

particularly to have strict rules for building party and state cadres, providing them with elementary and advanced training, and using and controlling them in a strict manner—those are urgent issues of current significance that can help to ensure our victory in the face of the plot of the adversary forces of all kinds now hoping to destroy the Marxist-Leninist ideological system, to resist the correct line on renovation of our party, and to make it deviate from its path.

### Voters' Opinions Solicited on Worker Rights

942E0015A Ho Chi Minh City SAIGON GIAI PHONG in Vietnamese 13 Nov 93 pp 1, 3

[Excerpts] On the morning of 12 November the National Assembly delegation of Ho Chi Minh City [HCMC] met with approximately 150 voters in the city. The meeting was arranged by the Municipal Fatherland Front Committee. Leadership cadres of the standing committees of the People's Council and the Municipal Fatherland Front Committee also attended. [passage omitted]

The city's voters sincerely and frankly contributed opinions to the National Assembly and the government in the various spheres in order to improve the effectiveness of state management and economic-social development. Many voters recommended that there be appropriate policies to truly strengthen state commerce and strengthen the management of activities in the cultural-ideological sphere, pay attention to creating a mass movement to protect security and national defense, be actively concerned with the lives of families covered by the policies, achieve social justice, and remain steadfast in foreign relations. Some voters recommended that the new salary system be reviewed, that policies be adopted to exempt students in teachers colleges from tuition fees and provide them scholarships, and that teachers receive special salaries to ensure their living standards.

It is necessary to ensure justice and adhere to the law in trying people who break the law, end the delays in carrying out sentences that have been imposed, and rationally resolve relationships among courts at all levels in adjudication. With regard to corruption and black-marketeering, there were many opinions that they must not only be opposed, but resolutely eliminated. It is necessary to analyze and immediately overcome the obstacles to that struggle. [passage omitted]

On the morning of 11 November National Assembly delegates Le Khac Binh and Nguyen Thi Ngoc met with more than 150 voters in Thu Duc District.

Voters in Thu Duc District expressed many opinions on the draft Labor Code. They were very upset over the situation in many economic units that are joint ventures with foreign countries in which incidents have occurred and which denigrate the dignity of workers, pay excessively low salaries, and even prolong the training period so that they will not have to pay workers' salaries. Some opinions reflected the situation of agricultural production still having many problems because of the lack of a

price support policy for agricultural products and the way the state sets the prices for agricultural products that are requisition-purchased and sets irrational prices for the purpose of calculating taxes, which harms agricultural producers. Many opinions disapproved of not bringing cadres, workers, and civil servants at the subward and village levels into the new salary system. The voters pointed out that although the village level is the basic administrative level and is in direct contact with the people and has many responsibilities, the personnel levels and benefit policies are not yet rational.

On the morning of 11 November 1993 large numbers of voters in Binh Chanh District met with the National Assembly delegate Pham Phu. The voters recommended that the National Assembly have complete policies and measures to take care of the lives of people in rural areas and actively oppose corruption and black-marketeering.

Many voters contributed opinions about the bills that will be presented to the national Assembly during the coming session.

### Article on Misconceptions of Democracy, Socialism

942E0016A Hanoi NHAN DAN in Vietnamese 4, 5 Nov 93 p 3

[Article by Le Quang Vinh, published in 21-23 Oct SAIGON GIAI PHONG: "Misconceptions of Democracy and Socialism"]

[Text] I have read in the 20 June 1993 issue of DIEN DAN [Forum] the translation of an interview with a Vietnamese professor of mathematics on "Mathematical Application and Democracy" conducted by the Norwegian Historian Stein Tonnesson and published in the review NORDIC NEWSLETTER OF ASIAN STUDIES (February 1993 issue, Copenhagen, Denmark).

The interview contains several viewpoints that, I think, should be discussed again. However, since I am not in a position to determine the veracity of both the article and its translation, I would only like to discuss the thoughts and not the person concerned.

My following review closely follows each word and sentence in the DIEN DAN translation of the article.

### Issue No. 1: "Abandoning Marxism-Leninism"

The article textually reproduces the professor's statement on Marxism-Leninism as follows:

*"As a scientist, for a fairly long time I have discovered that Marxism-Leninism can hardly bring about anything useful to a country wanting to escape poverty. The model of socialism as defined by the Marxist-Leninist Doctrine is not suitable for a country that wants to achieve social, economic, and scientific development. But the Communist Party in Vietnam as well as in other countries has naively sought to apply its doctrine to modern society.*

The failure of Marxism-Leninism in the computerization revolution of the 1980's and the failure of the current socialist economic system are obvious to everyone. The remaining question is to know how to draw adequate conclusions and relinquish Marxism-Leninism."

I beg to skip over the not-so-modest terms used by the professor. In this matter, I think it is necessary to set the record straight *about Marxism-Leninism, the socialist model, and development* of the economy, society, and science.

First of all, I think that the failure of the socialist economic system and the failure in the computerization revolution are not enough reason for abandoning Marxism-Leninism. I do not deny those failures; but they were the concrete applications of Marxism-Leninism, not Marxism-Leninism itself. Wrongly solving a mathematical problem, or even series of different mathematical problems, does not mean that mathematics is wrong.

Since the advent of realistic socialism, there have appeared in the world more than one socialist model. Even the Soviet Union of the period of wartime Communist policy (1917-1921) was vastly different from the Soviet Union of the NEP new economic policy period (1921-1924) and that of the period of the fixed "Soviet model" (1928-1940).

The Soviet model had an extensive influence on many socialist countries. Although Yugoslavia, Hungary, Poland, Romania... and later on, China, Vietnam, Albania... had all striven to build socialism in their own way, it must be said that the socialist models of these countries were still not fixed in form; moreover, they still bore the deep imprint of the Soviet model.

The Soviet model had exerted such a strong influence because it had not led to failures only. It had enabled the Soviet output of social labor to increase sharply and Soviet industrialization to make great strides, a feat that many countries had been unable to achieve for hundreds of years.

I would like to cite a remark by Brzezinski, former chairman of the U.S. National Security Council, a notorious anti-Communist person:

"According to official statistics, the Soviet gross national income increased fourfold under the first five-year plan. From 1928 to 1940, electricity increased from 5 billion to 48.3 billion kilowatt-hours, steel from 4.3 million to 18.3 million tons, and machine tools from 8,000 to 145,000.

"At the beginning of World War II, industry had already accounted for 87.7 percent of the Soviet economy.... Even if the figures had been exaggerated, these were still undeniable great achievements" (Zbigniew Brzezinski, *The Great Failure*, Scribners Publishing House, MacMillan, New York, 1989).

But why had the Soviet Union stalled in its pace of development and experienced 18 years of stagnation and then a precrisis and a crisis?

As a matter of fact, the Soviet model had very basic sound features such as: Socialist industrialization and science (and art too) encouraged the Soviet people's solidarity with the proletariat and oppressed peoples around the world. But the sound features became inappropriate when they overstepped certain boundaries. "An ideology will debase itself when it is divorced from interest" (Marx).

Since the Soviet model made excessive use of ideological and administrative measures (education and motivation combined with iron discipline), it was only suitable for the state of revolutionary war—when people had to sacrifice their immediate personal interests for the future interests of nation and society—and not for the state of prolonged peace and stability. But this does not mean that the Soviet model did not pay attention to interests. For example, socialist industrialization was also aimed at catering to the people's consumption; but because the three interests (those of the state, collective, and individual) were not harmoniously combined, the effects of the model could not last. Historically speaking, the Soviet Union experienced only two periods of strong development: It was in the 1930's (before World War II) and the 1950's (after the wounds of the great war of national defense had been healed). The rest was periods of wars against foreign aggressions and rebellions and of prolonged stagnation.

Scanning the chapters of the history of the CPSU's internal struggle over socialist construction lines, I would like to draw the reader's attention to two major areas in which, in the final analysis, Lenin's successors had acted totally in contradiction to the dialectical spirit of Lenin and Marxism-Leninism.

First, they abolished the NEP new economic policy (consisting of a commodity-market economy, five economic sectors, and importance duly attached to all the three interests), which Lenin regarded as a radical renovation of the various concepts of socialism, and replaced it with a number of erroneous policies, for example: agricultural collectivization (while Lenin advocated cooperativization, not collectivization), or complete planning of the national economy, which negated the motive force of production.

Second, they continued to maintain the Soviet model as an immutable formula from the 1930's until the 1980's, and raised the question of restructuring only after the Soviet Union had been plunged into a real state of crisis. This was totally in contradiction to the law of dialectics, especially when the third scientific and technical revolution—also called the technological revolution—had gradually raised the world productive forces to an extraordinary level. If one acts in contradiction to the laws, it is inevitable that they will take their revenge and that crisis will occur.

If the professor maintains that "the remaining question is to know how to draw adequate conclusions," then I have drawn the following conclusion: One fails because one's actions are at variance with Marxism-Leninism; therefore, rectification must be made so that one can act in accordance—in strict accordance—with Marxism-Leninism.

So, what really is Marxism-Leninism?

First of all, we should not forget, should never allow ourselves to forget the recommendation of the founders of Marxism-Leninism that their doctrine "is not a dogma but a guideline for action."

With its three constituent components, namely dialectical materialist philosophy and historical materialism, political economy, and scientific socialism (another component—party building—was added later on), Marxism-Leninism is a science of perceiving and transforming the world, a revolutionary science of the oppressed and exploited masses. In Ho Chi Minh thought, a revolution "without the (Maxist-Leninist) ideology is like a man without intelligence, a ship without a compass" (Nguyen Ai Quoc, *The Revolutionary Path*). Marxism-Leninism is a science because it has correctly and fully followed all scientific processes in determining facts. The most important crux of Marxism-Leninism, dialectical materialist philosophy, has been developed into a methodology of the essence of things (be they society, nature, or thinking), with practice as the criterion of the truth (this practice may be a reality, an experiment, or history). This means that perception has gone through three stages: "hypothesis, experiment, and law."

Like all other sciences, the truths affirmed by Marxism-Leninism are all relative, but, at the same time, they are also absolute.

I do not want to repeat in toto the theory of relative truth and absolute truth that Lenin had definitely resolved in his work entitled *Materialism and Critical Empiricism* (Lenin's Complete Works, Vietnamese edition, Progress Publishing House, Moscow, Vol. 18, pp. 142-159). However, I would like to clarify this matter by citing a number of concrete examples.

All scientific truths are absolute because they conform with certain concrete objective reality; however, they are also relative because any objective reality is limited by certain conditions.

In my opinion, there is nothing more obvious than the fact that 2 and 2 are 4. Yet, this mathematical rule is only correct when applied to collectives of natural numbers. When we enter the realm of algebraic numbers or imaginary numbers, it is a totally different matter.

The postulates of Euclidean geometry hold true only in three-dimensional space and not applicable in the space of  $n$  dimensions.

In physics, optical geometry began with the Cartesian law that light propagates in a straight line (1596-1650). But optical geometry proves helpless, incapable of providing explanations when it comes to the phenomena of light interference or diffraction. Not until Broglie (1929 Nobel prize laureate) discovered wave mechanics, beginning with the law that electromagnetic light moves in a sine wave pattern, was the problem resolved.

Let us go back to the issue of Marxism-Leninism as a science, and let us consider the "relative but absolute" nature of the truths it has affirmed. First of all, we must separate all of the forecasts and expectations by Marx and Lenin and classify them as scientific hypotheses that may be right or wrong. Engels made a very accurate prediction of the world wars as early as 1887 in a little book entitled *In Memory of the Ultrapatriotic Germans of the 1806-1807 Period*. But Engels also wrongly forecast the ruins of the cities in the developmental process of capitalism. This is normal with hypotheses.

But the laws established by Marxism-Leninism are not hypotheses but scientific truths because they have been proved by history. The level of universality of a truth depends on the scope of history. However, every time science comes up with epoch-making inventions and discoveries, these laws may become invalid and must be replaced by new ones. The reason simply is, at such times, there will emerge new conditions capable of altering even the essence of society—conditions that cannot be verified because they have not existed before in history.

Immediately after it came into being, Marxism-Leninism had affirmed the development of new notions and concepts to replace the old ones that have become outdated in the course of scientific progress. "As a science, in its developmental process Marxism-Leninism cannot help being enriched with fresh experiences and fresh knowledge; and some of its theses and conclusions cannot help being changed in the course of time or replaced with new ones more suitable for the new conditions of history" (*Dictionary of Philosophical Terms*, Hanoi, 1960, p. 478).

Thus, the following question will certainly be posed: What value does Marxism-Leninism have when there is nothing firm about it? As a matter of fact, Marxism-Leninism has a very enduring element. "The living soul of Marxism is the concrete analysis of each concrete situation" (Lenin).

Let us take a look again at the crisis of today's realistic socialism. I acknowledge that that crisis is inevitable because the model of socialist construction contains several features that are in contradiction to Marxism-Leninism. It is these contradictions that have caused realistic socialism to develop many defects that, during his lifetime, Lenin had waged an internal struggle to rectify. Lenin's successors, however, cast aside the NEP policy, which they regarded as his situational measure that had been overtaken. This abandonment led to a

recurrence of the malady that had not been completely cured. At first, the illness was overcome thanks to good ideological work and the fairly strong development of realistic socialism. But the disease became increasingly serious as time went by, drove the Soviet Union into a stagnation that lasted until the precrisis and then crisis periods.

However, crisis does not necessarily lead to collapse. A diseased body does not always die. If the illness is correctly diagnosed and timely treated with the right medicine, the body will become healthy again and will develop normally. The patient will die only if his illness is discovered too late, if he is not treated properly, or if he is given the wrong kind of medicine by a "quack."

#### Issue No. 2: In Contradiction to the Free Market?

The professor believes that there is an irreconcilable contradiction in the current renovation system.

*"The most striking aspect of the current situation is the contradiction between the desire to maintain the party's dictatorship and free market development."*

I think that the term "dictatorship" does not accurately convey the meaning of the establishment of the party leadership.

I do not deny that, throughout the 70 years of building realistic socialism in the world, at some time and in some places the category of "the party exercising leadership" had been wrongly construed as "the party assuming all power." But these were cases of misapplication of Marxism-Leninism, and their disastrous consequence was that the party was weakened because of its divorce from its function of mapping out strategies, political lines.... This led to the decline of the state and mass organizations, which became passive, inactive, and even dependent on the party because the latter had done, taken care of, and decided everything for them.

But it would be a loss for a society wanting to develop from one form to a higher one to be denied of the leadership of the party.

An orchestra playing a piece of music always needs one—and only one—conductor. Otherwise, mistakes and confusion would result immediately. In case a society is left alone to develop in a spontaneous manner, there will certainly be conflict, and conflict usually leads to war.

I think that Lenin's struggle for the NEP new economic policy within the CPSU in 1920 had helped to illuminate our country's path to economic development.

Socialism does not simply mean a system of social ownership of the means of production plus the dictatorship of the proletariat. In certain regards, this formula is a *necessary* but not yet *sufficient* condition.

A major law concerning the mode of production is that "production relationships must be in conformity with

the nature and level of productive forces." The question of "conformity" has shed light on many voluntaristic mistakes committed in the past in imposing communist, socialist production relationships on inferior, primitive, productive forces. Some places have at times thought that a "progressive" production relationship could help bring a backward productive force up to its level. As a matter of fact, there is always a reciprocal effect between production relationships and productive forces, but materialistic dialectics has clearly pointed out that the trailblazer must be productive forces, not production relationships.

According to the true spirit of Marxism-Leninism, whether a production relationship is progressive or reactionary depends on whether it conforms with the nature and level of productive forces or not. It is not true that capitalism is always bad and that anything having to do with it is bad. Such a wholesale denial has never been accepted by materialistic dialectics. During the precapitalist period and the early period of capitalism, the market and commodity mechanisms had strongly and positively stimulated socioeconomic development. Moreover, as our country is advancing to socialism without passing through the capitalist system, it has no other choice than to strictly abide by the law of development, namely: it must concentrate its efforts on developing productive forces whose current, highly complex nature and level demand corresponding production relationships—and this means there must be several economic sectors.

Here, may I go back to a term the professor used: "development of the *free* market." I think the spirit of renovation is not quite like that. Under the market mechanism, development is traditionally spontaneous and does not follow any definite direction. Therefore, if the market economy is allowed to develop "freely," the danger of chaos is certainly inevitable. This is a difficult, complex problem for which the solver usually chooses the simple (and incorrect) solution of abolishing the commodity-based economy and the market mechanism.

In the course of socialist construction in Vietnam, the Communist Party of Vietnam [CPV] has gradually realized the scientific character of this issue. From the period of "bursting out" (marked by the Resolution of the Sixth Plenum of the Fourth Party Committee) to the sixth party congress (1986), the issue was affirmed. The seventh party congress took a further step in substantiating it, announcing: "We shall develop a multisector, commodity-based economy along the socialist line; this economy shall operate in accordance with the market mechanism and under state management."

Realities over the past seven years and more have shown that such a line of economic development is suitable; and no antagonistic contradiction has been seen as the professor predicted.

### Issue No. 3: Democracy and the Two-Party System of the United States

Unlike the mathematical method, which begins with a definition, this time around the professor only brought up the necessary conditions for a common democratic system for all places and asserted that the two-party system of the United States is a typical one.

*"A democratic system demands, first of all, that human rights and civil rights be respected. This requirement applies everywhere. And civil rights must be respected by holding free elections. The key factor of a democratic regime is the way its leader is elected. Democratic election means free election, secret voting, and universal right to stand for election. A system not providing for these activities cannot be called democratic...."*

*"What matters is not the existence of many parties or a multiparty system, but the availability of real choice. For real choice to exist, two parties may be enough provided they are really different. The two-party system in the United States seems stabler than the multiparty system in France...."*

I beg to go back to the root of the term democracy. According to the *Larousse Dictionary*, 1992 edition, page 307, the word *democracy* comes from the Greek terms *kratos*, meaning power, and *demos*, meaning people. So, democracy means power of the people, people's administration, "the state of the people, by the people, and for the people" (Ho Chi Minh Thought).

The people hold the state-management power by several means, including the "election of leaders." But these means cannot be the "key factor" because election, no matter how it is done, can only reflect part of the voters' will to choose.

I can cite an example right away: Throughout the 1945-1975 (30 years) period, all the leaders of the former regime in the South ascended to power through elections. But the people made their choice in a totally different way, and that was: to make sacrifices and endure hardships for a long time through two wars of resistance against the imperialists and colonialists in order to ultimately win total victory. This choice must certainly be much more determined and courageous than a choice made with ballots, because both imperialist powers were a hundred, a thousand times stronger than our country economically and militarily.

Perhaps it would be an oversight to consider only the former regime in the South without directly studying the so-called most typical democratic regime of the world: the American two-party system. I agree that this system is "stable"; however, it is stable not because there are "two really different parties," but because the two parties are "one and the same."

Both the Republican and Democratic Parties of the United States serve the interests of a sole class: the American monopolistic bourgeoisie. Although they fight

each other fiercely, they have the same strategic line, the same nature, and the same objectives; and they differ—if at all—only in tactics and in the methods of organization, guidance, and implementation.

It is true that the Republican Party's northern industrial capitalist origins and the Democratic Party's southern slave-owner root have gradually disappeared since the end of the 1861-1865 Civil War and the emergence of the United States as a unified capitalist nation.

Both parties are organizationally amorphous; that is, they do not have grass-roots organizations (chapters) or party members; they only have party officials to take charge of campaigning to win elections. All voters who vote for the ticket of a party are considered members of that party. The national, state, or district committees of a party, or even party congresses are essentially organizations set up to take care of elections.

Concerning the election of the president, the *electoral college* system and the regulations of each state (each state has a different electoral law) concerning candidates make it impossible for any other party or individual to squeeze in and share power, which the two parties take turns at holding. Although the U.S. Declaration of Independence (1776) clearly states that "All men are created equal...," not all Americans may vote and stand for election. For a long time the U.S. Constitution prohibited black people from voting; and not until 1920 did it grant women the right to vote and stand for election.

Although today the right to universal suffrage has been officially recognized in the United States, every state applies a number of restrictions focused on age, place of residence, registration, tax payment, education... to eliminate the poor from elections.

For example, in many states, when voters are required to take a test designed to determine their ability to read and to interpret a certain passage in the state constitution, the number of voters drops sharply, because the rate of illiteracy among the American people is very high.

It is even more difficult to exercise the right to stand for election. Candidates must fulfill the requirements concerning age, diplomas, property... and the number of people recommending them, if these candidates do not belong to the Republican or Democratic Party.

Above the restrictive formal regulations—and playing a decisive role—are the methods used by the American monopolistic bourgeoisie to select people for leading positions from among those candidates whose activities conform to its interests. Among these methods, the most subtle and effective one is the extremely costly electoral campaign, which may require the expenditure of dozens of millions of dollars, most of which must be borne by the candidates.

I would like to cite some official figures provided by the former U.S. Information Service in Saigon. "According to the 1964 rate (I would like to add that, at that time, a

tael of gold cost \$35), a local congressman's electoral campaign usually cost between \$15,000 and \$200,000; a senatorial campaign, over \$1 million; a presidential campaign, several dozens of millions of dollars.... The total cost of electoral campaigns in 1964 was estimated at \$200 million...." "A televised campaign program costs \$75,000; a one-minute message on the local TV also costs up to \$1,750..." (A. Ribicoff and J.O. Newman, *Political Activities in the United States*, translated by Nam Chi, Van Dan Publishing House, Saigon, 1969, p. 246).

It is these expenditures that make it impossible for any individual or organization aside from the Republican and Democratic Parties to muster sufficient financial strength to successfully contest an election. For the monopolistic bourgeoisie, the financier of both parties' electoral campaigns, it does not matter which of them wins, because the more the two parties are in conflict with each other, the more the U.S. regime will be known for being democratic. But in this case democracy does not mean "power of the people" but "power of capital."

On this occasion, I would also like to deal a little more with the thesis that "for real choice to exist, there must be two really different parties."

In the United States, as I have analyzed above, the two parties are "one and the same," and the stabilizing factor of the system is the number 1, not number 2.

Now, if there must be "two really different parties" in Vietnam, does this mean that a bourgeois party will appear to compete for power with the Communist Party?

This will surely lead to political conflict and make the regime unstable; and this is to say nothing of long-term 20- or 30-year reform or restructuring programs. How can such programs be implemented if a party following a certain line holds power for just one year, then leaves to make room for another party that follows a different line?

As for the view that "democratic election means everyone has the right to stand for election," in renovated Vietnam, the 1992 Law on Election of National Assembly has enacted the right of people to offer themselves as candidates for election—with some conditions, of course (after all, under which regime are people allowed to run for election without any conditions?). For example, candidates must have no criminal record, must be free of mental disorders, and must have fulfilled some obligations to the localities where they live and work. Although we do not accept political pluralism and multiparty opposition, the enactment of the people's right to put themselves up for election is an effort to broaden democracy.

There is another question concerning *civil rights*, and that is: In a society in which different classes exist, how can there be equality between master and servant, bourgeois and proletarian, landlord and tenant farmer, metropolitan country and colonial country?

If a democratic regime has two characteristics—one is that all citizens enjoy the same freedoms and equality and the other is that the minority must submit to the majority—then only when there are no different classes left (I can say frankly that this is the objective of socialism) will democracy take on a true meaning.

#### Issue No. 4: "Vietnam Does Not Yet Have an Intellectual Class"

This is the text of the professor's appraisal of Vietnamese intellectuals: "*First of all I would like to talk about the intellectuals trained under French rule. In fact, there is only a very small number of them left.*"

*"The second group of intellectuals is composed of the majority of specialists formed during the socialist period. In contrast with the educational system under the French, the socialist regime trained specialists rather than intellectuals. We had many mathematicians, physicists, biologists, engineers... and now a large number of economists have been added. But they have never learned to think about the problems of society. The party thinks for everybody. Generally speaking, the political sense of the specialist is weak.*"

*"The third group comprises the intellectuals formerly trained in the South. Most of them have left the country. Prolonged living in foreign countries is not a fertile ground for the development of an active intellectual force.*"

*"Finally, there are the youth, who were formed recently or are still under training during the years of what is called renovation. But it takes time for these trends to develop into a real sociopolitical force. In short, my conclusion is that there is no intellectuals in Vietnam at present."*

First of all, it is probably not accurate to collectively call all the intellectuals of a country "the intellectual class." Even if one wants to translate the word *intelligentsia* [word in English], one should only use the term "intellectual circles" or "intellectual stratum."

I do not understand what is the basis for the professor's conclusion that the socialist regime only trains specialists, not intellectuals, and that the specialists' political sense is weak.

Born under French rule and growing up in the South when the country was partitioned, I was trained under the former regime and have done educational work under the socialist regime. It must be said that I understand both educational systems well. I do not deny that our country's educational system is showing numerous deficiencies and weaknesses and that many more reforms must be carried out before our people can master the advanced science and technology of the modern world.

But, with its motto "Study must go together with practice, education must be combined with productive labor, and the school must be closely linked with society," the Vietnamese socialist educational system has always persisted in its aim of training citizens comprehensively so

that they are conscious of their role as masters and know how to be the masters of the country in strict accordance with the spirit of democracy, that is, "The people are masters and the people exercise mastery" (Ho Chi Minh Thought). Naturally, these citizens do not regard either the U.S. two-party system or imperialism—the last stage of capitalism—as democratic; nor are they opposed to the "greatest desire" of Ho Chi Minh, our country's first Communist, "to see to it that every one of our compatriots is fed, clothed, and educated." If it is argued that the Vietnamese people—who have, over the past several decades, participated in the wars of resistance against imperialism, colonialism, and neocolonialism, and in building and defending the socialist fatherland under the leadership of the Communist Party of Vietnam [CPV]—are not intellectual and must have "the party think for everybody," then, honestly, I do not know how to discuss this matter with the professor again.

#### Issue No. 4: "Hoping That the Communist Party Will Change by Itself"

In the following words by the professor I see something sincere and admirable:

*"I still hope that the Communist Party will change by itself. In my opinion, the CPV has two aspects: the Communist aspect and patriotic aspect. It should retain the second and drop the first, and it can transform itself into a genuine patriotic force. If they really love the country and people, they must agree to turn the party into a nationalist party that fully respects the basic freedoms and holds free elections. In such conditions, other political organizations would appear and gradually develop into a constructive opposition force. If the Communist Party transforms itself in that process, it could win elections for a long time."*

Because I feel the sincerity of the professor's statement, I would like to respond with sincerity. Yes, the party is actively renovating itself. If in the professor this is "hope," in me it is confidence.

Throughout over 60 years of making efforts and sacrifices, the party was inculcated by Ho Chi Minh with a sense of independence, self-mastery, and creativity. "Try your best to do whatever is beneficial to the people and to avoid doing whatever hurts them." It is not true that the party "has two aspects" and that it "should drop the first and retain the second" as the professor thinks. In fact, the party has always had only one line and one "love of the country and people," as indicated by Ho Chi Minh in expressing his constant concern: "My only and greatest desire is to see to it that our country is independent, our people are completely free, and every one of our compatriots is fed, clothed, and educated."<sup>1</sup>

"If the country is independent but the people are not happy and free, then that independence is meaningless."<sup>2</sup> That is the line of "holding high the two banners of national independence and socialism," which, like a red thread, has run through the entire process of the CPV's leadership over the revolution.

If Ho Chi Minh had found in Marxism-Leninism a solution to the realization of that line, the party has also held firm to Marxism-Leninism as "the most correct, most revolutionary doctrine," as "what is necessary for us, the path to our liberation," and as "the brain" and the weapons of its struggle.

In Ho Chi Minh thought, the notion of democracy is always accompanied by that of dictatorship. "A trunk containing valuables must have a lock; a house must have doors. Locks and doors are precautions taken mainly to prevent dishonest people from stealing. *Democracy* is the people's most valuable asset, and *dictatorship* is the locks and doors to deter saboteurs. If a trunk has no lock and a house no door, all valuables will be stolen. Therefore, trunks must have locks, and houses must have doors. By the same token, in democracy there must also be dictatorship to help preserve the people's mastery."<sup>3</sup>

Socialism is a sine qua non for achieving an authentic democratic system.

To date, mankind has seen only one model—with a really fixed form—of the building of realistic socialism, and that was the Soviet model with its many flaws and defects, which presented an inadequate or even contradictory image of authentic socialism. It has also seen a number of other models which were in the process of developing and which had no fixed form yet. However, this is not a reason for us to return to "capitalism, which carries war in its bosom as a cloud harbors a thunderstorm" (Jaures 1914) and "which is crushing the Third World, the Fourth World"<sup>4</sup>. . . . And, in the United States, "the beacon of the Free World," "unsurpassable affluence is accompanied by utter destitution, and the notions of freedom and human rights are used to defend a world decayed by barbarity, narcotics, and racism." (G. Marchais, *Democracy*, Vietnamese edition, Su That Publishing House, Hanoi, 1992, p. 63).

Finally, I would like to tell the professor that democracy is not a mathematical problem. When the sheep have to live together with the wolves, freedom for all is a horrible crime that the sheep cannot accept. For me, I still have the iron belief that some day mankind will move from the "world of necessity" into the "realm of freedom." Perhaps only then will there be no more debates about democracy.

#### Footnotes

1. Ho Chi Minh, *Complete Works*, Su That Publishing House, Hanoi, 1984, Vol. 4, p. 35.
2. Ho Chi Minh, *Complete Works*, Su That Publishing House, Hanoi, 1989, Vol. 8, p. 701.
3. *Ibid.*, Vol. 7, p. 548.
4. "The Fourth World" is the destitute people in affluent countries.