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In the Interest of Building and Development of Ho Chi Minh City

(Excerpt from the speech delivered by Truong Tan Sang, Party CC member, Dep. Sec. Of the City Party Cttee., Chairman of the City People's Cttee., on April 30, 1995 – the 20th anniversary of the City's Liberation and May Day.)

‘In a short period of a few post-war years, the economy was gradually restored and developed; the political situation stabilized; the material and cultural life of different social strata, mainly poor working people, improved step by step. But like the rest of the country, the City experienced a difficult stage, including the consequences of a concentrated, bureaucratic, subsidized mechanism. Like other localities, the Party, the administration and people of the City endeavoured to bring into play the spirit of “courage to think and to act”, to bear responsibility, to seriously and realistically draw lessons from the experiences and organize a break-through in renovation of the economic mechanism. They accelerated the development of production and successfully cared for the people's lives. Along with other provinces and cities of the country, the City made contributions to the *all-round renovation* policy initiated by the Sixth Party Congress (1986), then reaffirmed and developed by the Seventh Party Congress.’ p 10

‘...particularly over the recent ten years of the implementation of the renovation line.....The open-door policy, the socialist-orientated multi-sector economy operating along the market mechanism and the diversified, multilateral foreign policy constitute a new gust of wind and bring enthusiasm to five million inhabitants who feel themselves more at ease in earning their living, in enriching themselves and their country. Being aware of the renovation of their Homeland, overseas Vietnamese have actively contributed their capital, drive and intelligence to the building of the City and country. The (sic) are more and more foreign countries investing and establishing economic operations with the City.’ pp 10-11

‘... foreign investment accounts for 30%.’ p 11

‘...the rate of poor patients who are treated free of charge has also increased.’ p 12

‘..... to raise funds to sponsor talented poor students.’ p 12

‘..... famine has basically ended and part of the population has become better off.’ p 13

‘Many living quarters have been beautifully rebuilt and have brought a new life to poor people who had to live miserable lives in the slums.’
p 13

‘Over the past twenty years, the City has always been a target to be destroyed by anti-Vietnamese forces.’ p 13

‘..... to narrow the gap, the lagging behind, in comparison with other cities and countries of the region.’ p 15

‘Different strata of people and overseas countrymen should make every effort to exploit all domestic potentials and opportunities, including the expansion of cooperation with southern provinces, cities and the whole country, which will serve as the basis for obtaining external resources.’
p 16

Interview given by Truong Tan Sang to “Dai Doan Ket” Review

‘Based on the development objectives of planning and programming, the method and content should be renovated so as to conform to the movement of the market mechanism.’ p 19

‘We will coordinate training organizations (supply) with labour-using organizations (demand) to work out training plans to meet the requirements of socio-economic development. The city has a policy to foster and train a contingent of “grey matter” labourers which constitute the basis of the process of industrialization and modernization.’

‘..... including the important role played by intellectuals, patriotic personalities and overseas countrymen, will make a worthy and glorious contribution to the building of the City.’ p 23

To Deserve Being a Major Economic Centre, an Important Cultural, Scientific and Technological Centre, an Important Centre of International Commerce

(Excerpt from the address by Do Muoi, Gen. Sec. Of the CP of Vietnam to the Vth Congress of the Ho Chi Minh City’s Party organization (second round) – October 22, 1991.)

‘We had not realized the dual character of the market mechanism, nor foreseen the problems which would arise, we had not made proper preparations when entering the market economy to promote its positive and dynamic aspect and limit its spontaneous negative one.’ pp 25-26

‘.....the City can gain greater successes in the struggle against negative manifestations, corruption, bribery, smuggling, manufacture of faked goods, bankruptcies of credit organizations, major cases of loss and theft of the property of the State and the people, defects in business with foreign countries, loose management of culture, information and press, including in cultural cooperation and cultural services with foreign countries, running after profits in cultural activities, non-selective acceptance of foreign culture, eroding the national features of the traditional culture and ethics of the nation.’ p 26

‘It must be recognized that the Party’s base in the working class is not strong enough, the comprehension of the Party in the working class has not been appropriately fostered, the promotion of the working class and the Party work among the workers are still weak.’ p 27

‘Yet on the whole, no other province or city in our country enjoys such great advantages and potentialities.’ p 30

‘The Party’s line of renovation gives us more knowledge and sets higher requirements with regard to the promotion of the central role of the City on the path to the development of a multi-sector commodity economy which operates in accordance with a State-managed market mechanism and which has a socialist orientation.’ p 30

‘It is to be noted that in the market mechanism, the City must entertain with the provinces in the region equal and mutually beneficial relations in a spirit of mutual trust and cooperation, making it possible for each party to develop. This relationship bears a deep significance in the strengthening of the alliance between workers, peasants and intellectuals.’ p 32

‘....to enrich themselves by legitimate means.’ p 33

‘An end must be put to the fairly widespread state of affairs in which private individuals indulge in unlawful activities under the cover of the State, fraud, tax evasion, perturbing order and discipline, negatively affecting social life and restricting the development of the economy itself.’ p 33

‘The State-owned economic establishments..... must be readjusted so as to operate with profit in conformity with the law, and to put an end to the state of affairs in which losses are incurred on a prolonged basis.’ p 33

‘We attach importance to the development of the State-capitalist sector as well as the cooperative economy with diversified forms on the principle of voluntary acceptance. Forms of cooperation in agriculture, with a new content, have emerged.’ p 34

‘We encourage private capitalists to develop production and business..... We encourage foreign organizations, companies and individuals, and over-seas Vietnamese.’ p 34

‘Our economy may be said to be one which operates according to an “open” mechanism in the full meaning of the word, “open” to all economic components, “open” to all opportunities for the people to get rich along with a reduction and eventually an elimination of poor households, “open” in commerce and economic cooperation with the other countries on the principle of equality, mutual benefit, and respect for each other’s independence and sovereignty.’ p 34

‘..... lowering of production and circulation expenses, lowering of production costs; strict prohibition of turning public into private property, using State funds for personal expenses, distribution to individuals, purchase of gifts, vanity.’ pp 34-35

‘Everybody must be encouraged to use commodity articles of domestic production.’ p 35

‘.... flood victims in the Mekong Delta.’ p 35

‘An outstanding feature now is the all-round and deep crisis of socialism. The socialist regime in the Soviet Union no longer exists.’ p 36

‘.....some people are wondering or not if our country can stand and continue to develop along the socialist path.’ p 36

‘On the threshold of 1991, there was no longer any source of aid.’ p 37

‘..... since the 6th Congress, the renovation we have undertaken has proved to be a correct step in its orientation, tempo and way of

proceeding. The renovation line has been unanimously approved and eagerly carried out by our entire Party and people.’ p 38

‘.....socialism.....is fully in keeping with the law of development of mankind. This is a historical necessity that all countries, all nations will sooner or later attain to. The great revolutions in the world had to go through temporary setbacks, but sooner or later, they are to triumph. The new which is in keeping with the law may encounter obstacles, go through twists and turns, ups and downs, but in the end, it will necessarily come to life and replace the old.’ p 39

‘In the process of socialist construction, we committed the mistake of dogmatism and voluntarism and applied an erroneous pattern of socialism. Nevertheless, we reached an early realization of the mistake, made our best efforts to correct it, undertook the renovation drive which was initiated at the 6th Congress, reasserted and developed it at the 7th Congress.’ p 39

‘Of course, that is not the old pattern of socialism. We must carry on research, draw experiences in the work in order gradually to build up new conceptions of socialism, and determine on this basis a correct pattern of socialism which really serves the people’s freedom and happiness.’ p 40

‘Experience has shown that the threat of instability usually begins from within the Party. Division within the party disorientates the people. A weakening of the Party causes loss of confidence to the people. That is an opportunity likely to be seized by hostile forces to deepen the division, to achieve peaceful evolution, to create troubles and to attempt subversion from within.’ p 41

‘We must resolutely fight opportunism, fractionalism (sic), dividing attempts, corruption, authoritarianism, detachment from the people. We must resolutely build our Party into a pure and strong one, remove from office the degenerated elements. The people are very fair, a well-intentioned mistake will meet with a comprehensive (sic) attitude on their part, and they will join the Party in correcting it. However, if an attempt is made to misuse some imperfection in the mechanism for personal benefit, they will be dissatisfied and will not pass over it.’ p 42

A Historian’s View

(Interview given by Dr Nguyen Khac Vien, a historian and psychologist, to the correspondent of “Vietnamese Studies” Review.)

‘Most of the big businesses fled abroad [after Liberation].’ p 51

‘Sai Gon cannot live without international relations. The erroneous economic management (which was clearly analysed by the Sixth Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam); the economic encirclement and embargo by hostile forces caused the city serious socio-economic crisis.’ p 52

‘For Vietnamese who learn the history of France and Europe, it is the most difficult to understand why two religious communities could wage wars only because of different religious beliefs.’ pp 56-57

‘For a long time, intellectuals of Asian-African countries have had an earnest aspiration for the earliest, quickest, most abundant acquisition of scientific knowledge from the West. Hence, there is the tendency to venerate the West, to belittle traditional culture and acquire the western lifestyle irrespective of good and bad manners.’ p 64

‘We should admit that the majority of Vietnamese intellectuals have quite low salaries so far but a lot of research or study work to do. The market economy has divided them into two categories: the small high-income number who work with foreign countries or as experts for important national programmes and the low-income majority having poor living conditions.’ p 67

‘Before liberation, almost no one placed themselves outside of the community; and the ethic was to sacrifice everything for the community when necessary. An intellectual who had a comfortable life in Saigon could leave everything behind to go to the resistance base. In time of peace, the values of an individual were again brought to the fore, while the influence of Western thoughts prevailed over Confucian ones. It must be made clear that even Confucianism never compels the individual to sacrifice himself wholly for the community.’ p 68

‘Saigon has only 6% of the total population of the country but possesses nearly 40% of cash in circulation in Vietnam. On the one hand, it is a leading centre in the economic development of the State speeding up the development of other localities. On the other, it is like an “octopus” sucking the resources of other regions. The differentiation between the rich and the poor is an inevitable consequence of the market economy.’ pp 71-72

‘Sai Gon intellectuals have not made the proper efforts; they are obsessed by technology and the economy which are absorbing almost all their vitality.’ p 73

‘..... it is impossible to prevent poor inhabitants coming from rural areas throughout the country to Saigon.’ p 74

‘It will be difficult for Sai Gon to avoid the existence of “ghost hamlets” where non-registered inhabitants gather, vagrants who have unstable lodging and occupations; or to solve the question of street children. In Saigon, if one works a little hard or is a little bit cunning, one can earn 5,000-10,000 dongs a day – an amount that is not easy to gain in rural areas.’ pp 74-75

Ho Chi Minh City: A Panorama

‘.....2,603,000 people of working age; 1,698,000 of them are working mainly in industry, commerce, agriculture, forestry, transport, communications, building, etc.’ p 79

‘From 1975 to 1986 it searched for appropriate steps for socialist construction. Being dynamic, but at times subjective and hasty, it advocated mistaken policies, especially on the transformation of private capital, which resulted in an economic crisis.

The Sixth Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam (1986) laid down a renovation and open-door line to shift the subsidy-based bureaucratic centralized mechanism to a State-regulated market mechanism.’ p 82

‘It is significant that the above growth [shown in table on page 86] was not based on subsidies and external aid, but mainly on the City’s self-motivation. The decisive factor of development was not the increase in the number of labourers (14%), but the great efforts made by the City to invest in science and technology, to renovate techniques and production processes, to change the structure of products and to reorganize production in order to increase productivity (86%).’ p 86

‘.... yet taxes were not collected at a similar rate, mainly because of attempts to hide the accurate figures of the turnover.’ p 91

‘The income of the City continued to increase at a quick tempo and made important contributions to the national budget, yet there was practically

no increase amount for the local budget..... This has resulted in great difficulties for the municipality in its budget expenditures.’ p 91

‘Public transport could handle only 5% of passenger needs, the remaining 95% have to rely on personal means of transportation with 2 million bicycles and 800,000 motorbikes.....the City transport sector is trying to improve the quality of the public transport system, while restoring and developing the bus network.’ pp 103-104

‘.... real turnover [in the private sector] is twice as large as that reported for taxation purposes.’ p 107

‘..... investment formalities and procedures should be streamlined.’ p 111

‘Activities of the City’s Lottery company help contribute and consolidate the State budget’s revenue. This company’s turnover was VND 315 billion in 1994, an increase of 35.3% over 1993, and its obligated contribution to the State Budget was VND 74.2 billion.’ p 116

‘The environment in Ho Chi Minh City is now in an alarming state as pollution increases due to the poor infrastructure, old public transport system, rampant wastewater, dust and garbage disposal in disorder.’ p 116

‘At present, Ho Chi Minh City is launching a campaign “No litter on the roads”. However, in order to make this practice become routine, promotion and education on environmental protection must be done frequently.’ p 117

‘Statistics show that only 50-60% of teachers who are working in elementary schools and in the suburbs intend to stay in the education system after they have benefitted (sic) from training courses and programs provided by the system.’ p 118

‘Today there are 2,800 private consultant rooms.’ p 119

‘The City currently has 2 free-of-charge hospitals with a total of 550 hospital beds and there are approximately 50 charity health-care stations scattered in various districts.’ p 119

‘A series of investigations have been made by the City’s Authorities to prevent illegally imported video tapes whose content is crime, violence and unhealthy sex.’ p 121

‘It is remarkable that the number of rapes (in which 50% of victims are children), prostitution, drug-addiction have not decreased despite extensive measures applied by the Government. Conflicts causing injury, robberies.... are tending to rise. In addition, traffic accidents have not been decreased: 1,592 accidents in 1994, (an increase of 21.9%) in which 591 people were killed and 1,706 injured. The City is now implementing extensive measures to reinstate the order for traffic safety, such as dislodging obstacles on the surface and pavements of 12 major roads, readjusting signals, inspecting means of transport, etc.

The City has 5,012 orphan children and 5,089 handicapped children facing difficult living conditions. Currently, 3,243 orphan children are being cared for within the community or at specific child-care centres (accounting for 64.7%).’ pp 121-122