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THE QUESTION OF THE FAMILY IN SOCIALIST CONSTRUCTION

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[Text] Under the light of the resolution of the 4th Party Congress, our people are eagerly and enthusiastically carrying out the three revolutions in order to build the system of socialist collective ownership, build the system of large-scale socialist production, build the new culture and mold the new socialist man. This is a process of comprehensive, continuous, profound and thorough revolutionary change on the part of all of society.

The family, the smallest organizational unit of society, absolutely must undergo this change along with society. There is a close relationship between the family and society.

The family, the natural cell of society, is the form of existence of the life of man. The family is a social product and develops together with the development of society. Socio-economic conditions during a specific stage of history determine the nature and structure of the family. "The family system is totally controlled by ownership relations." (1) Conversely, the family is a factor that has an important impact upon society. During each age, the state of the ruling class has established laws, established ethical and moral principles to serve as standards for each family to follow in order to protect the interests of its class and, at the same time, strengthen social order. These laws, ethics and morals were implemented by the people and gradually became the behavior of the family and the habits and customs of society.

The nature, task and function of the family and the relationship among the individual, the family and society under the different social systems are not the same.

In a society in which there is private ownership and exploiting classes, the family is a private economic unit and has the objective of protecting the right to own and inherit property. The family is established on the basis of economic interests, class interests and the structure of the family is determined by these interests. It is the man of the family who has the right

The Vietnamese family was formed under the historic conditions of the Vietnamese people, a people who possess a tradition of diligent labor, unity and love for one another, heroic struggle against foreign aggression, respect for ethical values and respect for feelings and obligations. Of course, having lived for several thousand years under the feudal system and for nearly 100 years under the colonial system, the Vietnamese family has been unable to avoid some of the characteristics of the feudal family with its "head of the family" attitude, the unjust principle of respect for the man but not the woman and countless customs and habits which shackle the worker, reduce the dignity of women and trample upon the legitimate interests of youths, teenagers and children.

Following the successful August Revolution, the victory of the national democratic revolution and the socialist revolution in northern Vietnam had a profound impact upon the family. In particular, since the virtual completion of socialist transformation, we have had the conditions for establishing the new style family, the socialist family. Socialist production relations have been established, the dictatorship of the proletariat has been constantly strengthened and women have been liberated and participate in every social activity; these are the conditions for establishing a new system of marriage and the family. The marriage and family law promulgated in 1960 was based on the principles: a free and progressive marriage, one husband and one wife, equality between man and woman and the protection of the rights of women and children. New style relations between husband and wife, between parents and their children, namely the relations of equality, mutual respect and love for one another, are forming. The material and spiritual lives of families have constantly been improved.

When the country was partitioned and we were engaged in the long, savage war, we were unable to research and guide the establishment of families in a comprehensive manner, unable to establish specific principles concerning relationships within the family, principles based on the spirit of socialist ethics. The remnants of feudal thinking, the long-standing habits of small-scale production and the influence of bourgeois culture are deeply imprinted in many of our concepts of ethics, happiness, life, the relationship between persons, etc. Therefore, in addition to the new factors, unwholesome phenomena still exist within many families, phenomena which cause many people to not truly have peace of mind or enthusiasm, phenomena which adversely affect the establishment of the new culture and the molding of the new socialist man.

Now that the country is at peace, independent, unified and building socialism, the question of building the new, beautiful family has become a pressing requirement of the revolution, a fervent aspiration of each person, a practical demand of everyday life. The war of aggression of the imperialists had many serious consequences upon the spiritual and material lives of our Vietnamese families. The social ills left behind by neo-colonialism have also had an impact upon the effort to mold the new socialist man and establish the new socialist family. The major changes occurring in the economy, science and technology, such as the reorganization of production, the zoning of production areas, the reorganization of population centers, the construction of new

economic areas, agricultural mechanization, the redistribution of the social labor force and so forth, will raise many new problems concerning man and life. The material and spiritual lives, the personal and collective lives of each person and the relationship among persons within the family and society will raise new demands which the family must promptly meet. Under the conditions of our society's change from the old to the new from top to bottom, how must the family be developed so that it contributes along with society to insuring that everyone, from adults to children, thinks correctly, possesses beautiful feelings and good health, receives an education, can rest and relax, achieves high productivity and has a civilized, happy life? This is also an important field in the struggle between socialism and capitalism. Consolidating and strengthening the position of socialism within the family will help accelerate the three revolutions.

In accordance with the line of the party, on the basis of the laws of the state and the actual situation of our country and by applying the experiences that have been gained, the responsible agencies must set forth correct guidelines and take appropriate measures to guide and help families uphold their good traditions, overcome their weaknesses and think, feel and live in a manner consistent with the new society.

On the basis of the organic relationship between the family and society and the fact that the interests of the family and the interests of society are the same, one conclusion which can be reached is that the building of the family must be closely linked to the building of the new society, to the three revolutions being carried out at this time.

The objectives and guidelines of building the family must be based on the requirements and actual conditions of society. The principle underlying the establishment of the relationship between the family and society is that the interests of the family must be subservient to the interests of society. In the immediate future, in the first stage of socialist construction, in which we face many difficulties, each family must still endure hardships, make sacrifices and contribute as much as possible to advance our society from a backward economy heavily damaged by war to socialism. Without the contribution and sacrifice of each person, each family we cannot have an independent, autonomous, prosperous economy in the future and, if the country is poor and dependent, the family cannot enjoy comfort and happiness.

The building of the new culture of a socialist, national nature, the struggle to eliminate the ideological and cultural remnants of the old system and the molding of the new, socialist man must be carried out in a continuous coordinated manner from within society to within the family. Only by delving deeply into concepts concerning ethics, morals, love, marriage and the raising of children and the customs, habits and style of life within the family can the building of the socialist ideology and culture be complete and thorough.

On the other hand, only on the basis of the victory of the three revolutions can the building of the new family be carried out under favorable conditions. Therefore, the building of the family cannot be carried out on the basis of

subjective desires, rather, it must be carried out in a gradual, determined manner on the momentum of development of the three revolutions. This does not mean that as the three revolutions are being carried out in society the family will automatically change. Within the family as well as in society, the old does not disappear nor the new appear on their own. Moreover, the family is part of the personal life of the individual, consequently, the old is very deeply rooted and time is needed for the new to become firmly rooted. Therefore, the replacement of the old with the new within the family must be done in an even more determined and continuous manner in order to achieve the desired results.

Whereas the family must be subservient to the interests of society, society, on the other hand, must care for the life of the family. Le Duan said: "The party, state and mass organizations must care for the life of each family, care for it in every respect, that is, in terms of the food, housing, education and the rearing of children of each family. When resolving problems pertaining to the lives of the people, we must give our attention to the family unit and its varied needs, must try to serve the life of the family as well and conveniently as possible. What must we do for the family, what are the needs of family life? These are the questions which we absolutely must ask ourselves when thinking about problems pertaining to the economy, production and everyday life; these are questions to be answered by the cooperative, the district and provincial levels and the state plan, in general."(6) Therefore, in conjunction with encouraging families to fulfill their obligations to society, it is necessary to give appropriate attention to such practical matters as improving the organization of the distribution of grain and food products so that it is both convenient and efficient, improving public health, sanitation and public service projects and expanding and improving collective welfare projects as well as the various forms of caring for and teaching teenagers and children. Facts at many places have shown: by knowing how to organize and tap the inexhaustible capabilities of the masses and with the assistance of the state agencies, especially the government on the basic level, we can resolve the problems mentioned above well within the limits imposed by present conditions.

Together with establishing a good relationship between the family and society, we must fully concern ourselves with establishing beautiful relations among the persons within the family so that they enjoy a truly civilized and happy life. These beautiful relations do not develop naturally, rather, they can only be the result of a process of struggling to transform long held thoughts, feelings and habits which have become outmoded and struggling to establish new, beautiful thoughts, feelings and relations suited to the new system.

The relations among the persons within the family are not purely a private matter, rather, they are also of profound social significance. The relations between husband and wife, between parents and children and between brothers and sisters are blood relations as well as relations between persons within the socialist system. It is clear that we cannot continue to practice the habits of the old society but that we must build new relations, ones which thoroughly implement the thinking "one for all, all for one" and express the

spirit of equality, democracy and love, respect and help for one another. This is a demand of society; at the same time, it is in the interests and for the sake of the happiness of everyone. Only on the basis of equality and mutual respect can there be true love for one another and happiness.

This is one of the special characteristics of the new socialist man. "The new man is a person who knows how to build a happy family on the basis of a happy society, a person who possesses a full sense of responsibility and a genuine spirit of love in husband-wife relations, a person who possesses a high sense of responsibility to molding his or her children to be new persons." (7)

The relations within the family do not pertain solely to the individual. They also have an impact upon the material and spiritual life of society, upon social order and security. Therefore, these relations are not simply a matter of ethics and feelings, they are also of a legal nature. Our state has promulgated and is now studying amendments to the marriage and family law and will research the establishment of other laws related to this matter (such as a law on the protection of teenagers and children and so forth) in order to define the legal responsibility of the persons within the family and express the state's recognition and protection of marriage and the family in keeping with the spirit of the socialist constitution.

For a long time, many young men and women, when embarking on their lives as wives and husbands, mothers and fathers, have not been trained in the viewpoints and knowledge needed to perform these important functions well. Is this not one of the causes of the family tragedies which should not occur in our beautiful social system?

There are two main relationships within the family: the relationship between wife and husband and the relationship between parents and their children.

The relationship between wife and husband is based on love between a man and woman and on a sense of responsibility to each other, to their children and to society. This relationship has a very large impact upon the health, life, private thoughts and feelings of everyone and even influences the future of each person. Without recognizing the great revolutionary changes in society, without having a revolutionary concept of life and happiness, it is not easy to free oneself from feudal, bourgeois and petty bourgeois viewpoints in this very complicated and delicate matter. We must insure that everyone (men as well as women, youths and parents whose children are now adults) possesses the correct concept of love and marriage. We must abolish such remnants of feudalism as early marriages, forcing a woman to marry against her will, demanding gifts from the future bridegroom, marriage ceremonies and so forth; we must also reduce the incidence of such unwholesome phenomena as illegitimate love, husbands and wives separating from each other, etc. Legal agencies and public opinion must harshly denounce such barbarous actions as maltreating and beating wives and children. We must guide and help young men and women correctly implement the principle of free and progressive marriages based on the spirit of genuine love. After they have married, husbands and wives must build families in a spirit of responsibility to one another, to their children

and to society. The husband and wife must respect each other, help each other make progress and discuss and perform the work of the family together. They must compromise with each other, respect and patiently persuade each other and resolve their conflicts beginning with the very first day of their marriage. Deserving of attention is the fact that conflicts in love, marriage and the family, if not resolved at an early date and if allowed to become too deep, can lead to blind actions which have very serious consequences.

The happiness of the family is the responsibility of the wife and the husband. It is even more necessary for the woman to see this as her right and responsibility. Endeavoring to achieve a worthy position in society and live an independent life through her own labor without relying upon her husband, making every effort to improve herself in every respect, knowing how to conduct herself and treat others and respecting herself, this is the basis for selecting a worthy mate and achieving a happy family life. The woman must, under all circumstances, display self-reliance, take the initiative in building her life, rely upon the law and the collective to protect the legitimate interests of herself and her children and avoid being content with her lot and negative.

In every social system, the family has the function of bearing children in order to maintain and develop the race. Childbirth is not something that pertains only to the husband and wife, it is also directly related to the matter of balancing the population and the economy, balancing production and consumption. Our country's present annual rate of population growth is approximately 3 percent, which makes it one of the highest in the world!

In view of the fact that our economy is still underdeveloped, this high birthrate creates additional difficulties for families and society. Therefore, in order for society to develop in a balanced manner, in order for the future of the race to be wholesome and in order to insure the health and progress of mothers and children and protect family happiness, childbirth cannot be unplanned as it was under the old system, rather, it must be a self-conscious, delicate matter based on discussion and agreement between the wife and her husband and reflecting the concern and respect they have for each other. This is the civilized, scientific way of life, it reflects one aspect of persons who are the masters of society, the masters of nature, the masters of themselves.

Bearing, raising and teaching children who meet the requirements of society are the noble function of the mother, the source of happiness and joy of the family. The new socialist man is the product of social relations, the result of the three revolutions; this man, however, is still born and raised within the family. Consciously or unconsciously, the family is still the first school of children, parents are still the first teachers of their children. The family is the place where children spend the majority of their lives from birth to adolescence, the period of time when the basic elements of each feeling and attitude are formed. Each influence of the family leaves deep impressions upon children which they carry for the rest of their lives. Although the education provided by society plays the dominant role, it cannot

replace the education provided by the family, particularly the teaching of feelings and ethics, an area in which the family exerts profound influence. The resolution of the 4th National Congress of Delegates of the Party pointed out: "We must mold the new man from the time he is born, mold him in each period of his life, in all mass organizations, economic and cultural installations and social activities, in each sector, on each echelon, in each ward, hamlet and family." The family must work with the school and society to train the generation of Vietnamese socialists.

As a very important educational environment, the family must have the same educational goals, subjects and methods as the school and society. Only in this way can the educational reform program set forth by the 4th National Congress of the Party be thoroughly implemented.

The failure to coordinate the various educational environments has a harmful effect upon the understanding and confidence of the young. At present, the building of the country demands a large number of youths to participate in productive labor in agriculture, forestry, industry, construction, communications-transportation, and so forth. In the future, on the momentum of development of the scientific-technological revolution, the majority of workers will acquire a college education through on-the-job training. However, because they do not clearly understand these requirements and this trend of development of society, many families think that the only way youths can make progress is by attending college. This misconception has caused a number of youths, when assigned to work at a worksite, cooperative, or enterprise, to lack the enthusiasm youths should have or possess a very dangerous psychology of disappointment just as they embark on life.

The education provided by the family encompasses many areas; however, the most important and difficult is the molding of children who possess a beautiful soul, beautiful feelings and ethics. Many parents only give their attention to the feeding of their children, to their children's academic education but are not appropriately concerned with this matter. The souls and ethics of children are not molded by means of long-winded dissertations on theory or by means of the whip, rather, they must be molded by means of the life of labor, the brave struggle, by means of the bright examples set by parents. At the same time, we must understand the characteristics of the psychological and physiological development of children, teenagers and youths in the new age, understand the characteristics of each child and conduct a very detailed and thorough process of education. If we simply maintain that "everything will turn out all right," rely upon the "many things taught by teachers" at the school or blame everything on circumstances beyond our control by saying that "parents bring the child into the world but it is the world that molds his character" and do not give attention to this matter at the very outset, by the time a bad child becomes aware of what he is, it will be too late. Raising a child is a science, an art which we must learn and apply throughout our lives as parents. Even when children are on their own and have started a family, parents must continue to provide them with guidance in several areas of their lives.

As the relationships within the family differ so, too, do the relationships between children and parents differ under the socialist system.

The socialist spirit of "one for all and all for one" does not permit us to be indifferent toward anyone, especially our parents, the persons who brought us into the world and raised us from childhood. The socialist lives a life of integrity and loyalty. If a person does not respect his father and love his mother how can he love the working people, how can he value his friends and the collective? The attitude toward one's parents must not only reflect gratitude to the persons who brought you into the world and raised you, but must also express the gratitude of one generation to the preceding generation that worked hard and waged a difficult struggle to help build and defend the fatherland. When our parents become old and ill, we must, in addition to our natural obligation of caring for them, also show concern and respect for them so that they are happy and secure in their older years.

Within the family, in addition to the primary relationships mentioned above, there are many other relationships, such as between brothers and sisters, between sister-in-law and mother, between wife and sister-in-law, between children of the present marriage and children of former marriages, between grandparents and grandchildren, etc. It can be said that the family is a small society. The family consists of persons of many different generations, consequently, they differ in terms of their concepts, abilities, feelings, preferences, ways of life, etc. If, in the life they share, instead of building the spirit of collective ownership and the spirit of loving, respecting and compromising with one another, each person in the family is concerned only with himself, it will be impossible to avoid conflicts and the life of the family will be nothing more than a process of putting up with one another, which will adversely affect the spirit of work and productive labor of each member of the family. Conversely, if each person realizes his responsibility, if the members of the family love, compromise with and help one another, the family will be a happy collective which is able to motivate everyone to overcome each difficulty and fulfill his task to society and provides each member with a harmonious, rich collective as well as personal life.

The relationships among each person within the family must be expressed, strengthened and consolidated by means of the organization of family life. The organization of family life not only has an impact upon the daily life and happiness of each person, but also influences the replenishing of the energies expended each day in work, the consumption of society and the creation of the habits and style of the new socialist man.

The organization of family life encompasses numerous complex, detailed matters which vary very widely depending upon the preferences and circumstances of each family, upon the conditions of each region and the country. However, it is still necessary to establish several general guidelines. At present, it is clear that superstitions and backward customs and habits in weddings, funeral ceremonies, death anniversaries, Tet celebrations and so forth must be removed from the life of the family. The need to establish a scientific and sanitary way of life in our food, clothing, housing, health care, the

bearing and raising of children and so forth is a pressing need. Those families which have the necessary conditions should make every effort to raise chickens, hogs, vegetables and fruit, store earthenware vessels of pickled melons and eggplant and have jars of soybean sauce and fish sauce in order to make their contribution to reducing the difficulties encountered by society in supplying these products. At the same time, depending upon actual circumstances, an effort should be made to increase the cultural activities within the family (in the form of books, newspapers, the radio, recreation, entertainment, and so forth) in order to make life richer and happier. On the basis of the development of the economy and by making full use of the material, spiritual and cultural services provided by society, each family must make an effort to organize its life in the best possible manner permitted by circumstances. If we utilize the capabilities of each member of the family, establish an efficient division of labor and budget expenditures we can, although we still face many difficulties, make life more comfortable.

On the basis of the viewpoints and understanding presented above and the experiences gained in the various campaigns conducted in the localities to build families of the new culture, we can establish the following standards of a family of the new culture:

First, building families who exercise collective ownership and live amidst equality, harmony, happiness and progress:

--The husband and wife must love and respect each other, discuss and look after the affairs of the family and practice planned parenthood; parents must raise healthy, obedient children who follow the five teachings of Uncle Ho; children must respect, love, care for and help their parents.

--The life of the family must be well organized; there must be an efficient division of labor; expenditures must be planned; the family must live in a neat, clean fashion and the health of its members must be maintained.

--Everyone must help one another make progress through study and training and not engage in superstitious practices.

Secondly, enthusiastically participating in labor and practicing economy.

--Every individual must comply with the labor regulations governing his duties and enthusiastically try to make progress in his labor, work and studies.

--Economy must be practiced in production and everyday life, in wedding ceremonies, funeral services, death anniversary services and Tet celebrations.

Thirdly, there must be full compliance with each position and policy of the party and state.

--It is necessary to enthusiastically contribute manpower and wealth to the construction and defense of the country.

It is necessary to set good examples in complying with each law on the protection of socialist property, the management of the economy and the management of the market.

--It is necessary to set good examples in complying with each regulation and rule on the new style of life.

In view of its revolutionary significance and comprehensive nature, the building of families of the new culture is the responsibility of all the people, of all of society and must be closely linked to the other campaigns. This is a process of replacing the old with the new in the thinking, feelings and habits of tens of millions of persons; therefore, the measure of foremost importance in this effort is to do a good job of teaching and improving the understanding, thinking and feelings of the people. Numerous thorough and regular measures must be taken which touch upon each person. If we only conduct a fast, impetuous campaign, the results will be temporary and the old ways will quickly return. Therefore, the building of families of the new culture can only become a mass movement if we have the response and coordination of the various sectors, especially the propaganda-training, cultural and educational sectors.

In conjunction with remolding thinking and deepening the knowledge of building a family, organizing one's life and raising children, full attention must be given to guiding the effort to build families of the new culture, creating the minimum material conditions needed, establishing specific laws, regulations, policies, rules and codes, etc. These measures are indispensable if we are to achieve specific returns from the campaign. Of course, we will accelerate these activities primarily by developing the potential among the people in conjunction with the very important assistance provided by responsible agencies.

The campaign to build families of the new culture in a manner closely linked to building the new style of life of society is a long campaign which will develop from a low level to a high level, from pilot projects to general practice, from one aspect to many, develop in breadth and then gradually develop in depth and culminate in the establishment of the beautiful customs and habits of the new society. We must conduct research as this campaign progresses and, after each period of time, conduct a preliminary and final review and gain experience in order to adopt appropriate themes and measures.

In view of its very broad nature, the building of families of the new culture is not the special work of any one sector. All governmental agencies and mass organizations are responsible for performing this work under the leadership of the party committee echelon. The government of each locality will, depending upon the actual situation, establish central jobs to be performed during each period of time, establish coordination among the various sectors and mobilize the sectors to pool their forces in order to perform pressing jobs. Each sector must take the initiative, fulfill its function, coordinate with other sectors and research and discuss ways to carry out each job. Only through an effort made in many areas by the entire party and all the people over a long period of time can we synchronize the effort to build families with the stages

of development of society in the process of carrying out the three revolutions, thereby creating strong, stable conditions for the three revolutions to support one another's development.

FOOTNOTES

1. K. Marx and F. Engels: "Selected Works," Su That Publishing House, Hanoi, 1971, Volume II, p 203.
2. Le Duan: "Vai tro va nhien vu cua phu nu Viet-nam trong giai doan moi cua cach manh," [The Role and Task of Vietnamese Women in the New Stage of the Revolution], Su That Publishing House, Hanoi, 1974, p 24.
3. Ibid.
3. Ibid., p 25.
5. Ho Chi Minh: "Trich loi noi chuyen tai hoi nghi can bo thao luan du thao luat hon nhan va gia dinh;" "Nhưng lời kêu gọi" [Excerpt from speech at the conference of cadres discussing the draft of the marriage and family law] [Appeals], Su That Publishing House, Hanoi, 1960, Volume V, p 281.
6. Le Duan: "Vai tro va nhien vu..." p 26.
7. The Political Report at the 4th National Congress of Delegates of the Vietnam Communist Party.

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