all fields. Moreover, they are enterprising and always sensitive to new things. Therefore, they are capable of shouldering the heavy responsibility assigned by their country.

If someone does not care about the education and training of young people nor actively participates in the training and cultivation of young cadres, they will have failed to see or apply satisfactorily the law of the revolution's development. They might have forgotten that the revolution will be successful and keep moving forwards because there are many generations, young and old, which rely on and succeed each other without pause. The past is the premise of the present; the present succeeds and complements the past and also acts as the foundation of the future. We are living in the present, but we are deeply attached to the past and feel slightly excited whenever thinking of the future. If no care is taken of the future, it means that national history will be deterred from development and the revolution from advance.

Only those have serene hearts and wholeheartedly devote themselves to the Party and people can have a view which is really sound, objective, and suitable with the law of the revolution. A sound view will result in a correct assessment of the youth, followed by love and respect for young cadres.

As a Vietnamese saying goes "A family is blessed if the children are better than their father." For a nation in general and a generation in particular, the greatest happiness lies in the successful creation of younger generations which are much better than one's own who are able to inherit, faithfully and satisfactorily, the previous generation's glorious revolutionary career and continue to pursue their own fine ideals.

For all the afore-mentioned meanings, we can say "Love the youth! Value and actively participate in the training and cultivation of young cadres!"

SUMMING UP REALITIES - AN ESSENTIAL TASK OF THE CURRENT THEORETICAL WORK¹

The Resolution of the 5th Plenum of the Party Central Committee (9th Tenure) on "the major task of the theoretical and ideological work in the new situation" points out: In the years to come, we should keep *boosting the summing up of realities and theoretical researches, further enhancing the perception of socialism and the way to achieve it in Việt Nam*. The Plenum stressed: "(We should) pay attention to the summing up of realities in theoretical research and in operation of Party committees, considering it the regular work of all echelons and sectors, combining the research on Việt Nam's reality with the selective adoption of the humankind's scientific achievements.

This is an important content and an essential task of the theoretical work in the current period.

To launch a revolution is to turn the old into the new. This is a difficult and complicated activity at a high level, which should be guided by a sound theory. Lenin asserted: "Without revolutionary theories, there is no revolution", "Only the Party led by a vanguard theory can play the role of a vanguard combatant." President Hồ Chí Minh also said a Party with no theory as its beacon is like "a man with no wisdom and a ship with no compass."

However, Marxism-Leninism and Hồ Chí Minh Thought point out that all genuine theories must originate from reality, reflect reality and serve the reality. In the ultimate analysis, theories are composed and generalized from reality. Without reality, there is no theory. Theory and reality are always interrelated and interacting in which

¹ Article in *Nhân Dân* Daily, 7 May 2002.

reality is the foundation. Reality, in most general terms, is an action of man to ensure social existence and development. It is an objective process of the production of material wealth as the basis for man's life. At the same time, it is also the transformation and revolution of the social forces to change the world.

Theory is the reflection of reality. Theories comprise a system of generalized knowledge creating relatively perfect concepts on fundamental relations and rules of the objective reality. In other words, theory is the experience generalized in man's consciousness. It is a relatively independent system of knowledge which can reproduce, in the logic of concepts, the logic of the reality reflected by it.

Reality is also the standard of the truth and the foundation to examine the correctness of theory. At last, all theories must face reality and must be verified in reality. The effects and vitality of a theory depend on its ability to generalize the nature of the objective reality from various specific phenomena. They also depend on the fact that they bring about historical progress and socio-economic, political and cultural development. In short, they help to build a better life for man.

Theory reflects the objective reality and crops up in specific historical conditions, thus all theoretical concepts and categories bear historical marks. The development of reality and the changes of historical conditions inevitably require theory to be supplemented and further developed. Thus, scientific arguments become more and more abundant and accurate. We should not turn theoretical principles into rigid dogmas. The most essential thing is to draw out methodological values from these principles. It will be a mistake to consider theoretical concepts and predications as models for all realities to develop. This not only withers away theory but hampers historical progress as well. The foundation to build and develop theory is reality through seeking and summing up the reality. President Hồ Chí Minh said: "Reality without theoretical guidance will become a blind one. Theory without any connection with reality will be an empty theory."¹

1 Hồ Chí Minh. *Complete Works, op. cit.*, vol. 8, p. 496.

Based on the country's reality during the last decades, we can confirm that we could not raise a theory of renewal and a sound renewal line if we failed to base on, and sum up, reality. Similarly, without a sound theory on renewal and theoretical leadership, the cause of renewal could not be carried out successfully in reality.

Việt Nam once faced a serious socio-economic crisis in the late 1970s and early 1980s: production stagnating, inflation soaring up, the country suffering economic embargo, the people's livelihood very difficult and their confidence in the Party's leadership and the State's administration on the decline. This situation was partly due to objective causes. However, subjectively speaking, at that time, we made some big and prolonged mistakes in designing major policies and guidelines, in strategic leadership and implementation. The roots of these errors were dogmatism, subjectivism, voluntarism, simple way of thinking and action, hastiness, infantile and backward theoretical awareness, and inadequate regard for summing up reality. Fortunately, right during this hard time, it was the people who had many initiatives and creations. And the Party quickly realized and summed up the practical experience of the people to renovate its own way of thinking and perception to elaborate proper guidelines and policies. Then it could gradually formulate a sound theory and orientation for renewal (*đổi mới*).

The 6th Plenum of the Party Central Committee (4th Tenure) in August 1979 laid down the guideline that facilitated "the booming" of production. Directive No. 100/CT-TW of the Party Secretariat (4th Tenure) in 1981 stipulated the contract of finished products to farmers or groups of farmers in agricultural cooperatives. Decisions No. 25/CP and 26/CP of the Prime Minister in 1982 referred to balancing various resources, and the "Three-Section Plan." The Resolution of the 5th Party Congress in March 1982 redefined the priorities for economic development and affirmed agriculture as the forefront. The Resolution of the 8th Plenum of the Party Central Committee (5th Tenure) in June 1985 mentioned the price-salary-monetary issue. Especially, the Politburo (5th Tenure) meeting in August 1986 yielded a conclusion on the three major economic issues. These above documents resulted from the Party's summing up of reality and renovation of its way of thinking. They

are the initial bricks to build the foundation for the line of *đổi mới* in Việt Nam.

The 6th Party Congress in December 1986 was a milestone marking the important change in the Party's theoretical perception. Under the motto "to look in to reality and actually assess reality and tell the truth", the Congress laid down a policy for a comprehensive national renewal. The Congress's resolution stressed: "Innovating the way of thinking in all fields of the Party's and State's operation is an urgent, regular and long-term work. Conservatism and inertia of old concepts are a huge obstacle, especially when those concepts are closely linked to individualism and conservative-mindedness. It is necessary to create favorable social conditions for the renovation of thinking, such as democracy in society, especially in the Party's activity, in scientific research; the respect for the truth; accurate information system; regular and proper criticism and self-criticism. The importance is to heighten the theoretical work to provide scientific contents for the renovation of thinking."¹ Through summing up reality, the Congress presented new perceptions of economic structure, industrialization in the initial stage of the transitional period to socialism, and the existence of commodity production and market. The Congress also strictly criticized the bureaucratic centrally-planning regime with State subsidization and affirmed the shift to a business accounting one. The Congress advocated developing a multi-sectoral economy with proper business forms, paying attention to the combination of individual, collective and social interests, nurturing and bringing into play the human factor and adopting new perception of social policies.

The 7th Party Congress (June 1991) continued to sum up reality and the implementation of the *đổi mới* line. By doing so, the Congress adopted its *Platform on national construction in the transitional period to socialism and the Strategy on socio-economic stabilization and development up to 2000*. The Platform defined six characteristics of socialism and seven fundamental directions for

1 Communist Party of Việt Nam: *Văn kiện Đại hội đại biểu toàn quốc lần thứ VI* (Official Documents of the 6th National Representative Congress), Sự Thật (Truth) Publishing House, Hà Nội, 1987, p.126.

the socialist construction in the transitional period in Việt Nam. The mid-term conference of the CPV in January 1994 pushed up the summing up of reality and devised some measures to accelerate the movement for *đổi mới*. It also pointed out four big dangers: further lagging behind economically, socialist disorientation, corruption and bureaucratic red-tape, and "peaceful evolution" by the hostile forces.

The 8th Party Congress in June 1996 thoroughly assessed and analyzed the country's situation to draw out conclusions: Việt Nam had pulled itself out of the socio-economic crisis. It had generally fulfilled the task in the initial stage of the transitional period to enter a new stage of industrialization-modernization. The Congress asserted: "The path to socialism in Việt Nam has been defined clearer". "In a broader sense, the elaboration and implementation of the line on *đổi mới* was correct, in conformity with the socialist orientation."

Through summing up reality after 15 years of *đổi mới*, the 9th Party Congress (April 2001) amended and clarified some issues, further ameliorating the perception of socialism and the path to achieving it in Việt Nam. The targets of the revolution were defined as follows: "to achieve national independence closely linked to socialism, a wealthy people, a powerful nation, and an equitable, democratic and civilized society." The path to development of Việt Nam is:

- to bring into play the strength of the great national unity with a view to carrying out industrialization-modernization;
- to develop a socialist-orientated market economy and increase the production forces, at the same time, to build and develop proper production relations to ensure social equity;
- to broaden international cooperation and preserve national cultural identities;
- to build a really democratic, dynamic and transparent political system.

Up to the 9th Congress, the CPV's perception of socialism and the path to achieving it had been gradually defined and developed. This was the achievement of the summing up of reality and theoretical

research on the basis of Việt Nam's specific conditions and in the light of Marxism-Leninism and Hồ Chí Minh Thought. It is possible to say that the renovation of the way of thinking and summing up of reality is a positive change in the Party's theoretical work.

Nowadays, the entire Party and population are doing their best to implement the 9th Congress Resolution. The theoretical work has achieved some important results, providing a scientific factual foundation to design, supplement and develop the Party's lines and policies. The Party's theoretical level has been significantly improved. However, in fact, theoretical work remains outdated and the summing up of reality inefficient, thus not in line with the development and demands of the revolution. Our perception of socialism and the path to achieving it is still in general terms, a number of specific issues posed by reality remain unsolved or unconvincing. A portion of Party cadres and members have a simple perception of Marxism-Leninism and Hồ Chí Minh Thought. Their understanding of modern capitalism is vague or even deviator. The way of thinking has not reached a dialectical level but stopped at the impulsive, empirical and pragmatic level. We have failed to draw out conclusions for many issues.

For example, what is the relationship between the socialist-orientated market economy in Việt Nam and the common laws of market economy? What are the causes to the prolonged inefficiency of State-owned enterprises? Why has the equitization of State-owned enterprises been executed so slowly and brought about results not as desired? How to encourage the development of the private economy and minimize the rich-poor disparity and maintain social equity? What regimes, policies and measures should be designed to help the State-run economy bring into play its leading role? How will household, farm and collective economies develop? What are the causes of poverty and the solutions? How to promote the formation, development and perfection of socialist-orientated markets, especially those of labor, real estates, and science and technology? How to actively join in globalization and international economic integration and shorten the process of industrialization-modernization in Việt Nam? How to build a socialist law-governed State of the people, by the people and for the people? How to

rationally and scientifically deal with the relationship between the Party's leadership and the legislative supremacy? What are the specific mechanisms to promote socialist democracy and fight against bureaucratic red-tape and corruption and build a transparent and diligent administration apparatus when the Communist Party holds power?

Sooner or later, these questions need to be answered accurately. Of course, this is a complicated and difficult work which cannot be quickly solved in one day. The importance, as pointed out by the 9th Party Congress and the resolution of the 5th Plenum (9th Tenure), is to further sum up reality, develop theory and use theory to guide and explain the issues raised by reality.

The summing up of reality is a fundamental method in theoretical activity to develop, amend and specify the Party's platform and guidelines. It aims to answer the questions cropping up from reality or unclear theories. It contributes to highlighting and multiplying eminent examples, identify and rectify the wrongdoings. It also improves theoretical ability and leadership of Party cadres and members, and eradicates dogmatism and empiricism. Summing up reality, especially the issues cropping up from reality, is the best way to develop theory and make it useful to the development of reality.

Summing up reality is important but uneasy work. It doesn't mean to "take photographs" or describe the situation nor make the list of strong and weak points. It never provides a vague assessment or simple conclusions on the events that have been occurring. To sum up reality is, through situations and phenomena, to discover basic issues, find out the nature and the laws of the development of reality. Then, proper measures could be devised. Thus, to sum up reality, it is necessary to have a thorough grasp of fundamental theoretical points, a rational viewpoint of reality, and a scientific methodology in assessing and dealing with various issues. This means to grasp the fundamentals and the methodology of Marxism-Leninism and Hồ Chí Minh Thought. In fact, those who do not grasp theoretical fundamentals have no consistent viewpoint and orientation, thus, they cannot tell the difference between the right and the wrong when considering some issues. It is very difficult for them to sum up reality.

Obviously, there *is a* dialectical unity between theory and reality, and vice versa.

In summing up reality, it is necessary to avoid the tendencies to make light of theoretical research, highlighting pragmatism, identifying objective reality with experience, considering superficial experience as the criteria of truth and using the helpfulness of reality to meet subjective interests of individuals or some groups.

In the current domestic situation, the further development of *đổi mới* and the effects of globalization, modern scientific and technological revolution and other factors require Việt Nam to enhance the summing up of reality and theoretical research (including fundamental research) to further clarify the theory on socialism and the path to achieving it. The Resolution of the 5th Plenum (9th Tenure) pointed out, up to the 10th Party Congress, (we should) focus on studying the following issues: socialist-orientated market economy; socialist-orientated industrialization-modernization; renovation and amelioration of the political system; building and rectifying the Party in new conditions; development of culture, man and the human resource; characteristics and contents of the modern scientific and technological revolution and the development of the knowledge-based economy; the multi-faceted effects of globalization; forecasting the major trends of development of the world and the region; and theoretical issues in service of national defense, security, foreign relations, and the combat against the plot of “peaceful evolution” of the hostile forces. These issues are all directly connected with the State-level social scientific research programs and themes in the period 2001-2005.

The Resolution also requires the leadership bodies and Party committees to pay special attention to theoretical work, regularly summing up reality and summarizing theories, and educating, fostering and improving the theoretical ability of Party cadres and members. The Central Committee, the Politburo and the Secretariat directly conduct, and give guidance to, the theoretical work and the summing up of reality.

Scientific research institutes, programs and projects should follow the orientations and requirements set by the Party Central

Committee with a view to further summing up reality, focusing on the explanation of theoretical and practical issues, forecasting trends of development, providing scientific foundations for the elaboration of the policies and guidelines. We should quickly give clear answers to the burning issues cropping up from reality, continually amend and develop the Party’s lines and policies, safeguard Marxist-Leninist viewpoints, and combat wrong points of view and ideologies. Each program or theme should provide new information, new documents and new suggestions of quality and not repeat what is already known.

It is necessary to renovate the methods and ways of summing up reality. We should involve ourselves deep into the life and various activities of the country and other aspects to gather information, then analyze and generalize it into theories. At the same time, we should quickly and sensitively grasp the world’s new developments and issues, and selectively receive humankind’s scientific achievements. We should try to receive true and objective information, documents and data under the guiding principle of “looking into and telling the truth”. We should not follow the beaten track, basing ourselves on bookish conclusions, to give abstract academic arguments, with not much fresh practical information.

We should define forms and modes to motivate a large number of scientists and practical activists to participate in studying and summing up reality, bring into full play the collective wisdom, and exercise democracy in scientific research. In studying and summing up reality, due to its complicated nature, there will be many different comments and viewpoints. Thus, it is necessary to extend democracy and ideological freedom to make use of all potentialities and creativeness, encouraging sound discussions and debates. We should avoid bias and prejudice against the views contrary to the available conclusions. In research and discussion, all opinions of the minority must be respected and carefully considered. It is important that all viewpoints, outlooks and debates should be prompted by transparent and constructive motivation to build and promote *đổi mới* to success. The reality during the *đổi mới* process should be used as a basis to identify the right and the wrong.

To meet the requirements and fulfill the tasks of theoretical research and summing up of reality, it is important to build a contingent of experts with good political qualification, high scientific and theoretical standards and independent thinking. At the same time, we should formulate proper regimes and policies to provide good conditions and favourable environment for this contingent's creativity. Special attention should be paid to training and fostering the leading excellent experts with erudition, who have a great passion for practical activities.

Under the leadership of Party committees, first and foremost the Central Committee, the Politburo and the Secretariat, a regime should be established to combine and coordinate the operation between the leadership and management bodies and scientific research institutes, between administrators and theoretical experts. We should frequently provide information on the Party's policies and guidelines as well as the results of theoretical researches to supplement each other and bring into play the comprehensive strength in theoretical research and summing up of reality. At the same time, this is also the best way to foster and improve the qualifications of the staff— the leaders, the administrators and the experts.

MAIN TASKS FOR PARTY BUILDING IN THE PRESENT PERIOD¹

Party building in the present period should be conducted in the following directions: promoting the Party's glorious traditions, working-class nature and vanguard quality; building up the Party's power in the political, ideological and organizational aspects; renewing the mode of Party leadership; strengthening relations between the Party and the people. All of these directions are to make sure that the Party can fulfill its responsibility as the vanguard and leader of the revolutionary cause.

Based on these general directions, Việt Nam should carry out some main tasks as follows:

1. Maintaining and Enhancing the Party's Working-class Nature

It is greatly important to clearly define and deeply understand the Party's nature. It not only dominates the contents and principles of Party operation but also determines the orientations and measures for Party building.

Before renewal, there was not much discussion on the nature of the Communist Party of Việt Nam. Almost everyone reached a consensus that the Communist Party of Việt Nam was the vanguard of the Vietnamese working class, as well as the representative of the interests of the laboring people and the whole nation; that it was the product of the combination of Marxism-Leninism and Vietnamese workers' and patriots' movements.

¹ See *Xây dựng và chỉnh đốn Đảng: Một số vấn đề lý luận và thực tiễn* (Party Building and Rectification: Some Theoretical and Practical Issues), National Political Publishing House, 2012, p. 107.

In recent discussions on the Party's nature, some people still focus on the aspect of class while others emphasize that of nation. There is an opinion that it is inadvisable to say the Communist Party of Việt Nam is the Party of the working class. Instead, it is better to say it is "the Party of the working class, the laboring people and the whole nation."

There are certain grounds for these opinions, since they all correctly reflect the nature of the Party and the reality of Việt Nam.

It should be repeated that any political party is the product of class struggle and bears the nature of a certain class. Any party, regardless of its organization (tight or loose) and operation (in form of revolution or struggle in the parliament), holds on to a certain class's standpoint and protects its interests. If not, it is not regarded as a political party. The working-class nature is a fundamental and encompassing issue, as well as an issue of principle, for all genuinely Marxist-Leninist parties. It is especially important for the Communist Party of Việt Nam, born and grown up in a backward agriculture-based country where industry was still underdeveloped, the working class was weak and only a small number of Party members came from the working class. The Communist Party of Việt Nam is currently operating in a new context—leading the country in its transitional period to an open-door, multi-sector economy with a complicated social environment. In addition, many of its cadres and members hold important positions in State bodies and have daily and hourly contacts with commodities, money and capitalism. Therefore, it is necessary to maintain and reinforce the Party's working-class nature and vanguard quality. If its working-class nature is not clearly identified and firmly stated for positive measures for Party renewal and rectification, the Party will degenerate easily. It is an extremely fundamental and decisive issue to keep the Party from degenerating and maintain its working-class nature. The more developed the market economy, the more efforts are required in the conservation and enhancement of the Party's working-class nature. It's not accidental that the Communist Party of Việt Nam considers it the most important task.

The working-class nature refers to the revolutionary and scientific qualities, will and consistency, vanguard brainpower and the sense of close organization and discipline of the working class. This nature

penetrates deeply into the politics, ideology, and organization (or political lines, ideological foundations and principles of organization and operation) of the Party. Specifically, it is manifested in the following aspects:

First, the Party is absolutely loyal to the interests of the working class, laboring people and the whole nation. It exists and operates for class and national interests. When defining its political programs and lines, it always firmly bases itself on the working class's standpoint, has a thorough grasp of objective laws and correctly reflects interests of the working class and laboring people. It steadfastly protects the working class's ideal goals: national independence, socialism and step-by-step advance to communism. Despite complications and difficulties in the international and domestic situations, it never staggers and diverges from those goals.

Second, the Party takes Marxism-Leninism and Hồ Chí Minh Thought as the ideological foundations and guidelines for its actions. Simultaneously, it receives the intellectual quintessence of the nation and mankind, struggles for national defense, and incessantly develops and enriches Marxism-Leninism and Hồ Chí Minh Thought.

Third, the Party is a united bloc of will and action. It takes democratic centralism as its fundamental principle of organization; practices collective leadership, individual responsibility, criticism and self-criticism; and maintains solidarity and unity on the basis of its Political Program and Party Regulations. It combats individualism, opportunism, arbitrariness, localism, division and factionalism.

Fourth, the Party is closely attached to the people, respects their mastership and accepts their supervision. It unites, organizes and leads the people during the revolutionary cause. It also leads the political system; strengthens the great bloc of national unity; and respects and promotes the role of the State, Fatherland Front and socio-political organizations. Simultaneously, it is a part of the political system and a member of the Fatherland Front.

Last, the Party combines true patriotism with the working class's internationalism and supports the world people's struggle for peace, national independence and social progress.

To strive for the satisfactory implementation of the five aforementioned things is to maintain and promote the Party's working-class nature. In the present context, it is extremely important to hold fast to the working class's ideal goals and the nation's supreme interests, and build a cadre force, including first and foremost all-level key cadres who are fully aware of, steadfast to and typical of the political lines, qualities, brainpower and mettle of the working class in particular and the Vietnamese nation in general.

In Việt Nam, the working-class nature is not separated from, or contrary to nationality. The former is expressed not only in whether the Party membership of working-class origin is large or small (though its increase is of great importance) but also (actually mainly and decisively) in whether the Party's stance, view, world outlook, political lines and organizational principles are really those of the working class and representative of national interests.

These general viewpoints of the Party's nature should be applied to specific daily activities in Party building. They include the formation of guidelines and policies, the education and cultivation of cadres and Party members, the strict observance of the principles of Party organization and operation, the execution of the policy on great national unity and the widening and enhancement of international relations. All these activities should reflect the deep impregnation and awareness of the working class's view and the nation's fine traditions.

2. Heightening Cadres' and Party Members' Political Mettle, Brainpower, Qualities and Capacities

The Party is the leader and combat vanguard of the working class and the political leader of the nation, so it should maintain political mettle, high brainpower and vanguard character better than anyone else. The Vietnamese people's triumph over invaders and liberation of the country were due to the Party's unyielding political mettle and vanguard brainpower. These constructs are of greater importance in the present national struggle for triumph over poverty and underdevelopment. There is an urgent need for heightened brainpower and vanguard character. All cadres and Party members, first and foremost key leaders, should be fully and deeply aware of

this issue to have plans for continuous study and improvement of their knowledge and theoretical thinking standards.

Recently the Party has proposed and satisfactorily implemented the new renewal line. This achievement is due to the Party's steadfastness to its strategic goals, renewal of thinking, improvement of theoretical standards, independent and creative application of theoretical principles, summarization of realities, promotion of its brainpower and that of the whole nation, and grasp of all issues springing from life.

The Party has many times emphasized the necessity of persistently overcoming degeneration in the political qualities, morals and lifestyles of a part of cadres and Party members. The present context features new conditions, a complicated social environment, rapidly developing international and domestic situations and numerous conspiracies and traps laid by hostile forces. What would the Party be like, if cadres and Party members do not maintain self-training, keep themselves transparent and hold fast to the revolutionary ideals and set path? The Party and the people are showing their concern for a part of cadres and Party members who are revealing swift and serious degeneration in their political qualities and morals.

Whatever work positions they are in, all cadres and Party members should be fully aware of their responsibilities, unceasingly promote self-training, strive for the improvement of their revolutionary morals and overcome the bad habits of individualism. Party organizations should have plans for the effective education, cultivation, inspection, management and assistance of this self-training. Next to timely commendations for its exemplary members, the Party should resolutely expel corrupt members from its organization and apply strict and timely punishments on those who are depraved or break Party discipline and State law, whoever they are and whatever positions they are in. It should also be considered a crime to shield erring cadres or Party members.

In the context of peace for economic development, Party members should bring into play their role as the vanguard and example in labor, production and economic development. They are allowed to enrich themselves, but they should do it legitimately,

legally and in compliance with State policies and laws and Party regulations. The Party should satisfactorily carry out reform in the State administration. Simultaneously, it should continue its research and summarization of realities and propose macro-management mechanisms and policies against corruption, bribery and smuggling at the root.

3. Reinforcing the Party in Terms of Organization, Better Implementing the Principle of Democratic Centralism, and Guaranteeing the Party Organization's Ever-closeness, Internal Solidarity, Unity and High Combat Capacity

It is an urgent requirement for reinforcing the Party in terms of organization in Party building to guarantee the Party organization's ever-closeness, united will and action and smooth and effective operation. From the comprehensive viewpoint, Party reinforcement in terms of organization includes many issues, such as: defining and building the structure and the machinery, functions, duties and operation mechanisms; arranging cadres and setting up an appropriate mode and style of work; and implementing organizational principles and supervising and inspecting Party members' activities. Here are some issues concerning the Party's organizational principles and system.

The fundamental principle that guarantees the Party's organizational closeness is that of democratic centralism. Accordingly, the Party should be a united bloc (in terms of ideology, will and action), reflected in its steadfastness to set ideal goals and political lines and its satisfactory implementation of democratic centralism. To deny this principle is to deny the Party from its nature; to erase this principle is to ruin the Party's power from its roots.

Experience shows that a thorough understanding and satisfactory implementation of democratic centralism requires a united awareness of this principle. Specifically, the Party should resolutely fight against any wrong ideas and actions; establish mechanisms for operation, supervision and management; have specific regulations to promote democracy; and practice a sound centralized leadership at all levels.

All Party committees and organizations should fully observe their members' rights. They include, for example, the rights to enjoy ideological freedom and democracy in discussion in Party activities; to be well-informed of the new situations, guidelines, policies, instructions and resolutions of the Party; to maintain minority opinions and review them; and to criticize and question leaders.

The Party should build up regulations and formalities for its members, specialists, scientists, practical cadres and civilians to directly participate in forming and organizing the implementation of its lines and policies. It should also encourage and create conditions for everyone in its organization to bravely think and study and straightly and honestly express their opinions.

Leaders, especially those of Party committees, should respect opinions and creative acts of Party members and units, listen to different opinions before making any decisions and democratize cadre assessment. A senior Party organization should have a deep understanding of its subordinates and realities. Before making decisions on any important issues raised by its subordinates, a senior Party organization should listen to their opinions as well as those of its consultant agencies. Any impositions should be avoided.

The Party should combat the tendencies of extreme democracy, making corrupt use of democracy to cause division and factionalism; demagoguery, following backward masses; and formalistic democracy. It is impossible to achieve true democracy without centralism, discipline, law and responsibility among Party members. Democracy is contrary to arbitrariness on the one hand, and anarchic freedom on the other. Democracy should go together with centralism and be under its direction. Without democracy-based centralism, it is impossible to form sound lines and policies and create power to realize decisions made. The relation between democracy and centralism is a dialectical and united one.

Party organizations and members should strictly observe the following regulations: the minority should comply with the majority, individuals should comply with their organizations and Party organizations should comply with the National Congress and the Party Central Committee. Whatever positions they are in, all

cadres and Party members should incessantly cultivate their sense of organization and discipline, consciously put themselves under the management of their Party committees, keep themselves within the framework of Party discipline and State law and overcome the loosening of discipline and laws.

It is necessary to strengthen the Party Central Committee's centralized and united leadership and direction; attach importance to macro regulation and management and ensure united actions towards important issues of the entire Party; and promote the responsibility, initiative, creativity, and dynamism of localities and units. It is also necessary to overcome both deviational tendencies: dispersion, or localism, and bureaucratic centralism.

All Party organizations and members should thoroughly grasp and strictly implement Party resolutions and directions. Any unorganized and undisciplined activities which are intentionally carried out to resist the implementation of Party resolutions and directions, cause division and factionalism, and weaken the Party's united bloc, must be punished. Simultaneously, Party organizations and members who strictly observe discipline and laws and preserve their virtuous characters should be commended and rewarded.

It is necessary for Party organizations and members to seriously implement criticism and self-criticism; combat formalism, perfunctoriness, and the acts of refusing to accept criticism or accepting criticism without error correction; and prevent themselves from repressing critics and exploiting criticism to falsely accuse others or cause internal disturbance.

It is also necessary to regularly reinforce unity within the Party and to maintain and promote the traditional solidarity of the Party and the nation. Reality shows that solidarity and unity within the Party, first and foremost within leading organs, is a determinant of the revolution's success. Cadres and Party members should preserve solidarity and unity within the Party on the basis of political lines, organizational principles and comradeship.

Many Party documents emphasize the necessity of satisfactorily dealing with the serious disunity in some localities and sectors. This

requires a sound analysis of causes and proposal of suitable solutions. It is vital to pay special attention to appointing the right people as heads of Party organizations and government bodies at the same level; thoroughly grasping and satisfactorily implementing the principle of democratic centralism; establishing clear and close work regulations, especially those on cadre work; regularly carrying out criticism and self-criticism; resolutely fighting against individualism, the envy of and scramble for positions and interests, and regionalism; incessantly cultivating comradeship and mutual respect; and detecting disunity as soon as possible and focusing on dealing with it definitively.

In the building and perfection of the Party's organizational system and machinery, it is necessary to follow hard on the requirements of political tasks and serve efficiently these political tasks. The building of the Party organization does not just refer to a reshuffle in the Government machinery. More importantly, it is the clear definition of each organization's functions, duties and work regulations, as well as the sound settlement of the relationship between organizations within or outside the system.

It is necessary to perfect the organizational system of Party machinery and that of any other organization in the political system in the direction of compactness, quality and efficiency; renew operational mechanisms, improve the mode of leadership and make sure that the system of operational machinery works smoothly, unanimously and effectively; and resolutely reduce redundant units and unnecessary intermediate steps. It is also necessary to concentrate on strengthening two essential levels of organization: central and local. Different organizations should not be merged together, as requested by the cutting out of waste in Party organization and workforce, because it will lead to a confusion of organizational functions.

4. Caring about the Building of the Cadre Force, First and Foremost Key Leaders of All Levels, and Ensuring the Revolution's Continuous Development and the Regime and Country's Solidity

Currently, the Vietnamese revolution is at a basic step of development and the pool of leaders at all levels is in an important

transitional period. Many key leaders at all levels, especially those at strategic levels, will gradually hand over their work positions to younger ones due to their old age and poor health. Many countries' experience shows that if leadership transition is not satisfactorily conducted and successive cadres are not actively prepared, adverse consequences may be considerable. Hostile forces want to grab this opportunity to realize their dark designs.

In the present context, it is necessary to thoroughly grasp the Party and Hồ Chí Minh's sound viewpoints on cadre work, and acknowledge and carry out cadre work for the class and nation's interests. In the building of key cadres and political leaders, it is necessary to pay attention to the selection, education and utilization of people who are really loyal to the working class's ideals, the nation's interests and socialism. Any cadres and talents who whole-heartedly serve the country and people should be united, rallied and well treated, regardless of their ethnicity, religion, residence and whether they are Party members or not. Any prejudices towards those who show repentance and a desire to redeem their past faults should be avoided.

It is necessary to bring new blood into the cadre force, ensure the cadre force's inheritance and development and bring into play the concerted strength of all types of cadres.

It is advisable to renew the views and methods of cadre assessment and arrangement in the direction of true democracy, scientific grounds, objectivity and justice, and through strict procedure. Cadre assessment and utilization should be based on cadre criteria and work requirements; cadre quality and capacity should be measured by work efficiency and practical contributions; each cadre should be put in a specific environment and conditions for a comprehensive assessment of his/her developmental process, both objectively and subjectively. Any comments and conclusions on cadres and cadre work should be necessarily collectively considered and made. Simplification, subjectivism and one-sidedness should be avoided; patriarchy, insularism, prejudices and partiality in cadre work should be overcome.

The supplementation and perfection of political guidelines and socio-economic strategies should go with active preparations for

cadre strategies, especially those for key leaders. Simultaneously, it is necessary to satisfactorily promote the available cadre force, cultivate and educate cadres according to new requirements, and timely deal with cadres who have been found guilty. Also, it is necessary to have plans for the creation of cadre reserves and for cadre education and cultivation. Cadre planning should involve the detection, selection, education, cultivation, arrangement, utilization and preparation of successive cadre forces. Cadre planning should be closely attached to cadre education, cultivation and utilization.

Cadres, including leaders, managers, businessmen and experts, first and foremost key leaders in the political system, should be educated and cultivated comprehensively in political qualities, morals, standards and capacities. In other words, both talent and morality should be valued in cadre education and cultivation. Of these two factors, morality is the core. Every cadre should incessantly improve their standards in all aspects, political qualities, loyalty to revolutionary ideals, steadfastness to the goals of national independence and socialism, sense of organization and discipline and exemplariness in morality and lifestyle. They should also combine harmoniously individual and collective interests and, in the case of individual interests in contradiction with collective ones, put the latter above all. This is what makes up the Party and cadres' prestige.

The arrangement and utilization of cadres should be conducted according to their qualifications and strengths. Cadre appointment and promotion should be carried out in a timely manner; tasks should be assigned to cadres according to their capacities; cadres should be encouraged to incessantly strive for higher tasks.

The ruling Party should care about the building of not only its cadres but also those of the whole political system, of the whole society and in all fields. Therefore, the Party should directly unify cadre leadership and management and simultaneously promote responsibilities of the member organizations of the political system.

The Party, on the one hand, should have sound policies for cadre utilization and treatment, and for preventing and overcoming the "brain-drain" in the market mechanism. On the other, it should heighten its vigilance and have active and proactive measures for

cadre protection. Cadre management and protection is the best way to safeguard the Party, the regime and the people's cause.

5. Improving the Combativeness of Party Organizations and Units

Realities in the years of renewal show that the Party is strong only when its units are strong. Therefore, it is necessary to pay attention to the building and reinforcement of Party organizations and units and guarantee the Party's leadership role in all of them. The deeper Việt Nam goes into renewal, industrialization and modernization, the further it should strengthen Party organizations and units. This is considered a focal and regular task of the entire Party. More attention should be paid to focal units and places stricken by difficulties; importance should be attached to the building of Party organizations and units and mass organizations in all units and economic sectors.

It is clearly pointed out by the Party that the main direction for the reinforcement and rectification of Party organizations and units is to make them fully aware of the Party and State lines and policies; propose sound policies and solutions; and lead them to satisfactorily implement their tasks for economic development, the elimination of hunger, the reduction of poverty, the improvement of laboring people's living standards and the prevention of corruption and bullying of ordinary people. In addition, it is necessary to rectify and improve Party activities, have strict regulations on Party member sent on business trips or those working in remote places or overseas, and guarantee order and discipline in Party member management.

In private and joint-venture enterprises with few or no Party members, the work of Party building should involve several steps: from building organizations to gathering and educating the masses, developing organization and Party membership and establishing Party organizations and cells. Regulations and instructions on the activities of Party organizations in these areas should be issued early.

Party organizations should have plans for encouraging and organizing the local people to frequently participate in Party building

via specific activities: contributing opinions to the preparation of Party resolutions and policies; supervising and criticizing cadres and Party members; introducing worthy people to the Party's ranks and leadership bodies and the State's key positions; and assisting Party organizations to achieve satisfactory results in the inspection and detection of and struggle against corruption, smuggling and other evils.

Party members should have a thorough grasp of their criteria in the present context; stay loyal to the Party's goals and ideals; put the country and people's interests above individual ones; seriously comply with the Party's political programs, regulations and resolutions and the State's laws; have revolutionary morals, healthy lifestyles and a strong attachment to the masses; set good examples in production and work; satisfactorily fulfill all assignments; incessantly study and improve their standards in all aspects; have a sense of organization and discipline; and consciously preserve solidarity and unity within the Party.

Party members are responsible for leading all social strata to participate in economic activities according to the renewal policy and directly guiding and assisting the masses in eliminating hunger, reducing poverty and getting rich. They have to comply with Party regulations and prevent themselves from pursuing practical individual interests, committing corruption and getting rich illegally. Some Party members have become owners of private capital economic units. They have to exemplarily comply with Party policies and State laws, satisfactorily implement labor policies and accept Party organizations' supervision and inspection.

Party members working in ethnic minority and religious areas, frequently having contacts and working with foreigners or going on business trips should seriously obey Party regulations.

The Party should assign tasks to its members appropriately, exempt its old and weak members from tasks, and create favorable conditions for its members to make contributions and promote self-cultivation in practical activities (eliminating hunger, reducing poverty, getting rich legitimately and satisfactorily fulfilling all assigned tasks). Simultaneously, it should further cultivate and

improve its members' professional knowledge and capacity required by their tasks in each work environment.

In the situation in which the average age of Party members is increasing, more attention should be paid to Party development to further vitalize the Party. It is necessary to satisfactorily implement the education of the masses to create human resources for Party development. This should aim at young people, including members of the Hồ Chí Minh Communist Youth Union, among workers (in State-owned, private and joint-venture enterprises), farmers, students, intellectuals, militants in the armed forces, women, ethnic minority groups, religious groups and people in areas with few or no Party members. It is also necessary to do away with the "vacuum", in terms of Party membership, in some units, hamlets and villages and narrow the Party membership gap between areas.

Party committees and organizations should promote their management and building of the Hồ Chí Minh Communist Youth Union; create favorable conditions for the Union to satisfactorily accomplish its duties of rallying and educating young generations, promoting their vanguard role and selecting and introducing brilliant Union members to the Party; and strengthen the vitality and ensure the long-term inheritance of the Party.

6. Continuously Renewing the Party's Mode of Leadership

Realities in the past years show that the renewal of the Party's leadership mode should be expressed not only in its working style and method, but also in its viewpoints, policies and operational mechanism. In other words, a sound and effective leadership mode is only achieved when the Party's position, functions, missions, organization and its work relations with other organizations in the political system, especially the State, are clearly defined.

As a ruling party, the Communist Party of Việt Nam practices the comprehensive leadership over the State and society. It is responsible for all successes and failures in the national cause of construction and defense. Party leadership is to ensure that power really belongs to the people, and that the State is really of the people, by the people

and for the people. This is not only a matter of principle asserted in the fundamental principles of Marxism-Leninism and Hồ Chí Minh Thought, but also the latest conclusion drawn from the vivid realities of life.

The enhancement of Party leadership and the promotion of State management's efficiency are two united sides of an issue. The efficiency of State management is the measure of Party leadership. Therefore, it is necessary to establish an organic relationship between Party and State building, and make the State really belong to the people and protect and serve their interests. After seizing power and being recognized by the State and the people as the leading force, the Party has enjoyed great advantages to fulfill its missions and simultaneously assumed much heavier responsibilities. Therefore, it should take precautions against committing bureaucratic abuses, exceeding and misusing its authority, degenerating, making corrupt use of privileges and especially making mistakes in policies. It is vital to clearly delimit the Party and State's functions; build and perfect the mechanisms, forms and measures for the promotion of democracy; and ensure that the Party is the embodiment of the class and nation's brain and conscience. It is also necessary to care for the implementation of the people's mastership and strongly promote their great brainpower, perseverance and creativity.

The ruling Party defines important and specific lines and polices that have multi-sided relations with and great impact on national politics. The State institutionalizes Party lines and policies and organizes, manages and supervises their implementation. The Party inspects the execution of its lines and policies, encourages good sides and correct deviations in a timely manner, leads the arrangement of cadres, directs the coordination between organizations and promotes the concerted strength of the entire political system. The Party leads the political system, but it and its members act within the framework of the Constitution and laws and take responsibility for their activities.

The Party practices its leadership through its organizations and members in State bodies and mass organizations. Party organizations and members in these organizations have to seriously comply with Party resolutions and directions and State laws.

Socio-economically, the Party considers and determines the targets of and directions for planning; the directions for ensuring budget balance; and policies on economic issues such as economic sectors, economic re-structuring, renovating management mechanisms, development planning for some key industries, some great projects and great foreign loans and debts; policies on social, cultural, educational and health-related issues; and other important matters.

National defense, security and foreign affairs are put under the Party's absolute and direct leadership in all aspects. Party committees determine annual policies, directions and tasks, and directly give instructions on specific reactions to complicated and important matters.

Concerning the enforcement of law, the Party plays a leadership role in the policies of dealing with crimes of all kinds in accordance with the law, respects judicial bodies' operational independence and does not interfere with any specific investigation or trial. Regarding some politically and diplomatically important and complicated cases, the Party personnel affairs bureaus of those judicial bodies have to report to competent Party executive committees when necessary.

Regarding cadre work, the Party exercises united leadership over the entire political system; determines cadre lines, policies and criteria; and directly manages cadres and examines their implementation. Cadre promotion, appointment and treatment are collectively decided by Party executive and civil affairs committees and organizations. With regard to cadres in State bodies and mass organizations, Party executive committees, Party groups and Party Personnel Affairs Bureau and organizations should introduce these cases to competent bodies for consideration and decision.

Party organizations and civil affairs committees in State bodies and mass organizations take responsibility before competent Party executive committees for those State bodies and mass organizations' implementation of Party lines and policies in their activities. These Party organizations and Party Personnel Affairs Bureaus also coordinate with higher and local Party executive committees in Party building in their sections. Party executive committees, Party

Personnel Affairs Bureaus and organizations operate according to the principle of collective leadership and individual responsibility; their working schedules are set periodically with clear contents and are not identified with those of administrations.

It is necessary to renew and enhance Party inspection of the implementation of Party lines, policies, organization and operation principles, and discipline. The satisfactory implementation of Party inspection is a guarantee for the sound implementation of the Party's Political Program, regulations, resolutions and instructions. It is also a condition for the promotion of democracy, Party discipline and cadre and Party member quality. The Party is facing a lot of difficulties and challenges in leading and implementing the cause of renewal. In this condition, it should enhance its supervision to effectively overcome risks, challenges, bureaucracy, corruption and other negative phenomena arising from the market mechanism.

Starting from the requirements of the new context, Party executive committees should directly implement the supervision and use its departments to satisfactorily organize the supervision of the implementation of Party lines, policies, resolutions and instructions. In addition, there should be mechanisms to promote democracy and ensure cadres and Party members' right and responsibility to participate in the supervision, active supervision and detection of strengths for further promotion and weaknesses for timely correction and settlement.

The elected bodies under the supervision of Party organizations and members should send periodic reports to Party organizations at lower levels and Party members. Higher Party organizations should implement self-criticism before lower ones and satisfactorily organize self-criticism from lower levels upwards. Leaders should set good examples of self-criticism and criticism reception. It is necessary to strictly forbid vengeance on people who give straight criticism and deal determinedly with those who make corrupt use of criticism to attack and falsely accuse others and cause internal divisions.

It is also necessary to continue the renewal of the organizations, duties, authorities and working methods of supervision committees at all levels in the direction of increasing their authorities and

responsibilities and improving their work quality and efficiency. Presently there are still many cadres and Party members who commit serious, sophisticated and complicated mistakes and have a low sense of criticism and self-criticism. In this context, Party executive committees should supply direct guidance and have regulations to closely combine Party and State inspection bodies and to merge the masses' inspection organizations into a concerted force.

It is vital to attach special importance to the education and popularization of Party discipline and determinedly overcome divergent tendencies in discipline execution. On the one hand, the Party should focus on the consideration and treatment of its members who degenerate and violate Party regulations and State laws. On the other hand, it should promulgate soon specific regulations on what its members can and can't do, especially in economic activities, and on the execution of discipline for its application throughout the Party.

State bodies should further research, complement and perfect laws, mechanisms and policies on socio-economic issues, as well as those on the stabilization and improvement of the living standards of cadres, public servants, officials and people. They should also guarantee the sound implementation of distribution principles. These are basic conditions for maintaining laws and discipline and for checking manifestations of degeneration, corruption and other negative practices.

If all the afore-mentioned tasks are satisfactorily fulfilled, the Party will surely make new steps forward and become increasingly transparent, strong and mature to satisfy any requirements and assume any tasks posed by the new period and to deserve the people's trust, affection and expectations.

FURTHER HEIGHTENING THE PARTY'S LEADERSHIP AND COMBATIVENESS TO MEET THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE REVOLUTIONARY CAUSE IN THE NEW PERIOD¹

Comrades,

The 4th Plenum of the 11th Party Central Committee discussed and agreed on the issuance of the Resolution "Some Urgent Issues Concerning the Current Task of Party Building." It is an important resolution that attracted the whole Party and people's attention during the Plenum. After promulgation, the overwhelming majority of cadres, Party members and people received it with excitement, joy and unanimity. It was assumed to have selected the right issues, assessed the situation and proposed measures for continuous Party construction and rectification to meet the requirements of reality and the people's aspirations. Hundreds of people have sent articles and letters to the Party Central Committee to show their affection, consent, excitement and aspirations. However, the public is still waiting and wondering whether the Resolution will be implemented effectively or fall into the "unsatisfying" status as many of its predecessors. This is a legitimate and popular concern.

Deeply aware of this issue, at the closing session of its 4th Plenum, the 11th Party Central Committee required that the implementation of the resolution should be organized under satisfactory leadership and direction and considered it a key and decisive issue for the Resolution to come into effect. After a short time of active and

¹ Speech at the National Cadres' Conference on the Thorough Grasp and Implementation of the Resolution of the 4th Plenum of the 11th Party Central Committee on "Some Urgent Issues Concerning the Current Task of Party Building", 27 February 2012.

prompt preparation, today the Politburo holds this National Cadres' Conference for the popularization and full grasp of the contents of the Party Central Committee's Resolution and the Politburo's Instruction and Plan for its implementation. The full attendance of members of the Politburo, Secretariat and Party Central Committee; key leaders of Central agencies, ministries and sectors; and those of cities and provinces throughout the country shows the special importance of this Conference and the Party's high determination from the opening stage of the whole plan for the implementation of the Resolution. Perhaps it has been the ever greatest conference so far on the popularization of a thematic resolution adopted by the Party Central Committee.

Through the introduction and popularization of the contents of the Resolution, Instruction and Plan, this Conference aims at helping key leaders of all sectors and levels of authority become fully and deeply conscious of the goal, significance and content of the Resolution; have a thorough grasp of necessary knowledge, directive ideas and things to be done, which serve as the basis for the creation of a high level of unity of will and determination; be fully aware of their responsibilities to set examples and consciously and satisfactorily implement and direct the implementation of the Resolution within their competence and responsibility. The Organization Committee for the Conference has disseminated and reported to you the working agenda, contents and procedures of the Conference. I would like to further stress that this Conference is of great significance. You are required to heighten the sense of responsibility before the Party and people, and concentrate, at a high level, on study, research and discussion for satisfactory results. The Party Central Committee, Politburo and Secretariat have shown high-level determination and unity. I hope that you will also show the same, right in the study of this Resolution.

You have been recently informed of the results and main contents of the 4th Plenum of the 11th Party Central Committee via the mass media or conferences held by all-level Party executive committees for the popularization and grasp of the Resolution. The Party Central Committee's Resolution and the Politburo's Instruction are written briefly and clearly, so they are easy to understand. You should

study them directly. To help you have a better understanding of the Resolution and Instruction, I would like to further discuss some issues mentioned in them, mainly providing further information and clarification of some of the contents.

I shall focus on four issues: the reasons for the discussion and promulgation of the Resolution on Party building; the purposes, requirements, preparation process and scope of the Resolution; fundamental contents of the Party Central Committee's Resolution and the Politburo's Instruction; and some issues that should be noticed in the direction and organization of the implementation.

1. Why should the Party Central Committee Discuss and Issue a Resolution on Party Building at This Time?

The Party always pays attention to Party building. Many resolutions, instructions, and conclusions on Party building have been delivered by the Party Central Committee, Politburo and Secretariat. The national Party congresses' political programs and documents all address Party building; one of them has even made a report on it. Since the 6th National Party Congress, the Party Central Committee has issued eight resolutions and the Politburo has issued six special-subject resolutions on Party building. The 7th Secretariat directed the summarization of twenty years of Party building (1975–1995). The 9th Secretariat directed the summarization of some theoretical and practical issues during twenty years of renovation (1986–2006), most of which focused on Party building.

Why should the Party Central Committee discuss and issue another resolution on Party building when there have already been so many resolutions on it?

In my opinion, there are four reasons for doing so.

First of all, Party leadership and Party building always have great significance for the revolutionary cause of Việt Nam. It is a great lesson and a profound conclusion drawn by the Party after over eighty years' operation. It is also the scientific theory and practical experience of many parties and countries in the world. The Political Program on National Construction in the Transitional Period to

Socialism (supplemented and developed in 2011) firmly states, “The Party’s sound leadership is the leading determinant of the victory of the Vietnamese revolution.”¹ This was true in the past, is the same at present, and will be the same in the future. International communists’ and workers’ parties consider the communist party’s leadership a matter of principle and a law of the socialist revolution. Hồ Chí Minh once said that the revolution will succeed only when the Party is strong, as the ship runs well only when the captain has good skills. The collapse of the Soviet Union was attributed to many factors. One of them was the Soviet Communist Party’s degeneration as the consequence of bureaucracy, corruption and prerogatives. Some high-ranking leaders of the Party fell into revisionism and rightist opportunism, made mistakes in policy lines and even acted against socialist ideals. The Party had a large membership (21 million), but it was not strong. Moreover, its loss of combat capacity led to its collapse when the situation went wrong. It can be said to be a profound and valuable lesson for Vietnamese Communist Party members who should remind themselves of not repeating the same mistakes. During the reform period, the Communist Party of China always stressed the necessity of holding fast to its leadership. At meetings with Việt Nam, China always emphasized that it would try its best to prevent itself from Westernization, degeneration and corruption. The Communist Party of Cuba is carrying out step-by-step renovations in the direction of updating the socio-economic development model. It also resolutely asserts the Communist Party’s leadership and refuses to accept pluralism and a multiparty system. Recently, the Communist Party of Cuba organized the National Cadres’ Conference on Party Building. In modern time, there are hardly any countries in the world that are not under the leadership of one or more parties or an equivalent political organization.

Realities show that the further Việt Nam promotes the renewal, market economy, open-door policy and integration, the more attention it should pay to the leadership of the Communist Party of Việt Nam and Party building. It is a guarantee for the successful implementation of the Political Program, the satisfactory fulfillment

¹ Communist Party of Việt Nam: *The 11th National Party Congress’s Documents*, National Political Publishing House, Hà Nội, 2011, p. 66.

of the task of building socialism and the sound safeguarding of revolutionary achievements and national independence and sovereignty. For the time being, Việt Nam should further assert strongly the Party’s leadership and or its leadership role and the importance of Party building. Recently, now and then there have been some misconceptions of this issue here and there. Some localities have attached exaggerated importance to the cultivation of professional skills and knowledge while making light of Party leadership and Party building. Some people have opined that the promotion of the multi-sector market economy, open door policy, international integration, joint ventures and associations with foreign partners does not require Party leadership. Some have even opined that Party leadership only troubles and hinders economic development.

Second, Việt Nam is currently undertaking great and heavy political tasks that require the Party to further improve its leadership and combat capacity. The 11th National Party Congress has recently approved the Political Program on National Construction in the Transitional Period to Socialism (supplemented and developed in 2011) and the Socio-economic Development Strategy for the 2011–2020 Period, which aims at turning Việt Nam into a basically modernized and industrialized country by 2020 and a modern socialist-oriented industrial country by the mid-21st century. This is really a comprehensive, profound and noble revolutionary cause.

To achieve the afore-mentioned goals, Việt Nam should continuously speed up industrialization and modernization in association with the development of the knowledge economy; develop a socialist-oriented market economy; promote cultural and human development, improve people’s living standards and guarantee social welfare; solidly safeguard national independence, sovereignty and socialism; maintain political security, social order and safety; and actively and pro-actively boost international integration. In addition, Việt Nam should satisfactorily deal with big relations between renewal and stabilization and development, between economic and political renewal, between a market economy and socialist orientation, between economic and cultural development and the implementation of social progress and justice, between independence and self-reliance and international integration, and between the

building of socialism and the safeguarding of the socialist country. Việt Nam has never implemented the establishment, development and expansion of international relationships on such a large scale as seen nowadays. Many new issues have been put forward and should be dealt with, both theoretically and practically; some of them seem to be contradictory or absurd.

The world is developing quickly, complicatedly and unpredictably due to conflicts between big countries and forces; contradictions and conflicts of interests between classes, nations and regions; global climate changes; and the rapid scientific and technological revolution. The struggle between socialism and capitalism, as well as that between the movement for peace, national independence, democracy and social progress and the extreme and aggressive imperialist forces, is going on violently in various forms and nuances. The inherent contradictions of capitalism have not been solved but increasingly deepened. The financial crisis and economic depression of capitalism that started in 2008–2009 have not been solved yet. To make it worse, public-debt crises in America and many Western European countries are pervading Ireland, Greece, Spain, Portugal and Italy. The Occupy Wall Street movement is expanding from New York to other cities in the United States of America, many countries in Eastern Europe and even Japan. These public-debt crises are considered to be the manifestations of “systematic errors,” reflecting the impasse of capitalism. They can lead capitalism to a new recession, as is assumed and predicted by many international experts. The situations in the East Sea and the Asia-Pacific region are undergoing new complicated developments.

In this context, Việt Nam advocates a foreign policy of independence, peace, cooperation and development, multi-lateralization, diversification and deeper integration into the international life. During the implementation of this policy, Việt Nam should handle the relations with persistent principles and flexible and resourceful methods and strategies in order to solidly maintain national independence and sovereignty, safeguard the political regime and revolutionary achievements, create a peaceful and stable environment for national construction, defense and development, avoid weaknesses and traps, increase friends and reduce enemies.

During the transformation of socio-economic management methods and international integration, Việt Nam should practise, study and draw on experience at the same time. It is also influenced by the dark side of the market economy, open door policy and integration. Many issues emerging during these processes have had direct effects on Việt Nam, as well as the ideology, sentiment and mood of Vietnamese cadres, Party members and people.

Third, although the Party has promoted its positive aspects and fine nature and traditions, it is also facing many new requirements as well as negative and complicated phenomena. Under the leadership of the Party, many Party members are promoted to high positions, given power and entitled to manage public property and cadres. In addition, Việt Nam is promoting a market economy, open door policy and integration. Many people show their concern about the Party, its nature and the dark side of market mechanisms and international integration that may have effects on the Party ranks. There has appeared a gap between the rich and the poor in the Party ranks. Many Party members have become rich very quickly and lead a life that is far different from that of the poor. Do these people have the same thoughts as the poor? To whom will the Party belong? Will it remain the revolutionary party of the working class, the laboring people and the nation? In fact, a part of the Party membership has shown serious degeneration in political ideology, morality and lifestyle. This is the most worrying problem and the greatest risk to a leading party, as once warned by Lenin and Hồ Chí Minh. Việt Nam has carried out Party building work regularly and continuously for many terms, with many methods and campaigns, to make the Party increasingly progressive and mature, but limitations still exist. Weaknesses and errors have not been much overcome. Even some of them have become more complicated, causing worry and anxiety among cadres, Party members and the masses, negatively affecting the Party's combat capacity and leadership role. These warnings should not be disregarded.

Fourth, Việt Nam is facing the frenzied and violent opposition of hostile and reactionary forces. Their basic and long-term plot is to eliminate socialism, the Party leadership, Marxism-Leninism and Hồ Chí Minh Thought in Việt Nam. To realize that plot, hostile forces

have resorted to many strategies and conducted many campaigns persistently, resolutely and cunningly. "Peaceful evolution" is a strategy in the counter-revolutionary strategy system of capitalism and a "peaceful expedient to win victory." Many Western experts and politicians call it by different names such as "peaceful transformation," "peaceful alteration," "peaceful revolution," "velvet revolution," "color revolution" and "street revolution." In this strategy, ideological-cultural activities are considered a "breakthrough," a "bridge leading to the battlefield," and a leading aspect that undermines trust, causes theoretical and ideological chaos, and creates a gap for the gradual reduction of communist ideology followed by the abolition of socialist ideology. Imperialist ideologists have come to such a conclusion that "there are tasks that cannot be completed by 100 fighter aircraft but can be accomplished by 10 messengers" and that "a radio station can pacify a country." At present, "electromagnetic waves are replacing swords;" "one dollar on propaganda is equal to five dollars on national defense;" "the aroused issues of democracy, human rights, nation and religion are the four breakthrough blows and attacks aimed at piercing the ideological-political front."

In recent time, the ideological and political wave against Việt Nam has risen high, sometimes repeatedly. It is perhaps due to the new developments in the world and regional situations. In addition, Việt Nam is facing new socio-economic difficulties and challenges, in spite of its great achievements. Social evils such as corruption, bribery, drug addiction and prostitution are continuously increasing, while the gap between the rich and the poor is widening. Bureaucracy and the lack of democracy have caused discontent among the population, leading to massive and complicated lawsuits in some localities. Hostile forces and opportunists believe that this is a good chance for them to advance vigorously to affect and transform the situation and change Việt Nam's line, so they have carried out many frenzied activities with new tricks and strategies, simultaneously using foreign forces and means and exploiting and developing domestic forces to cause "self-evolution," "self-transformation" and opposition within the Party and society; sabotaging Việt Nam from the inside out; and making the "communists destroy themselves." They are trying to find and put up "flags" to oppose Việt Nam. Some discontented political

opportunists are also making corrupt use of forums and relations to propagandize their wrong ideas. They are continuously writing letters and materials to attack and falsely accuse the Vietnamese regime and cause a negative impact on the Vietnamese people, especially young people, students, writers, artists and intellectuals.

These hostile forces and opportunists repeat arguments that have been raised by anti-communist ideologists, and have been criticized and rejected many times by Việt Nam. Generally, they deny the Vietnamese revolution's achievements, exaggerate Việt Nam's errors and weaknesses, paint a gloomy picture of Vietnamese reality, sow suspicion, break down the belief of the Vietnamese people and cadres and attribute Việt Nam's errors and weaknesses to the Vietnamese Party and State's wrong lines and weak leadership and management. They also deny Marxism-Leninism and Hồ Chí Minh Thought, negate the socialist path and orientation, denigrate the Party's leadership role, criticize and blame the Party and call for pluralism and a multiparty system. In addition, they try to arouse internal division by rumors that there are factions within the Party Central Committee and Politburo, make up and distort history, falsely accuse and sully some high-ranking leaders of the Party and State (including Hồ Chí Minh), and try by all means to topple the idol of Hồ Chí Minh. These arguments of hostile forces, reactionary elements and political opportunists are not new, but their spreading at this time is extremely dangerous since it sows internal confusion, suspicion and distraction that may lead to "self-evolution" and "self-transformation."

In the afore-mentioned context, if the Communist Party of Việt Nam cannot maintain its revolutionary nature, stay firm politically and ideologically, preserve its unity of will and action, safeguard its transparent morality and lifestyle and close organization and win the people's support, it will not be strong enough to stand firm and lead the country forwards. This is the reason why the Party always emphasizes the significance of Party building, regarding it as a key and vital task not only to the Party but also to the regime of Việt Nam. It is also the reason why the Party Central Committee ought to continue discussion and issuance of another resolution on Party building.

2. The Purpose, Requirement, Preparation Process and Scope of the 4th Plenum's Resolution of the 11th Party Central Committee

2.1. The Purpose and Requirement of the 4th Plenum

The 11th National Party Congress declared that the theme, as well as the directive idea, of the coming years is to continuously improve the Party's leadership and combat capabilities. It also raised the requirement of making the Party really transparent and strong in terms of politics, ideology, organization, staff and mode of leadership. It focused on eight basic, systematic and comprehensive tasks. However, these tasks are difficult and complicated and should be carried out regularly and for a long time. In the short term, the Party should select and focus immediately on some of the most urgent issues to create specific and obvious changes, meet in a timely manner the requirement of reality and contribute to consolidating the belief of the Vietnamese cadres, Party members and people. The 4th Plenum's discussion and issuance of "Some Urgent Issues Concerning the Current Task of Party Building" is mainly to satisfy that requirement, concretize the part of the 11th National Party Congress Resolution on Party building and realize the over-all Agenda of the 11th Party Central Committee.

2.2. The Process and Way of Preparation for the 4th Plenum

Fully aware of the position and significance of this Plenum, the Politburo directed the preparation for it promptly and seriously, with specific, practical and feasible renovations, to select the right issue, identify the right focus and propose positive breakthrough measures to bring about obvious changes in practice. It established the Steering Committee for the Preparation and Development of the Project. The Steering Committee included some members of the Politburo, Secretariat and Party Central Committee and representatives of the leaderships of the Party committees. It was headed by the Standing Member of the Secretariat. It also set up an editorial division in charge of promptly organizing the research and compilation of the Resolution. The Draft Resolution was sent to Party committees and organizations at central level, those of the cities and provinces under the Central Government and some theoretical research agencies at central level

for their comments. Four conferences were held to collect opinions from representatives of the leaderships of ministries and sectors, secretaries and deputy secretaries of provincial and municipal Party committees, and chairmen of the people's committees of the provinces and centrally-governed cities. The standing members of the Steering Committee directly worked with and listened to comments from many senior leaders, revolutionary veterans and former members of the Politburo, Secretariat and Party Central Committee who are experienced in Party building. The Politburo reserved two sessions for listening to the Steering Committee's report and discussing the important contents of the Draft Resolution before its submission to the Party Central Committee.

At the 4th Plenum, members of the Party Central Committee and other participants showed a high spirit of responsibility, promoted democracy, discussed in a straightforward manner and contributed a lot of important comments to the Politburo's drafts and reports. A total of 202 comments were raised directly at the Plenum. Many others were sent to the Plenum in the form of written documents. The Politburo received these comments to the maximum and explained the controversial issues. The Party Central Committee approved the contents of the Draft Resolution. On 16 January 2012, the Resolution was officially issued. With a high spirit of unity, the Party Central Committee is determined to create obvious changes and better fulfill the task of Party building and rectification for the common cause of the nation and the Party. Thus, the Resolution of the 4th Plenum of the 11th Party Central Committee is really a product of collective intellect.

2.3. The Scope of the Resolution

This time the Party Central Committee does not discuss comprehensively, but focuses on directing and implementing some of the most urgent issues relating to Party building in the present context, with the desire to overcome former wasteful activities and create specific and practical changes in reality. These issues are: (1) preventing and checking regression in the political ideology, morality and lifestyle of a large part of cadres and Party members, including first and foremost leaders and managers at all levels; (2) building a leading and managing staff at all levels, especially at central level,

to satisfy the requirements of industrialization, modernization and international integration; (3) clearly defining the competence and responsibility of the leader of an executive committee in the Party hierarchy, or an administration in relation to the executive committee, agency or unit; continuing to renovate the Party's mode of leadership.

Which is the most important and urgent issue? Some opine that the issue of political ideology is the most important at present, since it is related to the Party's political fate, political program, lines and regulations. In other words, it is a vital issue. Some others argue that the issue of political ideology is at central or strategic level only; at local or grassroots level, the most stinging problem is the one related to the degrading morality and lifestyle of cadres and Party members, which is easily observed by the masses. The population in localities do not lose faith in the Party and its lines, but they lose faith in cadres at local level, who commit corruption, perform negative deeds or show degrading quality and morality. Therefore, the issue of morality and lifestyle should be considered the most urgent. Besides, there is also an opinion that the cause of all causes is the cadre-related issue. In other words, the human factor is the determinant of all issues. Despite much discussion, the organization keeps expanding, the government apparatus's components keep overlapping, the staff keeps increasing and the salary regime remains unreasonable. Therefore, it is necessary to solve first and foremost the cadre problem. There is also another opinion that collective and individual authorities and responsibilities are not clearly defined. Consequently, many cases remain unsolved because no one takes responsibility for them. There also exists the practice of passing the buck, leading to "individual achievements but collective errors" (achievements belong to individuals, but errors belong to the leadership). Therefore, it is most urgent that individual and collective authorities and responsibilities should be clearly defined. All these opinions are reasonable to some extent. Accordingly, all the three afore-mentioned issues are equally important and urgent. On the whole, however, what is most complained about by the masses, makes them gradually lose faith in the Party and undermines the Party's nature is the degradation of the political ideology, morality and lifestyle of a large part of the cadres and Party members. This

degradation is really serious. Therefore, although the three afore-mentioned issues are equally important and closely related to each other, the Party Central Committee unanimously decided that the first issue is the focal and most urgent. Dealing with it will be the breakthrough of the entire Party building work at present and the main link of the chain, which should be tightly grasped by the Party. Nevertheless, the other issues should not be disregarded.

3. The Main Contents of the Resolution

As mentioned earlier, this Resolution is far different from its predecessors. Despite being written briefly, it consists of many fundamental and important contents and new points, while it mainly focuses on three urgent issues. After defining these three issues, it goes straight into assessing the situation, analyzing the causes and clearly defining the targets, principles and measures for implementation and the methods of organizing the implementation.

3.1. Regarding the Assessment of the Situation and its Causes

It is normally hard to assess the situation accurately because it is dependent on each person's stand, angle of view, outlook and the information accessed. In fact, when the Draft Resolution was introduced to the 4th Plenum of the Party Central Committee for discussion and feedback, some participants opined that it had not reflected the spirit of looking straight into the truth or the full awareness of the seriousness of weaknesses and errors. The situation was much more serious in reality than was assessed in the Draft Resolution. On the contrary, some others opined that the Draft Resolution overstated the Party's errors and weaknesses. They argued that if the Party's situation had been so gloomy, Việt Nam would not have attained such great world-recognized achievements during the years of renewal or heightened its standing in the international arena.

The Party Central Committee requires that there should be an objective, dialectic and scientific method of looking at and assessing the situation. Accordingly, Việt Nam should calmly and multilaterally look straight into the truth without painting it in bright colors or blackening it, pinpoint both achievements and weaknesses, analyze comprehensively both objective and subjective causes and describe

accurately the situation without overstating or exaggerating any of its aspects.

With such a method and principles, the Party Central Committee clearly states that during the over eighty years of incessantly striving, building, growing up and overcoming lots of difficulties and challenges, with the mettle of a true revolutionary party that is experienced and has a strong attachment to the people, the Party led and organized the people and army, promoted their great strength and gained many great victories in the revolutionary cause. During the years of renewal, it has achieved many positive results in Party building and rectification. In addition, its leadership and combat capabilities have been unceasingly improved; its leadership method has been constantly renewed; its leadership role has been ceaselessly maintained; the people's trust in it has been continuously reinforced; the leading and managing staff at all levels has gradually grown up and made progress in many aspects. The majority of cadres and Party members have incessantly promoted self-cultivation; improved their political quality, morality and lifestyle; and wholeheartedly served the people. Therefore, the people trust them. Việt Nam's achievements after 25 years of renewal are attributed to the contributions of the Party, people and army, including cadres and Party members.

Most suggestions emphasize the necessity of strongly asserting the Party's achievements, strengths, fine nature and heroic tradition. It is also necessary to assert that most cadres and Party members are good, otherwise Việt Nam would not have obtained such achievements. It cannot be denied by history that over the past eighty years the Party has established and ceaselessly reinforced and improved its leadership role, strength and prestige with its mettle, will, intellect, pioneering theory and sound lines that bring practical results to the people and country, its spirit of sacrificing and tirelessly striving for mastery, its closely and firmly united organization and its flesh-and-blood relationship with the people. Thanks to that, the Party has won the people's trust, support and protection. Việt Nam has never achieved such progress and standing in the international arena before.

Nevertheless, the Party Central Committee has also bluntly disclosed limitations, weaknesses and errors in the three aspects of Party building. It has also pinpointed their nature, scope, tendency and consequences. In terms of nature, these limitations, weaknesses and errors have become serious, lasted for many terms and only slowly been overcome. In terms of scope, they have become popular and been found at all levels and in all sectors. ("A large part of cadres and Party members, including those in leading and managing positions and some high-ranking cadres, have degenerated in terms of political ideology, morality and lifestyle.") In terms of tendency, they have developed complexly and have not been prevented or checked. In terms of consequences, they have undermined the people's trust in the Party; lowered the Party's position, role, combat capacity and leadership capability; and caused damage to the Party and State's prestige and reputation. If these limitations, weaknesses and errors are not overcome soon, they will pose great challenges to the Party's leadership and the Vietnamese regime's existence.

Regarding the first issue, the Party Central Committee has strictly pointed out manifestations of the degradation of political ideology, morality and lifestyle. The degradation is reflected, on the one hand, in the fading of revolutionary ideals, inconsistency with the socialist road, oscillation, lack of belief, decline of combat will, refusal to protect the right and fight against the wrong, and support of wrong conceptions and deviatory opinions. On the other hand, they are manifested in the absence of the sense of wholeheartedly serving the country and people, satisfactorily fulfilling duties and assignments and strictly complying with the Party's organizational and operational principles and regulations.

The degradation of morality and lifestyle is expressed in selfishness, pragmatism, opportunism, self-interest, greed for fame, corruption, waste, factionalism, localism, disunity, bureaucracy, divergence from the people, indifference to the people's difficulties and urgent matters, luxury and hedonism. Among these expressions, the cadres, Party members, people and social opinion are most concerned about the corruption, factionalism, localism and group interests of a part of the Party members in high positions and some high-ranking cadres of the Party and State, either incumbent or retired.

Regarding the second issue, the Party Central Committee has straightly pointed out some errors in the organization and cadre work. The staff at central level and strategic level has basically not been built. The cadre planning work has been implemented at local level and has not been carried out at central level, leading to deficiency, inconsistency and the lack of systematics and pro-activeness in cadre arrangement and assignment. There have been some cases in which cadres are not assessed and arranged properly, objectively and according to their work requirements, strengths and capabilities. This has affected the governing bodies' prestige and the development of sectors, localities and the whole country.

Concerning the third issue, it is clearly pointed out by the Party Central Committee that there has not been a clear definition of individual authorities and responsibilities of the leaders of Party executive committees, administrations, agencies and units, as well as their relationship with these collectives, which may affect Party's leadership capability and the State's management efficiency. The principle of "collective command; individual accountability" is actually formalistic in many places due to the lack of a clear definition of a responsibility mechanism and the relationship between collectives and individuals; no one takes responsibility for any errors that may occur. This not only leads to the reliance on collectives and unclearly defined individual responsibilities, but also discourages leaders from working wholeheartedly and enterprisingly, thus creating loopholes for acts of irresponsibility, stagnation and abuse of power in pursuit of personal interests to occur.

Regarding the causes of weaknesses and errors, the Party Central Committee has carried out a comprehensive review and pointed out both objective and subjective causes. Among them, subjective causes are the major ones. The objective and subjective causes have affected and intertwined each other in a complicated way. Here are the most noticeable causes.

First, a considerable part of cadres and Party members show a deficiency in self-cultivation, self-training and combat will; have fallen into individualism and forgotten their responsibilities and obligations before the Party and people; are afraid of difficulties,

hardships and contacts; ignore moral standards and public opinion; disobey laws and regulations; and fail to set good examples in leadership and management.

Second, the principle of democratic centralism has been relaxed, leading to formalistic centralism in some places. Collectives serve as screens for the legitimization of their leaders' opinions, which are actually patriarchal and arbitrary. The principle of criticism and self-criticism is not implemented straightly and honestly, but poorly and formalistically. Opinions are not expressed consistently. For example, some cadres and Party members may show unanimity at conferences, but opposition outside them; some did not express or falsely expressed their opinions when in office, but then reveal different opinions when retired; some did not receive any suggestions when in office, but have received many letters of denunciation when retired. Democracy is not accompanied with laws and regulations, while laws and regulations are not strictly observed. The principles of Party activities are violated; leaflets have been scattered; anonymous letters aimed at speaking ill of and attacking Party members or causing loss of prestige and divisions within the Party may be dispersed. Some reactionaries even hide themselves behind the masses and may incite them to protest.

Third, the research, adjustment and promulgation of the mechanisms, policies and laws in accordance with the socialist-oriented market economy have not been carried out in a timely manner; many regulations and laws have not been accompanied by specific sanctions. The evaluation, utilization and arrangement of cadres are still based on personal relations and localism; attention is not paid to detecting and treating well the talented and virtuous; those with mistakes, declined prestige and poor capacity have not been resolutely replaced.

Fourth, the popularization of and education about politics, ideology, morality and lifestyle has been conducted formalistically, so it has not been able to encourage cadres' and Party members' revolutionary will. Theoretical research is still insufficient and outdated, thus having not solved many problematic or controversial theoretical-practical issues. Laziness in study or formalistic study just for academic degrees is still rather popular.

Last, the examination, supervision and maintenance of laws and regulations in many places and at many levels have not been carried out regularly and urgently, while struggles against violations have not been conducted seriously.

From the afore-mentioned analysis, we can find an answer to the question that has been raised by many people, "Why hasn't the Party prevented and checked limitations and weaknesses, although it has issued many resolutions and instructions on Party building and has directed many campaigns on Party renewal and rectification?" It is due to subjective causes or our faults: weakness and shortage of determination in education, leadership and management; the lack of self-cultivation, self-training and the practice of probity among some cadres and Party members; and the lack of exemplariness among some leaders and managers at all levels. President Hồ Chí Minh repeatedly emphasized that individualism was a cruel enemy and an internal invader of Việt Nam. It has neither swords nor guns, but it can pull one down the slope without stop. All evils come from this disease. If it is not defeated or swept away, the Party cannot stay strong and transparent or remain a true party that wholeheartedly devotes itself to the country and the people.

3.2. Regarding the Tasks and Measures

Based on the definition of the three focal and urgent tasks mentioned earlier, the Party Central Committee has introduced synchronous, focused and feasible measures, which combine "confronting and building" to deal with the most pressing issues. There are four groups of measures: (1) a group of measures on criticism and self-criticism and the enhancement of the authorities' sense of being the vanguard and exemplary; (2) a group of measures on the Party's organization, staff and activities; (3) a group of measures on mechanisms and policies; (4) a group of measures on political and ideological education.

The overwhelming spirit of these groups of measures is the need to identify what should and can be done immediately and what would take time for preparation, especially those on working out and

promulgating mechanisms and policies, for the building of a resolute, feasible and effective plan or roadmap of implementation.

Regarding what should and can be done immediately, each cadre and Party member, first and foremost each member of the Party Central Committee, Politburo and Secretariat, should consciously and exemplarily carry out criticism and self-criticism; review themselves for self-adjustment; further promote the good points and wipe out the bad points; stay alert to the temptation of fame, material gains and money; and prevent themselves from falling into the swamp of selfish individualism. The Party Central Committee, Politburo and Secretariat should regularly conduct reviews and evaluations, clearly define their responsibilities in the leadership and direction of the implementation of the Party's resolutions and instructions and incessantly promote their direction of the study and cultivation of moral qualities and healthy lifestyles. Leaders of Party executive committees, Party organizations and State bodies should take responsibility for building and organizing the implementation of the plan for dealing with every one of the urgent issues and things that should be done immediately, and clearly define the tasks, deadlines and persons responsible for these specific tasks. They should also strictly observe the regulations on what Party members are not allowed to do, promote the prevention and fight against corruption and waste, completely deal with matters of public concern and improve the quality of the campaign of studying and following the moral example of Hồ Chí Minh.

Regarding what would take time for preparation, the Party should urgently carry out research and summarization and make proposals for decision and implementation. For example, the Party should urgently renovate its cadre organization work and activity regulations; regularly examine and supervise its members' self-cultivation and self-education about politics, ideology, morality and lifestyle; gradually perfect its mechanisms and policies, especially those on the training, arrangement and utilization of cadres in accordance with the new conditions; build specific regulations on the implementation of democratic centralism, criticism and self-criticism and questioning within it; work out regulations on the leaders' competence and responsibilities in cadre management and

utilization, in association with the organization and implementation of their responsibilities and tasks; establish mechanisms for its organizations and the people to practice their supervision of its activities; replace in a timely manner those who fail to fulfill their tasks; continuously reform the salary and housing policy for its staff to ensure their stable living standards and enable them to keep themselves righteous; and resolutely fight against prerogatives.

There are some new points in the groups of measures as follows:

1- The measures ensure synchrony and concentration, follow a roadmap, combine "combating and building" and focus on dealing with the three most pressing issues in order to create specific and obvious changes in reality.

2- The measures raise high and emphasize criticism, self-criticism and exemplariness of superiors, leaders and managers at all levels, first of whom are those at central level and the heads of sectors, levels and units. The Resolution clearly states, "The Party Central Committee, Politburo, Secretariat, Party committees at all levels and key cadres, especially those at central level and leaders, should set good examples for others to follow." It also states that, "Members of the Politburo, Secretariat, Party Central Committee, Party Personnel Bureau, Party organizations and committees directly under the Party Central Committee, heads of the sections of the Party Central Committee, standing provincial and municipal Party committees and executive committees at all levels of the Party hierarchy should strictly conduct criticism and self-criticism and set good examples via practical actions."

3- The measures highlight that the review, criticism and self-criticism should be regulated strictly and specifically. The content should mainly focus on the three pressing issues mentioned in the Resolution, which are closely associated with the implementation of the 19 things Party members are not allowed to do, and the settlement of urgent and big problems in their localities, units and sectors. Regarding the method, each of the cadres and Party members should pro-actively and consciously review themselves to promote their possible strengths and correct their possible mistakes, without waiting until a review conference is held. Before such a review conference

is held, preparations for it should be made carefully; referenda for contributing opinions from the Party committees and organizations directly under the Party Central Committee, the Fatherland Front, the equivalent socio-political organizations and former members of the equivalent Party committees should be held. The inspection committee should chair and coordinate with the organization board, the popularization and education board, the public relations board, the office and related bodies to make to the Party committee (or its standing commission) suggestions for individual and collective review where necessary. Results of reviews should be reported to the higher level and transmitted to the lower level and bodies for suggestions. The Party committee or organization where cadres and Party members have not conducted satisfactory criticism and self-criticism should reorganize the review. Party committees and organizations, cadres and Party members who have not consciously conducted review, criticism and self-criticism, or admitted or overcome their mistakes should be resolutely disciplined. Anyone who has made a mistake but consciously conducts review, criticism and self-criticism, and actively corrects and overcomes his/her mistake should be considered for a reduction of, or an exemption from disciplinary measures. After this phase of review, criticism and self-criticism according to the Party Central Committee's Resolution, the regulations concerning criticism and self-criticism will be observed strictly, on an annual basis and in association with responsibility- and task-based reviews and votes of confidence for the leading positions in Party and State bodies and organizations. Party committees and organizations should annually inform cadres, Party members and the masses of the review results, in some way, for contributive ideas. They should hold periodic referenda for the people's suggestions to Party building via the Fatherland Front and socio-political organizations at all levels.

The satisfactory implementation of review, criticism and self-criticism will provide foundation for a better understanding of cadres, a better evaluation and selection of cadres for the whole political system and a better preparation and planning for Party committees and key positions at all levels in the coming term. It is suggested that the vote of confidence for the leading positions in Party and State bodies and organizations should be held annually. Simultaneously,

it is recommended that the National Assembly should provide instructions for the implementation of the vote of confidence for those who are holding positions elected or approved by the National Assembly and the people's councils. Those who have had low levels of trust for two consecutive years and failed to accomplish their tasks should be considered for dismissal from their office, before their terms end or before their retirement age.

4- The measures stress the necessity of promoting the building and planning of the Party Central Committee, the Politburo, the Secretariat and the key leading positions of the Party and State for the 2016–2020 term; actively creating a source of strategic-level consultants and specialists and making a plan for their training and cultivation; and implementing the appointment of cadres to leading and managing positions at high levels with reference to their positions at lower levels.

5- The measures emphasize the necessity of the formulation and implementation of some regulations for the further guarantee and promotion of democracy in the Party, as well as the examination and supervision of cadres and Party members. They also stress the necessity of carrying out questioning within the Party, especially at the meetings of the Party Central Committee and Party executive committees at all levels; implementing the report on public and private assets among cadres and Party members honestly and publicly, according to regulations, and strictly punish those who lack honesty in doing this; and clearly defining the competence and responsibility of the heads of Party executive committees and organizations, State bodies and units. According to these measures, there should also be regulations for the Party Central Committee to annually make suggestions to show their trust in the Politburo and the Secretariat as a whole and in each of their members, and for the Party executive committees at all levels to show their trust in their subordinate standing committees as a whole and in each of the latter's members.

The inspection committee at each level should regularly examine and supervise the Party and State regulation observation by cadres under the corresponding Party committee's management and annually report the results of these cadres' implementation of Party and State

regulations on cadre work, the Law on Cadres and Civil Servants and the Law on Officials. It is necessary to build, complement and perfect the legal system to ensure democracy, openness and transparency in the cadre work and prevent cadres and their relatives from exploiting the formers' working positions for personal interests.

6- Regarding cadre work, the measures attach importance to the building of title-based cadre criteria and cadre evaluation criteria as the foundations of cadre planning, management, training, cultivation, arrangement and utilization; the pilot realization of the policy of one cadre simultaneously holding two official positions—secretary of the Party committee and chairman of the people's committee at district and commune levels; and the establishment of regulations on examination and supervision to ensure real efficiency and prevent power abuse and arbitrariness. The measures also highlight the necessity of summarizing practice and learning from experience for the building of a sound policy at Party congresses from provincial to grassroots levels, directly electing members of the Party committee at the respective level; implementing the policy of assigning non-local cadres to some key positions at provincial to district levels; carrying out the pilot project of empowering the secretary of a Party committee to recommend and select candidates for permanent membership in that Party committee and assigning the head to recommend and select candidates for vice-headship; piloting the regulations on recommendation and trainee leadership and management; and administering a personnel recommendation process according to which those who are to be promoted or nominated should present their action projects or programs before consideration and decision can be made by competent authorities.

7- Regarding the implementation of the Resolution, the measures emphasize the role of the Party committee's secretary. Accordingly, the secretary of a Party committee or organization should be directly involved in studying, popularizing and grasping the Resolution and direct the building of a specific program and plan for the implementation of the Resolution in his locality, organ or unit. Some other permanent members of the Party committee should also be involved in the direction of the Resolution's implementation. The Party Central Committee should include the

General Secretary, permanent members of the Secretariat; and heads of the Organization, Inspection, Communication and Education and People Mobilization Departments. This regulation should also be applied to Party committees at provincial and municipal levels and the Party organizations directly under the Party Central Committee.

4. Some Noticeable Issues in the Direction and Organization of the Resolution's Implementation

The Resolution adopted by the 11th Party Central Committee at its 4th Plenum, "Some Urgent Issues on the Current Task of Party Building," is one of great significance. It is welcomed and supported by the entire Party and people and is considered to have breathed new vitality into the country's political life. However, everyone is currently waiting in hope. The present decisive issue lies in the organization of the Resolution's implementation. The entire Party Central Committee is determined to satisfactorily implement the Resolution, however hard it might be. The Politburo has given an instruction and will soon introduce a plan for implementation in which the specific requirements, tasks, roadmap, schedule, method and procedures are clearly stated. I would like to focus on some common points as follows:

First, you are required to have a full and profound perception of the purpose, significance, requirement and content of the Resolution; thoroughly grasp the directive ideas and things that should be done as the foundations for the attainment of unanimous will and determination; be fully aware of your responsibilities to set good examples and consciously implement the Resolution; and direct and organize the Resolution's implementation in the areas and fields you are in charge of.

Second, after this Conference, the Politburo will collect your contributive ideas for the prompt perfection and issuance of a plan for implementing the Resolution and direct the Party Central Committee's departments to accept the Conference's comments for the prompt promulgation of instructive documents suitable for each task. Based on the Party Central Committee's Resolution, the Politburo's Instruction and Plan and the Party Central Committee's departments' and high-

level bodies' instructions, Party committees and organizations at all levels and in all sectors should make plans and design programs for the study, grasping and implementation of the Resolution in accordance with the specific conditions of their localities and sectors. This should be done promptly, seriously, practically and in association with specific and close division of responsibilities in leadership and direction.

Third, cadres and Party members, first and foremost, leaders and managers at all levels, should consciously set good examples and review themselves and their units and families. Strong points should be promoted; bad points should be eliminated.

Fourth, all the tasks and measures, including the eight tasks mentioned in the 11th Party Congress's Resolution and other Party and State resolutions, instructions and regulations, should be implemented synchronously and concertedly, with focuses and with attention to be paid to the combination of "combating and building." During the implementation, it is necessary to set examples of good people and good deeds; prevent, warn about and criticize wrong actions; strongly fight against corruption, debauchery and other negative phenomena; strictly punish violations of Party discipline and the State law; enhance the education, training and management of Party members and cadres; strengthen the inspection, supervision and auditing of competent agencies; heighten Party organizations' combativeness; and promote the supervision role of the people, mass organizations, press and public opinion.

Fifth, the review, criticism and self-criticism should be prepared carefully, directed meticulously and closely and implemented seriously and cautiously. Specific and practical results should be achieved in every step. Every effort should be made to avoid perfunctoriness and formalism. Bad habits such as going easy on somebody, treating somebody with indulgence, turning a meeting for criticism and self-criticism into an occasion for mutual flattering, and exploiting this opportunity to struggle with or topple each other for impure motives should be overcome. Those who victimize critics and falsely accuse others should be strictly punished. Experience shows that for satisfactory criticism and self-criticism, genuine democracy within the Party should be promoted; leaders should set good examples, enable the masses to criticize and offer suggestions to cadres and Party

members and be seriously open to sound criticism and suggestions. Those who have made serious mistakes but refuse to sincerely and consciously admit them or accept collective comments should be punished appropriately. It is not right to treat somebody with indulgence, support rightist deviationism and extremism or exploit criticism to attack somebody or cause internal discord. Criticism and self-criticism requires from each person high self-consciousness, true comradeship and courage for struggling straightly and sincerely. It is also a chance to have a better understanding of cadres, which serves as the foundation for the evaluation of cadres, as well as the consideration and preparation for cadre planning in the coming time.

Sixth, the Resolution adopted by the 11th Party Central Committee at its 4th Plenum should be implemented at the same time with other resolutions of the Party Central Committee, National Assembly and Government. Broadly speaking, the implementation of the permanent political tasks of the entire political system should not be separated from the accomplishment of the tasks for socio-economic development, the maintenance of political stability and national security and defense and the promotion of foreign activities. In other words, Việt Nam should not “shut the door” for Party rectification. In summary, Party building and rectification is to strengthen the Party, increase cadres’ and Party members’ exemplariness, improve Party organizations’ combat capacity, strengthen the Party’s internal solidarity, enhance the association between the Party and the people and promote the implementation of political missions for better results.

Last, Party building and rectification is related to organization and human development. It may easily harm personal honor, interests and relations because it requires each person to self-criticize and self-analyze their strengths and weaknesses, as well as judge and evaluate others. If one is not really self-conscious, sincere and fair, he/she will easily become subjective. As a result, he/she will see more strengths in himself/herself than in others and more weaknesses in others than in themselves. Therefore, Party building and rectification is often difficult and complicated. Despite difficulties, it must be done because it is closely related to the Party’s fate and the regime’s existence. The Party has done it regularly and

gained many important achievements. If the Party had not done it, it would not have achieved the results that can be seen nowadays. However, before the new requirements of the revolutionary mission and the existence of some weaknesses and mistakes, more than ever the Party should attach special importance to Party building, as it is specified at the 11th National Party Congress and the 4th Plenum of the 11th Party Central Committee, to create real changes in this work. It is important and decisive that all of us, from top to bottom, should have high determination and unity, dramatic and feasible implementation measures, close directions and a thinking method which is sound, cautious, calm and non-extreme to prevent bad forces from any act of exploitation, distortion, incitement or sabotage. Some tasks cannot be finished at once. On the contrary, they should be done patiently, tenaciously, regularly and continuously, and repeated as often as daily tooth-brushing and face-cleaning. Sometimes, no sooner has a problem been solved than another emerges; no sooner has a task been completed than another appears. If one does not understand this, he/she will easily lose his/her self-control, become pessimistic and suspicious, lose faith and deny all common efforts and results after discovering negative affairs within the Party.

Comrades,

The issues addressed in the contents of this National Cadres’ Conference are very basic and important. The Conference does not last long, so I request all of you to raise high the sense of responsibility and spend time on studying, discussing and contributing ideas to its contents to achieve a high degree of unanimity in the implementation of the Resolution.

The Politburo and Secretariat believe that with the Party’s fine tradition and nature and high political determination and the people’s support, we shall certainly overcome all difficulties and implement successfully the 11th Party Central Committee’s 4th Plenum’s Resolution to bring about new changes in Party building and make the Party increasingly transparent and powerful.

On behalf of the Politburo and Secretariat, I would like to wish you all good health, happiness, more trust and more ardor. May our Conference end successfully!

STRONGLY PROMOTING SOCIALIST DEMOCRACY AND FULLY IMPLEMENT THE PEOPLE'S RIGHT TO MASTERY¹

In 2009, the Vietnamese National Assembly (NA) continued to renovate thinking and awareness in the implementation of the tasks entrusted to it by its constituents and the people.

The Vietnamese NA has many fields to renovate. That means the NA needs to renovate many more areas, not only those shown at each session or each meeting of the Standing Committee but also shown in its organization and content of operation, its Standing Committee, Ethnic Council, and other committees and each deputy and assisting agency. The renovation must be methodical, sustainable and effective. Since the beginning of 2008, the NA Party member group proposed and won acceptance by the Politburo to spend a day discussing the directions to renovate the NA organization and operation. On this basis, the Politburo issued Conclusion 144-TB/TW (on 28 March 2008) concerning this issue. As directed by the Politburo, the Party member group and the Standing Committee of the NA have carried out the research, summary of reality, and a series of projects concerning the renovation of the NA organization and operation, such as Regulation for the operation of the Party member group and the Standing Committee of the NA, Regulation for the relationship between the NA Standing Committee and the Ethnic Council, and other NA committees, Regulation for the relationship between the NA Party member group and other centrally-administered Party organizations and other organizations in the whole political system, renovation of law-making and supervision, improvement of the

¹ Excerpts from an interview with *Đại biểu nhân dân* Newspaper, posted in *Đại biểu nhân dân* Newspaper on the issue in celebration of the Lunar New Year of the Tiger, 2010.

quality of the NA's decisions, renovation of the mode of contacting constituents and the fostering of the NA deputies. In reality, under Party leadership, the efforts of the NA agencies and deputies and the close coordination of the Government and related organizations, the NA is doing its job better, which is appraised by its constituents and the people.

Specifically, in 2009 legislation underwent several changes. For example, under the amended Law on the Issuance of Legal Normative Documents, which took effect as from the 1st of January 2009, the program for making laws and ordinances has been conducted more actively and has timely met the requirements for social organization and management. The NA Standing Committee was tasked with the amendment and modification of this program and reporting to the NA. Reality has proved that these modifications are appropriate. The supplements and amendments to some laws related to investment in capital construction at the 5th session of the NA, the Law of Public Investment, the Law of Capital and the Resolution to amend Resolution 66/2006/QH11 on projects of national importance have been submitted to the NA for examination. The drafting and the examination of bills are actively carried out with close coordination among the related organizations right from the preparation process. The organizations responsible for examination are active in doing research, studying the reality and promoting the roles of the subcommittees and the experts so that the examination reports are more critical, scientific and practical. Consultation with the people and sectors for bills is given due attention with an increasing quantity, varied methods and special attention to the affected subject of the laws going to be issued, which expresses the true democracy and caution in our law-making.

Interpellation is also promoted with increasing quality, effectiveness and validity. The supervision and interpellation focus on controversial issues in life. Supreme supervision is also intensified in order to timely identify, modify, supplement and promote positive aspects, while limiting undesirable consequences emerging from the policies and timely correcting mistakes to promote the implementation of socio-economic development. In 2009, the Ethnic Council and other committees of the NA supervised a number of socio-economic problems. The National Assembly focused on supervising two major

projects related to the implementation of the policies and laws concerning the management and use of state investments and property at State-owned corporations as well as food hygiene and safety. With an objective view in examining the achievements and drawbacks, identifying the causes and finding solutions, the NA issued a resolution on these problems in which the requirements and specific tasks that the government and the related agencies must execute were clearly presented. A brand-new point is that the NA supervised the solutions to the constituents' petition and held a plenary discussion from the report from the NA Standing Committee.

Questions and answers at the interpellation of the NA and the meetings of the NA Standing Committee have become more focused and practical. Therefore, interpellation is becoming more interesting and much appreciated by the people. At the 6th session, the NA issued a resolution on interpellation in which the interpellant is required to propose specific solutions to the problems raised, and report thereon to the NA at the next session.

Interpellation of the Vietnamese National Assembly is appreciated as one of its most prominent activities. Only the constituents and the changes in practice as a result of supervision can objectively and accurately evaluate their effects. During the past year, the NA focused on supervising the most important issues in a spirit free of nit-picking, verbal abuse, tension or acrimony, but with a sincere, straightforward and constructive attitude, neither neglecting the issues nor making concessions. After the interpellation, the relevant agencies seriously examined the issues raised such as reviewing the planning, managing the issuance of permissions for golf courses, managing the procurement and export of rice, speeding up the projects for capital construction, managing the plan and permission for some small and medium-sized hydroelectric plants, managing the foreign exchange and gold market, etc. Reality shows that supervision and interpellation are an added "kick-off" to exert positive impact on dealing with issues of life. In the follow-up, both the subject and object of supervision are likely to increase their responsibility. Many ministers and heads of sectors cooperate with local leaders to solve the problems pointed out by the NA. This is the new working style that shows respect for the NA deputies.

The renovations that the NA has adopted over the past years show the desire for renovations and originated from the requirements of reality. These are the general results of the renovation of the theoretical thinking and practice of the Party and State, of which the most important content is to promote socialist democracy and more fully realize the right of the people to mastership. The Vietnamese NA is the highest representative body of the people. Each NA deputy has been elected by the people and bears responsibility to the people. They should have a close relationship with the people in order to listen to their opinions and expectations of the people and report thereon to the NA. The people's opinions are the foundation for improving the effectiveness of the NA's operation. The leadership of the Party, the trust and supervision of the people and the renovation of the working style are factors creating the inner strength of the NA. The decisions that the NA has made all originated from the will of the Party and the expectations of the people.

The achievements of the Vietnamese NA are partly thanks to the work of leadership and management. To manage well, first it is important to grasp the guidelines and policies of the Party, the laws of the government and the regulations passed at the sessions. At the same time, it is necessary to have a sound understanding of reality and the expectations of the constituents to harmonize relationships with a sincere heart. Besides, it is essential to promote the role of different NA agencies, deputies and advisory organizations to have discussions with the right direction and focus.

There are some stressful moments in management, especially when it comes to delicate and controversial issues. When dealing with such issues, it is necessary to listen to different opinions and then take notes, summarize and consult with members of the presidium. From the experience, it is important to keep calm and respectfully listen to different opinions and solve the problems flexibly.

The year 2010 is of great significance in the political life in Việt Nam. This is a year with many important events and major holidays of the nation. In this year, the 10th National Party Congress ended its tenure and Party congresses at all levels took place, as well as the 11th National Party Congress. After that, there was an election for

the 13th National Assembly and for people's councils at all levels. The standing of Việt Nam in the world continues to be confirmed when Việt Nam was appointed to become the President of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and President of the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly (AIPA).

As the representative body for the will and expectations of the people, the NA has to try its best to complete all the major tasks of the year 2010 under the NA resolutions and actively prepared for the Party congresses at all levels and the 11th National Party Congress to be held in 2011. Along with the implementation of the annual tasks, it was necessary to:

- Positively contribute to the completion of the Program for national construction during the transitional period to socialism (adopted in 1991), make political reports and strategies for socio-economic development for the 10-year period from 2010 to 2020 and plans for socio-economic development for the 5-year period from 2011 to 2015 to report to the 11th National Party Congress. These jobs are very important because they do not only help draw up new policies and plans for the immediate future years but also involve planning for medium-term strategies and partly completing fundamental theoretical and ideological orientations to socialism. Many theoretical and practical issues of the Vietnamese revolution need to be clarified.

- Review the operation of the 12th NA and prepare for the election of the 13th NA. It is necessary to evaluate both the achievements and the drawbacks in order to find effective solutions. Cooperate with the related organizations to prepare for all work and conditions for the election of the 13th NA and People's Councils at all levels in 2011.

- Commemorate the big anniversaries in 2010. These are the occasions for us to look back at the development period of the Vietnamese NA since the 1st general election (January 6, 1946) and its contribution to national construction, protection and development. Lessons to be learnt from these experiences will be of extreme importance to the completion of the organization and operation of the National Assembly.

SOCIALISM AND THE ROAD TO SOCIALISM – FROM THE VIETNAMESE PERSPECTIVE¹

Socialism and the road to socialism consists of fundamental, theoretical, and practical issues which contain a very large, diverse and complicated content and allow various approaches, hence the need for thorough, serious research and profound, scientific reviews of realities. I would like to look at only some of these aspects from the Vietnamese perspective. I would also like to focus on answering the questions: What is socialism? Why has Việt Nam adopted it? How can the country build it up step by step? What significance do the renovations and socialistic causes in the country over the past 25 years have and what problems do they pose?

As is known, socialism is normally understood as a doctrine, a movement, and a regime, each of which is manifested in different forms depending on the world outlook and development level of specific historical periods. The socialism being mentioned here is scientific socialism based on Marxism and Leninism in the modern context.

Apparently, in the time of the Soviet Union and other socialist countries, there was hardly any debate on the question of advancing to socialism in Việt Nam. It used to be taken for granted. However, since the collapse of the Soviet Union and socialist systems in many countries and the ebb of world revolutions, it has been posed again, only to become the focal point of every discussion, and even a heated debate. Anti-communist forces and political opportunists are now more than happy to distort socialism or sabotage it.

¹ Excerpted from Party General Secretary Nguyễn Phú Trọng's speech at Nico Lopez Advanced Studies School, Cuba, on 9 April 2012.

Some revolutionaries have become pessimistic or doubtful as to socialism's soundness and scientific character, blaming the collapse of the Soviet Union and Eastern European socialist countries on erroneous Marxism, Leninism and socialism. They argue that we have chosen the wrong way and that we need to adopt a different style of governance. Some have acceded to hostile arguments, while some have derogated socialism or have praised capitalism one-sidedly. Some even regret following Marxism, Leninism, and socialism. Is all that true? Is it true that capitalism and old-established capitalist countries are still flourishing?

Let us acknowledge that capitalism has never been as global as it is nowadays and that it has achieved tremendous success, particularly in the liberation of productive capacity and the development of science and technology. Many developed capitalist countries, owing to their strong economic conditions and fruitful working-class opposition, have taken adaptive measures and have established more advanced social welfare systems. Nevertheless, capitalism has failed to resolve its fundamental innate contradictions. Since the mid-1970s and especially since the collapse of the Soviet Union, it has again shown its true nature by promoting "new freedom" policies on a worldwide scale. We are now witnessing a financial and economic crisis, which began in the United States in 2008, rapidly spreading to other capitalist centers and now affecting most countries on all the continents. Capitalist states and governments in the West have pumped huge amounts of money in order to save transnational economic and industrial corporations, financial and banking institutions and stock markets, to no avail. The crisis has revealed injustices in capitalist societies. Living standards amongst most working-class people have seriously decreased, unemployment increased and the "rich-poor" disparity has only widened. "Bad development" situations and "anti-developmental" paradoxes have spread from economic and financial domains to social ones, sparking off social conflicts. Economic incidents have turned into political incidents in many places where demonstrations and strikes have shaken up the entire regime. The plain fact is that the capitalist free market itself cannot help poor countries overcome their difficulties and, in many cases, has done them severe harm and has deepened

conflicts between workers and capitalists worldwide. That fact has bankrupted the economic theories or the "Washington consensus" model, which has been hailed as the most up-to-date model and revered by many capitalist politicians and considered to be optimal and reasonable by their experts.

Along with the economic and financial crisis are the energy and food crises, the exhaustion of natural resources and deterioration of the environment, which are posing monumental challenges to the survival and development of the human race. This is the consequence of a socio-economic development process where profits are considered the ultimate goal, increasing material possession and consumption are a measure of civilization and individual benefits a pillar of society. These constitute the essential characteristics of capitalist production and consumption modes. The ongoing crises have once more proved that capitalism is anti-progressive, anti-humanist and unstable in economic, social and ecological terms. Karl Marx once said capitalism was ruining labor and resources, factors conducive to its wealth. According to scientific analyses, the current crises cannot be completely resolved within the framework of capitalist regimes.

The recent social resistance movements in many capitalist countries have uncovered the true nature of capitalist political institutions. In truth, the democratic institutions based on the "free democracy" formula, which the West is making every effort to impose on the rest of the world, does not ensure that power truly belongs to the people, is established by the people and works for the people; which is the most fundamental characteristic of democracy. In these institutions power still belongs to a wealthy minority that caters to large capitalist corporations. This minority, accounting for only one percent of the population, possesses the majority of wealth and productive material and controls most financial resources, knowledge and major mass media, thereby manipulating the entire society. Propagation of equality of rights that omits equality of necessary conditions for such rights has resulted in the fact that democracy remains formal rather than substantial. In the context of politics, once money rules, people's power will be subjugated. That is the reason why the so-called "free" elections in developed capitalist countries cannot change ruling forces although they can

change governments; in fact, behind political pluralism is capitalist corporations' authoritarianism.

We need a society where development is meant for people rather than one which is aimed at profits, exploiting people and trampling their dignity. We need economic development which goes hand in hand with social progress and equality rather than one which widens the rich-poor gap and deepens social inequality. We need a society which is oriented towards progressive and humanitarian values, one which facilitates humanism, solidarity and mutual assistance rather than one which encourages win-lose competition for the vested interests of individuals or factions. We need sustainable development in harmony with nature so as to ensure a wholesome environment for the life of current and future generations rather than one which induces excessive exploitation of resources, infinite consumption of material and destruction of the environment. We need a political system where power truly belongs to the people, is established by them and works for their benefit rather than one which only caters to the wealthy minority. Those are the true values of socialism, aren't they?

The Vietnamese people experienced an enduring and arduous revolutionary struggle against colonialist and imperialist rule and invasion for national independence and sovereignty and for their own freedom and happiness in the spirit that "Nothing is more precious than independence and freedom."

National independence combined with socialism has been a major guideline of Vietnamese revolutions and is an essential part of Hồ Chí Minh's ideological legacy. Hồ Chí Minh, owing to his rich practical experience and the revolutionary, scientific theories of Marxism and Leninism, concluded that only socialism and communism could ever bring about ultimate national independence and genuine freedom; focused on the well-being and happiness of everyone and every nation.

The Communist Party of Việt Nam, since its inception and during its revolutionary struggle, has always asserted that socialism is the goal and ideal of itself and the Vietnamese people and that advancing to socialism is an objective necessity and inevitable road of revolutions

in the country. The Party, in its 1930 political platform, laid down the policy of "carrying out the national democratic revolution led by the working class, advancing to socialism, skipping capitalist stages." It maintained in the late 20th century that "Our Party and people are determined to build Việt Nam into a socialist country following Marxism-Leninism and Hồ Chí Minh Thought" although practical socialism badly crashed, the socialist countries' network ceased to exist and socialist movements were going into a decline.

More recently in our 11th National Congress in January 2011, we again asserted in our revised platform for national construction in the transition to socialism, "Advancing to socialism is an aspiration of our people and a correct choice the Party and President Hồ Chí Minh made, and accords with development trends."

Having said that, what socialism is and how it can be achieved are the two questions over which we have been pondering in our search for best guidelines and stance which obey general rules and suit Việt Nam's specific circumstances.

The Communist Party of Việt Nam, during the country's renovation process and through its review of realities and theoretical research, has developed a more correct and more profound awareness of socialism and socialist transition. It has diverted from some of its previous simplistic notions including equating the ultimate goal of socialism with immediate-term tasks, one-sidedly emphasizing productive relations, carrying out egalitarian distribution, underestimating the need for development of productive forces in the transitional period and equating market economy with capitalism and jurisdictional with capitalist states, to name but a few.

Although there remain some issues that need further research, we are aware that the socialist society which the Vietnamese people are trying to achieve will be one where the people are rich and the country strong. It will be a democratic, equitable, civilized society where the people are in charge. It will have a highly developed economy, based on modern productive forces and advanced, suitable productive relations. It will have an advanced culture rich in national identity. It will be a place where the people can enjoy full well-being and comprehensive development and where the different ethnic groups

are equal, united, mutually respectful and mutually assisting for common development. It will have a Communist Party-led socialist jurisdictional state which belongs to the people, is established by them and caters for them, and which has friendly and cooperative relationships with other countries.

In order to achieve those goals, Việt Nam must speed up its national industrialization and modernization towards a knowledge-based economy, develop a socialist-oriented market economy, build an advanced culture rich in national identity, develop human resources and improve the people's living standards while realizing social progress and equality. More key aspects must ensure national defense and security and social order and safety; carry out independent, self-reliant, peaceful, friendly foreign activities conducive to cooperation, development and international integration. To achieve these attributes there must first be a socialist democracy built, while realizing national solidarity, enhancing the united national front, establishing a socialist jurisdictional state which belongs to the people; which is established by the people and caters to the people and builds the Party into a clean and strong organization.

The deeper it is engaged in actual leadership, the better the Communist Party of Việt Nam understands that the transition to socialism is a long, complicated cause because it must bring about profound, substantial changes in all areas of social life. As a matter of fact, Việt Nam began the cause as a backward agricultural country skipping capitalism. Its productive forces were very weak. It fought decades of war and is still faced with severe aftereffects. Meanwhile, hostile forces have been trying to conduct acts of sabotage. Being now made more difficult and complicated, the cause, therefore, needs to undergo a long transitional period divided into various stages and requires the participation of different economic and social organizations. Clashes between old and new schools of thinking will be unavoidable in the process. Skipping capitalism means skipping oppression, injustice, capitalist exploitation, bad habits and unsuitable political institutions. This does not mean skipping civilization's achievements or values which humankind has attained during capitalist development periods. As a matter of course, those achievements must be inherited on a developmental and selective basis.

The idea of developing a socialist-oriented market economy in Việt Nam is the Party's fundamental, innovative theoretical breakthrough. It is an important theoretical achievement after twenty-five years of realizing the renovation policy. It originated from Vietnamese realities and the country's selective reception of the world's experience. Our understanding is that the socialist-oriented market economy is a multi-component commodity which operates on market mechanisms under State management and socialist orientations. This is a new type of market in the development history of the market economy. It complies with market economy laws while acceding to the principles and nature of socialism in the aspects of ownership, management and distribution. It aims to make the people rich, country strong and society equitable, democratic and civilized. This is not a capitalist market economy. This is not a socialist market economy either because Việt Nam remains in the transitional period.

There is a variety of ownership forms and economic sectors in a socialist market economy. Such sectors, obeying the law, constitute important parts of the economy. They are equal before the law and aim for long-term development and wholesome cooperation and competition. The State sector plays the key role. The collective sector keeps strengthening and growing. The private sector serves as one of the driving forces of the economy. Within the mixed economy that takes various forms of ownership, stock companies keep expanding. The State and collective sectors are the firm foundation of the national economy. Distribution relations ensure equality and facilitate development and are mainly conducted according to performance, efficiency and contribution of capital and other resources and through social welfare and benefit networks. The State manages the economy with laws, strategies, planning, policies and physical resources so as to provide it with orientation and regulation and promote socio-economic development.

A chief characteristic of the socialist orientation in the market economy in Việt Nam is the link between economics and society, whereby economic and social policies are united and economic growth coupled with social progress and equality in every single step or policy and throughout the development process. This means not waiting until the economy reaches a high level of development

before conducting social progress and equality and not sacrificing social progress and equality solely for economic growth. On the contrary, each and every economic policy must aim for social development, each and every social policy must create a driving force for economic development; lawful enrichment is encouraged to assist in hunger eradication, poverty reduction and care for people with distinguished services to the country and those in reduced circumstances. This is a definite requisite for wholesome, stable and socialist-oriented development.

Considering culture and the spiritual foundation of society, the Communist Party of Việt Nam aims to achieve cultural development in parallel with economic growth and use social equality as a fundamental orientation for the building of socialism in Việt Nam. The culture that Việt Nam is building is one which is advanced and rich in national identity, diverse yet united and based on progressive and humanitarian values. Marx's, Lenin's, and Hồ Chí Minh's ideologies are to take the leading role in social and spiritual life. Good traditions of all ethnic groups in the country are to be inherited and promoted while humankind's cultural achievements and quintessence are fostered and welcomed. We strive to build a civilized, wholesome society for the sake of the people's rightful benefits, dignity and higher levels of knowledge, morality, physical strength, lifestyles and aesthetics. Việt Nam maintains that the human factor holds the central position in its development strategies; cultural and human development is both the objective and driving force of the renovation cause; developing education, training, science and technology is its top priority policy; protecting the environment is one of its critical tasks and one of the criteria for sustainable development; happy, progressive families are to constitute healthy, stable cells of society, and gender equality is a criteria for progress and civilization.

Unlike societies where individuals and factions compete with each other to gain benefits, a socialist society is one which aims for progressive and humanitarian values based on common benefits of the entire society. It is therefore necessary to establish social consensus rather than social opposition or resistance. In the socialist political system, the relationship between the State, Party and people is one between entities that are of one mind about their objectives

and benefits; each and every Party guideline and State policy, law and activity is for the people's benefits. The general political model and operating mechanism is that the Party leads, the State manages and the people are in charge. Democracy is the nature of the socialist regime as well as the goal and motive force of the socialist cause; building a socialist democracy and ensuring that power truly belongs to the people are the essential, long-term tasks of the Vietnamese revolution. It is Việt Nam's policy to constantly promote democracy and build a socialist law-ruled state which truly belongs to the people, is established by them and caters for them on the basis of a Communist Party-led alliance between workers, peasants and the intelligentsia. The State represents the people's mastership and organizes the realization of the Party's guidelines. There are mechanisms whereby the people take charge of various areas of social life and participate in social management.

Việt Nam is aware that a socialist law-ruled state is of a different nature from that of a capitalist law-ruled one in that capitalist laws are in essence tools for protecting the bourgeois class and their interests whereas socialist laws are tools for manifesting and realizing people's mastership and protecting the interests of a vast majority of the population. The State, through law enforcement, ensures that people are holders of political power and punish any act of sabotage against the interests of the country and people. Also, Việt Nam considers national solidarity the source of its strength and the decisive factor in ensuring a sustainable victory for its revolutionary cause and unceasingly promotes equality and solidarity among different ethnic and religious groups.

Being deeply aware that the Communist Party's leadership is decisive to the victory of the renovation cause and ensures the country develops along a socialist orientation; we pay special attention to the task of Party building, considering this crucial to the survival of the Party and socialist regime. The Communist Party of Việt Nam is the pioneer of the Vietnamese working class; its birth, existence and development are all for the benefit of the working class and the entire nation. Because it holds the power and leads the entire nation and is recognized by the whole people as their pioneer, it is therefore the pioneer of the working class and the entire Vietnamese nation.

This does not mean to diminish the class nature of the Party but rather shows a more profound, fuller awareness of its nature because the working class has shared interests with working people and the entire nation. Our Party perseveringly looks to Marx, Lenin's, and Hồ Chí Minh's thoughts as the ideological foundation and lodestar for our revolutionary activities. We use centralized democracy as the fundamental principle of organization. The Party exercises its leadership by using its platforms, strategies and orientations for major guidelines and policies. It also uses communication, persuasion, advocacy, organization, examination, supervision and exemplar deeds of Party members. It maintains unified leadership of the cadre work. Seeing corruption, bureaucracy and degeneration as the threats to a ruling party particularly in the market economy context, the Communist Party of Việt Nam sets itself the tasks of constant self-renewal and self-rectification and fighting against opportunism, individualism, corruption, bureaucracy, wasteful spending and degeneration within the Party and the entire political system.

The renovation cause, including the development of the socialist-orientated market economy, has brought about positive changes for our country over the past twenty-five years. A poor country devastated by war, Việt Nam is faced with monumental human, physical, and environmental aftereffects. To take one example, at present, millions of Vietnamese suffer grave illnesses and hundreds of thousands of children have inborn malformations because of exposure to the Agent Orange used by the Americans during the war in Việt Nam. According to experts, it will take Việt Nam more than a century to clean up the remaining bombs and land mines; in the province of Quảng Trị alone, forty-five per cent of its farm land remains contaminated with such bombs and land mines. After the war ended, the United States and the West imposed an economic embargo on Việt Nam for nearly twenty years. The then regional and international situations were complicated, causing us a lot of difficulty. There were severe shortages of food and other essential goods. The people lived hard lives with about two-thirds of the population living under the poverty line. Those were the realities in a pre-renovation Việt Nam.

Owing to the renovation policy, the economy took off and has been growing at annual rate of seven to eight percent over the past

twenty-five years. The average income per capita has increased by eleven hundred percent; Việt Nam is no longer a low income country as of 2008. From a country which was constantly short of food, Việt Nam has managed to ensure its food security and has become the world's leading exporter of rice and some other farm produce. Industry and services have developed relatively fast, presently accounting for eighty percent of the country's GDP. Export has also increased significantly, earning approximately \$100 billion in 2011. There was a rapid rise in foreign direct investment, which had been registered at nearly \$200 billion by 2011. In terms of economic structure and ownership relations, at present, thirty-four percent of Việt Nam's GDP is contributed by the State sector, five per cent by the collective sector, thirty-one per cent by the household sector, eleven percent by the domestic private sector and nineteen percent by the foreign invested sector.

Việt Nam has a population of more than eighty-six million composed of fifty-four ethnic groups. More than seventy percent of the population lives in rural areas. The economic development has helped the country overcome the socio-economic crisis it used to face in the 1980s and has brought about considerable improvement in the people's living standards. Poverty rates have decreased at between two and three percent annually and by half every decade; the rates dropped from seventy-five percent in 1986 to 9.5 percent in 2010. Now, most rural villages have had access to automobile roads that reach as far as their centers, the national power grid, primary and secondary schools, health facilities and telephone lines. While being unequipped to provide free education at all school levels, Việt Nam has focused on eradicating illiteracy, achieving universal primary education in 2000 and universal secondary education in 2010; the university and college student population has increased by nine hundred percent over the past twenty-five years. At present, Việt Nam has a ninety-five percent literacy rate amongst adults. While being unable to provide free universal healthcare, Việt Nam has focused on improving preventive healthcare, epidemic control and support for people in reduced circumstances. Many epidemics which used to be rife have now been controlled. Poor people, children under six years of age and senior citizens are now entitled to free medical

insurance. Child malnourishment has decreased by almost three hundred percent and infant mortality by about six hundred percent. Average life expectancy increased from sixty-two in 1990 to seventy-three in 2010. Owing to the economic development, we have been able to provide better care for people with distinguished services to the country, Heroic Mothers of Việt Nam and her martyrs' graves. Cultural life has improved significantly with an abundant diversity of activities. There are now approximately twenty-five million Internet users in Việt Nam, and it is one of the countries with the fastest information technology development in the world. The United Nations has recognized Việt Nam as one of the leading countries in the realization of its Millennium Development Goals.

Thus, it can be said that the renovation cause has brought about extremely positive changes in Việt Nam such as the development of the economy, the strengthening of the productive forces, the rapid and continuous reduction of hunger and poverty, the improvement of the people's living standards, the resolution of many social issues, the stability of the politics and society, the guarantee of national security, the enhancement of the position and strength of the nation, and the consolidation of the people's trust in the Party's leadership. Our 10th Party Congress, reviewing the twenty years of renovation, asserted that the renovation cause had gained "monumental achievements of historical significance." In truth, the Vietnamese are now entitled to better living conditions than in any historical period. This is one of the reasons why the renovation cause, initiated and led by the Communist Party of Việt Nam, has won the entire people's consensus, support and participation. The achievements of the cause in Việt Nam prove that the socialist-oriented development does not only bring about positive economic results but also helps the country solve its social issues much better than capitalist countries with the same level of economic development.

Despite those achievements, Việt Nam has quite a few shortcomings and limitations, and faces newly emerging challenges in its national development.

Economically, growth quality remains low and is not yet stable; infrastructure is incomplete; the efficiency and capacity of many

enterprises including State-owned ones are limited; the environment is polluted in many places; there are still problems in market management and regulation. Meanwhile, competition is becoming fiercer given the context of globalization and international integration.

Socially, the rich-poor disparity is widening; the quality of education, healthcare and many other public services remains limited; some aspects of culture and social morality are degenerating; crimes and social illnesses are becoming more prevalent. Most notably, corruption, wasteful spending and deterioration of political ideologies and moral values tend to spread amongst quite a few officials and Party members. It must be mentioned that hostile forces have always been trying to conduct acts of interference or sabotage in order to cause instability in Việt Nam and they have been plotting "peaceful evolution" so as to abolish socialism in the country.

As Việt Nam is now in the transition to socialism, socialist elements are taking shape, co-existing and competing with capitalist elements in a number of areas. This co-existence and competition is becoming tougher in the context of the market economy and international integration. Besides achievements and positive aspects, there will always be negative ones or challenges that need to be seriously taken into account and solved in a timely and effective manner. This will cause an enduring battle which requires a new vision, mettle and creativity. The road to socialism is a process where socialist elements keep strengthening so they will become predominant and ultimately irreversible. Whether it succeeds or fails depends, first and foremost, on the soundness of the Party's guidelines as well as its political mettle, leadership capacity and fighting resources.

At present, Việt Nam is shifting its development model and restructuring its economy in order to achieve higher quality and sustainability of such important work as infrastructure, human resources and administrative reform. Socially, Việt Nam keeps speeding up poverty reduction in a sustainable manner, increasing the quality of healthcare, education and other public services and further improving its people's cultural life. The entire Party, people and military are trying to learn good moral lessons from the example of late President Hồ Chí Minh. The recent 4th Plenum of the Party

Central Committee resolved on "Some Urgent Issues Concerning the Current Task of Party Building" in an effort to prevent or repress political, moral and lifestyle degeneration amongst some Party members, especially leadership and management at various levels and better the realization of Party organization and building principles, which is meant to make Party organizations and State apparatus cleaner and stronger, maintain the Party's revolutionary nature and strengthen its leadership capacity and fighting resources.

Both theories and practice have shown that building socialism is building a substantially new society, which is no easy task. This is a great innovative yet challenging cause which must be voluntary and continuous to best serve long-term goals. Therefore, besides ensuring the Party's leading role, it is imperative to promote the people's creativity and encourage their support and participation. The people only participate when they see that the Party's guidelines meet their expectations. Popular strength is the root cause of victory and development.

As the leader and power holder, the Party, in its political orientation and policy making, cannot just base itself on the country's realities but also needs to consider realities of the world and the times. In such a globalized world the development of each country cannot be independent of, or isolated from, contemporary world events or situations. We have, therefore, laid down the policy of proactive international integration, independence, peaceful cooperation and development-based foreign activities which aim for multilateralism and to diversify our international relationships on the basis of mutual respect for independence, national sovereignty and integrity, non-interference in each other's internal affairs, equality and mutual benefits.

Most importantly, it is imperative to stand by Marxism and Leninism, the scientific and revolutionary theory of the working class. The scientific and radical revolutionary nature of Marxism and Leninism provides stable values which have been pursued by revolutionaries. The theory will continue to thrive in practical revolutions and scientific development. We need to learn selectively, critically and creatively from the latest ideological and scientific

achievements so that our ideology and theories are kept refreshed and abreast with the times rather than rigid, backward, or outdated.

Việt Nam is aware that this is an extremely complicated, unprecedented job requiring us to learn as we go. The recent steps are only initial and inconsiderable. As we all know, the objectives of socialism may be the same but there are different ways to realize them depending on the specific conditions of each country. The job requires tremendous creativity and energy.

After socialism collapsed in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, some western ideologists announced "the knell of history." Many politicians and opportunists predicted the subsequent fall of the remaining socialist countries. However, history would not unfold as they expected. China, Việt Nam and Laos have been successful with their renovation and are firmly advancing to socialism. Cuba remains steadfast and is a good example of social progress and equality, international solidarity and indomitable spirit for national freedom and human dignity. The ongoing revolutionary progress in Venezuela, Bolivia and Ecuador and the growth of left wing movements in many other Latin American countries signal an emerging trend for socialism in the western hemisphere. Other socialist countries in Asia keep moving forward on their chosen way. Leftist parties and people's progressive movements in all continents are increasingly involved in the struggle for socialism and are well aware that socialism is the only correct way to break the deadlock caused by the development models currently in crisis. This is encouraging evidence for the vitality of socialism.

POLITICAL TRUST AND RELATIONS IN ALL FIELDS BETWEEN VIỆT NAM AND THE UNITED STATES TO BE BOOSTED¹

Good afternoon everyone!

It's my great pleasure to be with you here today on the occasion of my official visit to the United States. I would like to thank the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) for inviting me to address this meeting.

I've learned that CSIS is one of the preeminent institutions for research and academic exchange in the United States. It plays a critical role in promoting academic exchange and dialogue among politicians, scholars and people from across the world on issues of significant importance to international peace, security and development. My compliments to your outstanding achievements. And thank you all for your presence.

My visit to the United States comes at a time when we are celebrating 20 years of diplomatic relations between Việt Nam and the United States. This is a meaningful time for us to reflect upon the relationship between our two countries and share the vision for the future.

1. History of Việt Nam – US relations

There were events in the history of Việt Nam - U.S. relations that are little known. Thomas Jefferson, before becoming the third

¹ Address by H.E. General Secretary of Việt Nam Communist Party Nguyễn Phú Trọng at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) in Washington D.C., 8th July 2015, during his official visit to the US from July 6-10 on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of normalization of Việt Nam – US diplomatic relations.

President of the United States, tried to obtain rice seed from Việt Nam to grow on his Shadwell farm in Virginia.

100 hundred years ago, Vietnamese patriot Nguyễn Tất Thành – who later became President Hồ Chí Minh, during his quest for national liberation set foot in the city of Boston – the starting point of the revolution for independence in the United States.

In World War II, Việt Nam and the United States were allies on the front against fascism. The Việt Nam Independence League or Việt Minh led by President Hồ Chí Minh rescued American pilots who had been shot down by Japanese troops in Việt Nam, and the only foreigners who were side by side with President Hồ Chí Minh during the early days of the August Revolution were American friends.

The Declaration of Independence of the new Việt Nam in 1945 began with the quote from the American Declaration of Independence: *“All men are created equal. They are endowed by their Creator of certain unalienable Rights, among these are Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness”*.

One of the first nations that President Hồ Chí Minh wished to establish friendly ties with was the United States. He wrote 14 letters to American leaders, including President Harry Truman, to ask for a “full cooperation with the United States”. It is regrettable that some historic opportunities were missed and we had to encounter a period full of twists and turns in the history between our two nations until the normalization of relations in 1995.

Today in America, there are still different opinions about the war the United States conducted in Việt Nam in the 20th century. For the Vietnamese people, it is the war of resistance for national independence, freedom and unification, not the war against the United States nor one against the American people.

Even in the midst of war, the Vietnamese people still maintained friendship with the American people and were grateful to many Americans who stood up in protest of the war and expressed solidarity with the Vietnamese people, a remarkable example of whom was Martin Luther King, Jr.

After the end of the war, Việt Nam advocated to “put behind the past and look to the future”. While suffering heavily from the consequences of war with 3 million people dead, 4 million wounded, 4.8 million exposed to Agent Orange/dioxin and hundreds of thousands missing right in their homeland, the Government and people of Việt Nam were actively engaged in an effective cooperation with the United States in accounting for American soldiers missing in action in Việt Nam.

Today, all Americans who come to Việt Nam including war veterans are warmly welcomed and can feel the sincere friendship of the Vietnamese people. That may not be easy to understand for some, but that’s the truth that everyone who used to come to Việt Nam could see first-hand.

Having recalled history, I want to affirm the tradition of peace and friendship of the Vietnamese people and our persistent desire for good friendship and cooperation between Việt Nam and the United States.

2. Việt Nam – U.S. relations over the past two decades

Twenty years ago, few people could imagine how Việt Nam and the United States would overcome the pains of war to build such a robust partnership as today. Over the past 20 years, Việt Nam - U.S. relations have gone from strength to strength all the way through important milestones from the establishment of diplomatic ties in 1995 to the signing of Bilateral Trade Agreement in 2000, and most recently the establishment of Comprehensive Partnership in 2013.

Bilateral cooperation in a wide range of areas has made substantial progress. Economic cooperation has kept growing strongly, and the United States today is Việt Nam’s leading trade partner. Cooperation in science, technology, education and training has seen very positive steps forward. There are currently over 16,500 Vietnamese students studying in the United States. The two-way trade turnover increased by 90 folds in the last two decades from US\$400 million in 1995 to US\$36 billion in 2014.

Cooperation in defense and security has made steady progress with the signing of the MOU on Bilateral Defense Cooperation

in 2011 and particularly the Joint Vision Statement on Defense Relations in June this year. Việt Nam and the United States also enjoy good coordination on many international and regional issues from counter-terrorism, climate change response, rising sea levels to maritime security, nuclear security, maintaining peace, stability and promoting cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region.

Humanitarian cooperation including activities to address war legacy issues has been realized effectively by both sides. It is Việt Nam’s consistent policy to consider the accounting for American soldiers missing in action during the war in Việt Nam a humanitarian issue, where we will continue to engage in an effective cooperation with the United States. People-to-people ties have increasingly expanded and act as an important contributing factor to enhancing mutual understanding and friendship between the two countries.

The robust growth of the Việt Nam - U.S. relationship over the past 20 years has been grounded in the respect for the fundamental principles of international law, among these are respect for each other’s independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity, political regime and cooperation for mutual benefit. Along the way over these 20 years, Việt Nam and the United States have gradually achieved common ground of these principles. This is also an important contributing factor to building political trust between the two countries.

It can be asserted that the development of friendship and cooperation between Việt Nam and the United States over the past 20 years is positive, follows the right direction and brings about practical benefits to both peoples. It is beneficial for peace, stability, cooperation and development in the Asia-Pacific and the world.

This is the result of hard work by the leaders and people of both countries in the spirit of putting behind the past, overcoming differences, maximizing commonalities and looking to the future. This is also an example for the success story of the relationship between two countries having different political backgrounds and used to be adversaries in the past, which is conducive to the trend of peace and cooperation of the time.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the statesmen, organizations and individuals from both Việt Nam and the United States who, with heart-felt support and hard work, have made significant contributions to promoting friendship and cooperation between our two countries in the past decades.

My special thanks go to American friends who have been actively assisting Việt Nam to overcome the consequences of war and those who always stand by our side to support the cause of national development and national defense of the Vietnamese people.

The accomplishments and lessons of the past 20 years give us all reason for great optimism and expectation about the future of Việt Nam - U.S. relations.

3. International affairs and Việt Nam's foreign policy

A fast and deeply changing world requires ourselves to be exposed to new ways of thinking and new ways of action.

Scientific and technological advances, cooperation and development trends, globalization and democratization are opening up new opportunities for prosperity and cooperation among nations. Economic and financial crises along with social and humanitarian crises pose new demands for an equitable and sustainable growth model, for the economic relationship between nations and the international economic order.

Traditional and non-traditional security challenges including, among others, territorial disputes, terrorism, religious extremism, cyber security, aviation and maritime security have emerged in new forms, affecting international peace, stability and development, hence requiring new mindsets and approaches to security.

Environmental and ecological crises, climate change, natural disasters, and epidemics continue to unfold with complexity, posing new demands for production methods and people's way of life, and for managing human relationship with nature.

In a globalized world where interdependence among nations is increasing both in terms of development and security, international

law, mutual respect and cooperation between nations must be upheld more than ever before.

The Asia Pacific – the world's most dynamic region embraces all the common features of the world while maintaining its unique attributes. While economic cooperation and integration are taking place vigorously with a huge variety of initiatives for intra and extra-regional connectivity, challenges to peace, security and stability have become ever more acute, especially increasing tensions in maritime disputes.

While economic interdependence among countries is increasing, our region lacks an efficient arrangement, mechanism or architecture for collective security to cope with emerging risks and challenges, among which nationalism, religious extremism and unilateralism tend to rise.

Against that context, all countries including Việt Nam and the United States are required to increase their interest in and cooperation efforts for a region and a world of peace, security and prosperity.

From the economic perspective, we support the cooperation models for equitable, sustainable and mutually beneficial development between countries. We support the initiatives to boost trade and investment to bring about equal benefits to all, especially to workers in all countries. We believe the best way of cooperation is based on the principle of mutual reinforcement for shared development, helping narrow down development gaps among nations.

From the political and security perspective, we support the friendship and equal cooperation between nations on the basis of respect for each other's independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity and political regime, non-interference in each other's internal affairs, peaceful resolution of all disputes in accordance with the UN Charter and international law, non-use or threat of force.

We support the formation of economic and security cooperation mechanisms among countries in the region and the world in keeping with such principles.

We support an Asia-Pacific region of peace, stability and cooperation for shared prosperity, connected by intra and extra-

regional economic linkages and economic cooperation for mutual benefit, having agreements and mechanisms to ensure the common security, freedom of navigation and over-flight in accordance with the UN Charter and international law. We are of the view that upholding ASEAN's centrality in evolving political and security architectures in the Asia-Pacific region is conducive and beneficial to regional and international peace and security. We believe that the Asia-Pacific region offers enough opportunities for all countries in and outside the region including the United States, China, Japan, India, Russia and the EU.

In that spirit, Việt Nam continues to pursue a foreign policy of independence, self-reliance, peace, cooperation and development, multilateralization and diversification of external relations, and proactive international integration. Việt Nam has established diplomatic ties with over 180 countries, comprehensive partnership and strategic partnership with important partners in the region and across the world.

Việt Nam has been actively engaging in the negotiations for many bilateral and multilateral free trade agreements, among which TPP with the United States and other partners is of significant importance.

4. The future of Việt Nam - U.S. relations

Our two countries have established the Comprehensive Partnership. That's a very important premise for advancing bilateral ties over the coming years.

Looking ahead, we need to work together to deepen and broaden the Comprehensive Partnership in order to lay the foundation for taking bilateral ties to the next level in the future.

An important impetus to the Việt Nam - U.S. partnership towards that end lies in the shared interests between our two nations.

First, we have shared interest in promoting comprehensive cooperation for development and prosperity in each country and for the happiness of both peoples.

Second, we have shared interest in advancing regional cooperation for peace, stability and prosperity in the Asia-Pacific, particularly

in maintaining peace, maritime security and safety, freedom of navigation and over-flight in the East Sea on the basis of respect for international law.

Third, we have shared interest in collaboration and coordination of efforts to contribute to common global issues as responsible members of the international community.

A strong, prosperous, stable, independent and self-reliant Việt Nam fully integrated with the world and making responsible contributions to the international community is in the interest of peace, security and prosperity in the Asia-Pacific and the world, and is conducive to the interests of the United States and other countries in and outside the region.

Looking ahead, we have much work to do to advance the bilateral ties further forward.

First and foremost, advancing mutual understanding, building and consolidating political trust between the leaders, political circles and people from both countries are essential to deepen and broaden friendship and cooperation between Việt Nam and the United States.

To this end, we need to increase high level exchanges and contacts to include legislative bodies and political parties, expand consultation and dialogue mechanisms in areas of mutual interest. This is one of the objectives of my visit to the United States. We are also looking forward to welcoming President Barack Obama in Việt Nam in the time to come.

Economic, trade and investment cooperation remains the focus of bilateral ties and must be advanced further as it acts as both the foundation and the driver for bilateral cooperation.

So far American investment in Việt Nam remains modest, and the United States is only ranked the 7th among countries and territories investing in Việt Nam. The United States has yet to recognize Việt Nam as a market economy and still imposes trade barriers to Vietnamese goods. I hope that the conclusion of TPP in the time to come will give a strong boost to American investment in Việt Nam and will facilitate trade between the two countries, between the United States and

ASEAN, for American exports to Việt Nam - an emerging market of 90 million people are connected to the larger market of the ASEAN Community of 600 million people. The United States' recognition of Việt Nam's market economy status is a necessary step to that end.

Cooperation in science, technology, education, training, health, environment, etc, is a red dot and an area of huge potential in bilateral ties. These are also areas closely related to the quality of sustainable development, where Việt Nam pays great attention to and the United States has many strengths that can be shared with us.

During my visit, Hồ Chí Minh City will grant license to the construction of Fulbright University. We encourage and call on American enterprises, universities, research institutes, organizations and individuals to increase investment in and cooperation with Việt Nam in these areas.

Cooperation in defense and security is an element contributing to enhancing trust and adding strategic values to bilateral ties, which should be fostered based on appropriate steps in line with the interests of both countries.

Both sides must continue to implement effectively the Memorandum of Understanding on Bilateral Defense Cooperation signed in 2011 and especially the Joint Vision Statement on Defense Relations signed in Hà Nội last June. At the same time, we should expand cooperation on law enforcement, counter-terrorism, maritime security and others to contribute to the maintenance of peace, stability and cooperation in the Asia-Pacific.

Cooperation on humanitarian issues must continue to be strongly promoted to help address war consequences, build trust and enhance friendship between the two peoples.

The consequences of war in Việt Nam remain heavy until today. Generations of Vietnamese are still struggling with such a harsh war legacy.

Over the past decades, many American organizations and individuals including war veterans have conducted practical activities to help Việt Nam overcome war consequences. The U.S. Congress

has adopted annual funding to help address war legacy issues in Việt Nam including remediation of dioxin-contaminated hotspots and removal of unexploded ordnance.

Nevertheless, the results achieved are still modest compared to the practical demands. As we advocate to put behind the past, we should work hand-in-hand to heal the wounds of war. This is a very sensitive issue touching the heart and emotion of people from both countries. Therefore, an effective coordination by both sides to handle this issue will significantly contribute to fostering bilateral ties.

People-to-people exchanges are essential to further enhance mutual understanding and friendship between the two peoples. Việt Nam and the United States share an uneasy history. I've learnt that many prejudices against Việt Nam still exist in the United States. But I also know another truth that most Americans after visiting Việt Nam have a more positive view towards my country, and all are impressed by a vibrant, non-discriminatory and humane society and by the friendly, optimistic and open-minded Vietnamese.

Over the past 20 years, our two countries have come to a better understanding of each other. Yet a fuller mutual understanding, which is critical to building mutual trust and friendship, must still be promoted. I do hope that both countries will work to strengthen contacts and exchanges through all channels, particularly between the NGOs and the people towards that end.

Another extremely important contributing factor to the bilateral ties is the Vietnamese community in the United States, who are American citizens but are also our compatriots.

I hope that the US Administration will continue to provide favorable conditions for the Vietnamese who are living, working and studying in the United States so that they can successfully integrate into the U.S. society and make positive contributions to the prosperity of the United States and to Việt Nam - U.S. relations.

Human rights is an issue of great interest to the American political circle and public and is also a sensitive issue in Việt Nam - U.S. relations. I would like to affirm that Việt Nam attaches great importance to human rights.

Certainly there remain many limitations and problems in our country that we need to address including the issue of human rights, but we are making efforts everyday to strive for a better and better society for all.

I understand that this is an issue where both sides still have differences, and we need to continue frank, constructive and goodwill dialogue in order to have a general approach to the systematic and fundamental changes, and based on which to come up with more balanced assessment on human rights and religious freedom in Việt Nam. This issue should not be allowed to hinder the growing momentum of bilateral ties as well as to affect trust building between the two countries.

Cooperation on regional and international issues is an increasingly important part of bilateral ties. Việt Nam is ready to increase the coordination with the United States on international issues of mutual concern including counter-terrorism, cyber security, epidemics and climate change response.

Việt Nam will continue to work with the United States and other countries to build the ASEAN – U.S. Strategic Partnership to become one with increasing significance to peace, stability, cooperation and development in the Asia-Pacific; uphold ASEAN's centrality; ensure the effectiveness of the ARF, ADMM+; make APEC play a more practical role in regional economic arrangements; and turn the East Asia Summit (EAS) into an effective platform for handling strategic and political issues in the region.

We highly appreciate the United States' increasing interest in the situation in the East Sea as well as its timely expression of consistent position in support of peaceful resolution of disputes on the basis of respect for international law, non-use or threat of force, refraining from unilateral actions to change the *status quo*, militarization or imposition of control over the waters and airspace in the East Sea.

Việt Nam welcomes countries, including the United State, to play an active and responsible role in maintaining peace, security, stability, maritime security and safety, freedom of navigation and over-flight, and promoting development cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Dear friends,

The lessons of history and the accomplishments of the past 20 years have clearly shown that friendship and cooperation is the only right path for Việt Nam - U.S. relations. It is beneficial for both countries, conducive to the interests of both peoples and those of the region and the world.

The differences that remain between our two countries reflect an objective and inevitable reality in a diverse world where all nations are entitled to choose their own development path. Yet, the reality of the past 20 years has shown that our two countries share many common interests, and differences cannot, in any way, be an obstacle to the growing friendship and cooperation between Việt Nam and the United States.

In today's fast changing world, the overlapping interests between our two countries have ever broadened. Looking ahead, Việt Nam - U.S. relations should move towards deepened and broadened, practical and effective partnership and towards new heights, in the interest of the two peoples, for peace, stability, cooperation and prosperity in the region and in the world. The experience and accomplishments of the past 20 years give us all reason for our conviction in that future.

President Theodor Roosevelt has said, and I quote: "*Believe you can and you are halfway there*". I believe that together we can build a bright vision for our future relations, so that our two peoples and our children will always be good friends and partners.

Thank you for your attention.

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TS. TRẦN ĐOÀN LÂM

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