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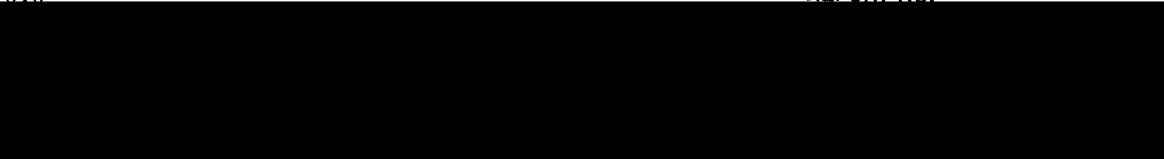
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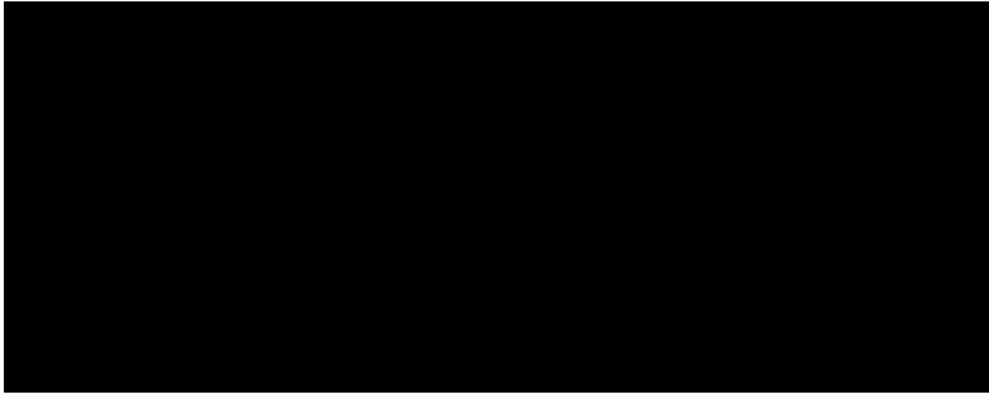


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FOR A NEW DEMOCRATIC EDUCATION

AIMS OF THE NEW DEMOCRATIC EDUCATION

I. - REEDUCATION OF THOUGHT:

By its victory, the Revolution of August 1945 had done away with the dual yoke of the French imperialists and their Indochinese lackeys. Still the liquidation of our political bondage did by no means entail an eradication of all vestiges of French domination in other spheres. One of the domains in which the enslaving influence of French domination was most deeprooted was that of thought and knowledge. This was why the August Revolution has raised the urgent problem of reeducation of our people's way of thinking. In other words, our national culture also calls for a sweeping revolution.

Referring to the need of an "intellectual revolution", some people would argue: "How could the evil influence of French domination be impressive upon our people's minds if no Viet Nam -- let alone the few who chose to be enslaved -- ever tolerated the woful crimes perpetrated by the colonialists for so many years?"

Such, however, was not the case. It is not true that all those who hated and repudiated French rule had rid themselves thereby of the invisible fetters which French imperialists had clapped down upon their judgment, their understanding, their working methods, and their conception of men and things.

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Other people would opine: "Since French rule is no more, why should we not build upon the foundations they had laid, enjoy a cultural past full of achievements, and make use of the schools and universities they had set up? Both our present program and school terms must remain the same as before, since they have been framed by scientific minds according to the inalienable principles of education which still are prevailing in all civilized countries", or they would say: "Why should our knowhow of medicine, pharmacy, public works, agriculture, law and other things be rubbed out and cast away if it is strongly based on both reason and experience, if it is the very criterion of natural and eternal truths and while no new bases have been found as yet to replace the old ones?" There is no denying that these opinions may have come from people whose sincerity is not to be doubted, who are for an all-out support of the war of resistance and the national reconstruction, who are prepared to make every sacrifice in order to ensure the liberation of the country. Nonetheless, it must be stressed that these people are still closely associated with the metaphysical logics, the unalterable way of thinking which are heirs to a superannuated education which indeed has some bearing upon our everyday works and activities. Each time a change was proposed which aimed at harnessing a branch of art or science to the serving of the interests of the people in greater numbers, the same "objectors" would hesitate, fearing lest the "inviolable" principles of the old "system of thought" should be hurt. To revolutionize our people's way of thinking will, therefore, be a long standing, perseverant, systematic, self-consistent, continuous, and energetic undertaking.

Why will it take time to carry out that revolution in our country? First, because we have lived too long under French domination. French colonial rule had gone a long way in turning nearly all of us into passive-minded men whose chief business in life was to serve the enslaving purposes of the imperialists. The whole French-imposed education was spearheaded toward a unique goal: to turn each Vietnamese into a docile servant completely void of all initiative, of all critical sense, and standing aloof from realities. Besides, French education even now is being regarded as lagging far behind that of other progressive nations. The impact of French education upon the thought and deeds of such generations as had studied longest under the French rule was great and forcible.

Secondly, the main feature of Vietnam society was the absence of almost all industries. Townspeople were but a handful as compared with the rural population. Furthermore, the major part of the urban population was made up of civil servants, small tradespeople, and small craftsmen. The remaining 90% of the population lived on agriculture. And as most peasant and farm laborers live far apart, and since collective life was unknown, they had no desire for improving their routine work, and their insight lacked synthesis. In short, Vietnamese society was a petty bourgeois society, that is, an open ground in which bad habits could take root and develop.

Thirdly, the Viet Nam August Revolution was different from the "classical" revolutions which had taken place elsewhere in the world. The French Revolution of 1789, for one, had occurred at a time when capitalism was

Before the French Revolution, the culture and education of the French bourgeois class -- which came into being under the Renaissance -- had already developed into a powerful current with Descartes' theory of rationalism as its basis for thinking and with the 18th century encyclopaedists' teachings as its whetstone.

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The ultimate goal pursued by the bourgeois class of the French at the end of the 18th century was to seize power. But the French Revolution, while handing over the reins of government to the bourgeois also put a definite end to an era of economic, social, and cultural development. Such was not the case with the Viet Nam Revolution. Prior to August 1945, French administration was monopolistic, oppressive, and subservient from the respective points of view of economic, political, and cultural influences. Under such a regime, a new approach to nature and to life was the privilege of but a handful of underground revolutionaries. To seize power for the Viet Nam people was, in fact, but the first step toward an all-over transformation, economic, political, social, cultural, as well as military.

Only by assessing the true sense and direction of the August Revolution and by assuming the tasks it assigned to each of us, can we hope to materialize national independence and unity, to promote genuine democracy, and the lasting welfare of our people.

If, therefore, we are to build up a new nation and a new way of life, we must no longer use the old tool, that is, the old way of thinking. Education, an important part of national activity, must assume the task of furthering the transformation of thought. It cannot fulfill this hard but glorious task unless it takes steps to transform and to straighten itself first. In other words, it must proceed to inventory all the useless, backward, and decayed learning dispensed by the French-sponsored educational system. It must have the courage and means necessary to move over the old educational value, to kick off all that is inadequate, and to retain and improve on all that may help to speed up the progress of the people.

Fourthly, the Viet Nam revolution was a people's revolution having the people as its motivating power; the sovereignty it restored was also the people's sovereignty. The background of this revolution was, therefore, full of teaching, and it was apt to catapult the march of events in our country. The results obtained within a given period of time in the present war of resistance, in a given branch of activity, are quickly overtaken and outrun by realities. Thus it came about that the achievements recorded were unable to meet the demands of the people which increase daily both in number and in quality. A convincing evidence may be drawn here from our wartime education. Compared with the year 1947, the number of schools, pupils, and teachers in 1948 was many times greater and yet the movement for study among the people and the youth now working in public services, people's organizations, and the army has developed to such an extent that the education ministry once wondered how to meet all these demands. The number of books, newspapers, and publications is much greater today than ever before, since each war zone is having its own paper mills and book shops, and yet reading materials have so far proved insufficient. Three years ago, people would be peeved at the sight of old folk above 60 years of age going to school. Today anti-illiteracy courses in many villages are attracting hundreds of old men and women, not a few of them above 80 or 90 years of age. After completing the anti-illiteracy courses, people insist upon continuing to learn.

With regard to the spirit of today's education, a momentous change has also been recorded. Two or three years ago professors or teachers still could allow themselves to teach history or geography out of old text-books along the old confused line. Today the thing is unfeasible. High school

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pupils both of the middle and upper degrees who are daily watching the march of events are looking upon things and life with a new eye. The thirst for a new knowledge is permeating their minds as the influx of sap from the people is increasingly felt among the younger generations.

It is plain, therefore, that the need for a transformation of thought has become imperious and that the failure to meet it may cause the people to lag far behind the revolutionizing realities which are racing forward like a tidal wave.

II. - TRAINING OF NEW PERSONNEL:

Generally speaking, all the personnel working in public services under French domination were uniquely trained to be obedient executors of the masters' orders but not leading cadres. Even at the higher levels of the administrative ladder, Indochinese officials of equal positions to the French had to note bitterly to their French "colleagues".

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since we must personally take up the task of running our sovereign state. Under the new regime each official must be an agent of the people's government whose policy he must carry out to the full. This calls for a new, unclouded idea of our daily tasks, duties, and responsibilities. Today the old discrimination between the chiefs, the clerks, the "orderlies", and the "coolies" has completely disappeared from all government services. There are only colleagues and collaborators each having his own duties and responsibilities. The division into hierarchical levels is only designed to deal out works according to each one's abilities and responsibilities. This does not mean lack of discipline but instead that discipline is priced higher than it ever was before, that the old "automatic", soulless discipline which used to be maintained by grim sanctions, threats, or display of authority must be ruled out and superseded by a self-conscious and self-convincing discipline.

Today the responsibilities shouldered by all public officials -- whatever their stands and positions -- are heavy. It may be comforting in this connection to recall President Ho Chi Minh's words which dated back from before the start of the war, when he underlined the responsibilities and also appreciated the dignity of government officials: "The administrative machine", he said, "is just like a clock. The government is like the dial; its personnel is like the wheels inside. The dial is the only part of the clock to be seen at first glance. But, in fact, if the hands turn unceasingly, it is thanks to the wheels inside."

Years ago many officials had worked often ostentatiously only from fear of the "chief" fear of missing their promotion or of being fired by the "boss"; or if they did not want either to toil or to be dismissed, they would resort to bribery. Today our government officials are not working out of fear of anybody's "authority" but instead because they want to carry out to the full the tasks entrusted to them by the government.

Thus the foremost task to be carried out by educationists of the new school in training new government personnel is to clear out the old bureaucratic spirit and habits.

Years ago officials were the class of people on whom French pressure was the heaviest and readiest because they depended on the bosses for their own subsistence, and because they had purposely been trained as obedient servants.

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If, therefore, they chanced to witness or to be submitted themselves to unfair treatment or humiliating oppression on the part of the rulers, they could only smart under their superiors' rebuffs without any other means of redress or revolt.

Today government officials are the living embodiment of national honor and dignity and, therefore, could not easily be oppressed or bribed either by imperialists or traitors. Why? Because our lives and the lives of dear ones and the fate of our entire people no longer depend upon the landgrabbers' whims. Each official must, therefore, prove himself to be a fervent patriot, must look upon the prospect of losing national independence as something humiliating and revolting and must steel and bolster the will to fight and exterminate the aggressors and their lackeys.

Next, the new officials, whether they be working in the administrative, technical, or social services, must keep close contacts with the people as a whole. Years ago the imperialists would either stuff the youth and the intellectuals with the idea that they were a separate class, the highest in society, the "elite", or would wean them from inquiring - even out of curiosity - into other branches of activity than the one in which they were serving. The new personnel must bear in mind that only by linking up their own activities with those of the people can they succeed in increasing the efficiency of their works. Intellectuals, workers, though playing a prominent part in national life, are only a part of the people. Indeed the building up of a new society will not be possible without the participation of the intellectual workers. On the other hand, without the activities of other social classes the intellectuals cannot hope to achieve anything worthwhile. This leads us to consider the interdependence between theoretical learning and actual realization. Social activities must be based on and guided by well framed theories. Conversely, social activities must serve as fountain heads of theoretical reasoning.

The task of the new education in this respect will be to train our personnel to think and act according to the activities and way of life of the whole people.

Lastly, the spirit presiding over the training of new personnel must materialize in the will for progress of officials holding some leading positions in government services. These people must constantly inquire and study in order to improve both their critical sense and their working . . .
over their desks from dawn till dark and follow stubbornly the same old stiff methods of working which, even though they were applied conscientiously, cannot push ahead the global work of the community or of the nation.

Office work under French rule which was executive in nature could not encourage or stimulate the officials. Today the nature of office work makes it possible for officials to go continuously forward. Thus having a clear conscience of their own responsibilities, knowing themselves to be holding a definite position in the struggle for national emancipation, officials will be able to, and must of necessity, go ahead if they constantly interweave their daily life and activities with those of the people at large.

III. - BUILDING A NEW CULTURE OF THE PEOPLE:

Education is the foundation stone of cultural life and activities. First, because before entering any definite branch of culture - science, philosophy,

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art, etc., the intellectual workers must pass through the school of the campus. Next the works being done by most officials in the various branches of culture are closely connected with education. A large number of scientific workers, engineers, artists, philosophers, etc., are teaching either in the universities or the high school; or their works are being diffused as text-books.

The prominent role of education consists at the same time in propagating and furthering knowledge of all branches of culture and in pooling the knowledge imparted by each separate branch. Besides, the continuous intercourse between education and culture is not mechanical or passive but vivid, dynamic, and constructive. It is the synthesis of natural and social sciences which spring up from the practical life of the people.

The nature and role of education being thus defined, we must look upon such theories as "education must remain neutral", "science must stand above all else", "art for art's sake", "culture must not mingle with trivial life", etc., as mere sophisms.

The so-called aloofness and insulation of culture and education were but a piece of falsehood and deceit, because they never really existed anywhere in the world since class society came into being. How indeed can we speak of "neutrality" or "non-interference" in education when in all the schools and universities of western Europe and America materialism has been ruled out as a part of modern philosophy as a philosophical theory? Can science really "stand high above all else" when in the same western European countries the theory of evolution of species thought out by Darwin had been kept in cold storage by all government schools for many decades?

How can we presently speak of a "neutral education" when pupils in all the schools under French rule were taught for half a century that the leaders of the Tayson movement were "bandit chiefs", that De Tham was himself a "rebel", that France's conquest of Indochina had been motivated by the persecution of Christian missionaries, that the French were exporting their "civilization" to our country, etc.?

How can we speak of a "neutral education" when the record of the last hundred years of Viet Nam history - from the beginning of French rule up to the August Revolution - had been replaced in official text books by voluble appraisals of "French protection" and by slanderous abuses against our national heroes?

How can we speak of science and culture as "standing high above all else" as "not mingled with trivial life" when in all the former Hitlerite laboratories and alike in today's America scientists were and still are making atomic bombs and growing bacteria for the warmongers to exterminate mankind, while other so-called scientists or thinkers were working out such theories as the superiority of the German race over other races or the omnipotence of the United States?

Other people may say: "Science, culture, and the like have no national frontiers, since they only know and serve humanity." Now this theory which apparently purports to be humanitarian is, in fact, inhuman and criminal because it may cause some so-called "scientific workers" to jump over into the enemy's camp and shout back, "We are serving humanity because we are tending the sick or making weapons for people to fight. The fact that the people we are serving happen to be the French imperialists themselves does not change anything."

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No, that's a lie! For self-respecting scientists and other men of culture only serve a civilized and progressive humanity, one that sets as its goal the building up of a bright future, of an untrammelled and happy life. They are not to serve a handful of greedy and brutal men whose sole aim and concern are to exploit, oppress, and slay the peoples of their own countries; of others, to destroy peace, to pile their fortunes upon the sweat and blood of other people, and to indulge in revels and luxury while half main advance.

The task awaiting any new democratic education is, therefore, to help in building a national culture, a culture of the people and for the people. Such a culture is by no means colorless, cleansed of all political hues and tints, a "neutral culture". Such a culture is impossible because it is unreal. What people were wont to call "pure reason" was only the expression of the discontented souls of a handful of artists or thinkers seeking to console their individualism by rambling into the nothingness, the "bore some realities" of life.

This discontent was tolerable under a decaying capitalist regime, a moment when scientists, artists, and writers, disgusted with the disintegrated bourgeois culture, were yet unable to find out the motivating power capable of bringing forth a new culture for humanity.

In our country today, while the seeds of that inchoate culture which were sprouting at the time of the August Revolution are blooming under the cross-fire of the war for national liberation, such "runaway" theories and ideas must be held as reactionary and as indicative of their originators' desire to shun their duties as citizens. The new education must lead up to a culture deeply concerned with the realities of life and with the very fate of the nation.

Neither should the new culture be a mere rehash or rehearsal of all the teachings or experiences imparted by previous generations and by foreign peoples. Instead we must digest all the knowledge of science, art, and thought made available by our forerunners and then weld up a new and synthetic knowledge of our own. The new culture our people are craving for must be able not only to explain but also to transform nature, not only to record, but also to improve and refine human reason, sense, and sensibility.

In brief, the new democratic education must be so framed as to be able to build a culture intermingled with the people's daily life, drawing its inspiration from the people, and, above all, to transform and improve the people's living conditions.

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PRINCIPLES OF THE NEW DEMOCRATIC EDUCATION

We have said in the foregoing that the primary aim of the new democratic education is to bring the people as a whole, and especially the younger generation, a new way of thinking, a new understanding and a new spirit, so that they may take an active and useful part in the war of resistance and the national reconstruction.

The lines along which the new education should go in order to attain these goals must be at once firm and flexible. The new education must lay heavy stress on and coordinate the trend and the laws of the general evolution of the world on the one hand, and the specific laws ruling over the evolution of our people at the present stage of our history on the other hand.

The dialectic coordination of these two factors: people and mankind, is an outstanding feature of the new democratic regime.

The education which best fits and symbolizes the spirit of the new democracy - because it leads straight up to the foregoing goals - must be at once national (of the people), scientific and popular (for the many). But how are we to apply these three principles to culture and education?

I. - A NATIONAL EDUCATION

A. The study of history stirs and tempers nationalism.

First, a national education is one which undertakes to impress the mind of the youth with a clear and dignified idea of the origins of their own peoples; to acquaint them thoroughly with the national traditions, the sufferings and the glories of previous generations in their struggle for national independence and freedom; stir in them a deep love for the people and an undiluted faith in the strength and power of the people.

Next it must tell the young generations the present hour and open before them a vista of the brilliant and unlimited progress of the people in the future.

Having these basic principles in mind the young man who makes his "debut" in society - whatever his specialities and abilities - will not lose sight of his main duty which is to serve the common interests of the people.

In this respect we may rightly regard the history of Viet Nam as a decisive factor in the rejuvenation of the mind and spirit of our youth.

Due to our ignorance of the leading role of the study of history in the educational scheme as a whole, the teaching of history up to now has not been seriously attended to and has not as yet a dignified place in our schools.

Once we have come to a clearer idea of the vital role of history in the new education, we must tackle the question of how to bring about a scientific conception to ensure a scientific teaching and writing of history. In this connection the history books handed down to us by the French administration must be scrapped. Much or little, these textbooks

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had stamped the minds of the elder generations with two damaging ideas; first, they killed the confidence of the elder generations in and their respect of our people and denied it the status and dignity of a nation. The result was that many French educated people had fallen in for the enthralling culture of the Imperialists with such blindfoldness and self-oblivion that they finally relied on other people's help and knelt down before the might of foreign invaders and foreign aggressors.

Next, they sowed in the minds of the previous generations the seeds of a narrow-minded, racial discrimination with regard to neighboring people. A scientific conception of history is, therefore, necessary to both teachers and historians. Such conception cannot be based on any other theory than that of historical materialism. This doctrine enables the history students to respect and have confidence in their own people and prevents them from relapsing into narrow-minded racialism. History, if taught or recorded according to a scientific conception will show us the main trend of our people's advance throughout these It also will bear out the fact that our people have the strength and courage necessary to win a place in the history of nations and at the same time to line up with other nations in the same process of evolution, which means that without parting with its individualism and personality, it will continue to hold at intimate intercourse with other nations.

If we wish to bring out these characteristics of history - which are the expression of objective realities of truth itself - we must write and teach a history of the people, of the masses of people whose life and activities had led up to the momentous changes in the various stages; trends and of their influences upon the general progress of society.

In a word, in order to transform our national education and bring it into line with the spirit of the new democracy - which is embodied in the first place by the principle of nationalism - the place of honor in our schools must go to history.

And if we want to record an accurate and self-respecting history of Viet Nam in keeping with the scientific spirit, the first step to be taken is to organize a nucleus of researchers and writers of national history, that is, to create a historic research institute to be placed under the direction or sponsorship of the education ministry.

The creation of this organism is necessary because historic research has so far been the private concern of separate individuals which inevitably resulted in the subserving of the works done to the personal and arbitrary conceptions of the researchers themselves.

The Historic Researches Institute (which, incidentally, may be called Academy, Commission, Association, or any other names) provided that the work be done jointly by a group of researchers, and must not only collect material but also set the main lines and principles according to which history should be recorded.

A common line is necessary because a book of history must no longer be a passive and colorless record of past and bygone events or incidents. History.

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which has become a fullfledged science like other natural sciences, must be able to describe and explain the laws which preside over the general evolution of human society, and, in particular, over the development of each separate people. Collective research is, therefore, necessary and helpful.

B. National Language, an Instrument of Thought:

While the study of history is expected to revive the national consciousness of the people, the means by which the principle of nationalism in education must be expressed is the national language. It is an instrument for expressing, improving, and transforming the thought of the people. The history of other countries shows how deep the influence of national language has been upon the thought and national consciousness of the people.

Under French rule Viet Nam pupils were taught in the French language. Today pupils of all degrees and part of the students (law and teachers' training colleges) are taught in Viet Nam.

Generally speaking, however, the study and teaching of the national language in our schools have not yet received either a rightful place or a scientific basis. Now our national education cannot develop speedily unless it is conveyed through a rich, flourishing, and popular mother tongue. The study and teaching of Vietnamese as observed today show the following flaws:

1. The vocabulary used in natural and social sciences has not yet been unified or even fixed.
2. The choice of text-books old and new does not follow a definite line.
3. The teaching of literary works is done often with attention being paid uniquely to their forms and style, or to the proper meaning of words without due insistence upon the political or social significance of the works themselves.
4. There is no teaching of the history of Viet Nam literature. This is mainly due to the lack of a really valuable work of this kind.

To remedy these shortcomings and to speed up the progress of our education so that all Viet Nam pupils will be taught in their mother tongue in the near future - otherwise national education would be impossible - the second immediate step to be taken is to create a literary academy. This organization, which will either be placed under the direction of the education ministry or at least will keep in close contacts with it, will collect, translate, and comment on old and new literary works both of the writers and of the common people, and to write a history of Viet Nam literature. It will also study the literature of the East and of the West. Lastly, it will undertake to compile a Viet Nam dictionary.

Also in order to materialize the principle of nationalism, the new education among our upland minorities, we must complete in a most scientific way the of their native dialects. It may be noted here that the basis of this great work has already been laid by our education ministry after two years of constant effort. What remains to be done is merely to broaden and consolidate this foundation and to make it more scientific every day. This task also rests with the literary academy.

Now the creation of the literary academy, like that of the institute of historic research, cannot be delayed any longer.

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C. The Realities of National Life are the Fountain Head of the People's Culture and Education:

It is much to be regretted that we have so far been unable to assimilate available in our country by the realities of our daily life and by the long standing and many-sided struggle of our people.

This is a disease we have caught from the French-sponsored education, namely, the bookishness which keeps us away from surrounding realities.

The only way to cure this disease and to give our new education a truly national character is to go back to reality to try to grasp all the permanent or transient forms under which it manifests itself.

In the field of historic research, apart from the political and military changes recorded in French-censored books, we have not yet collected historic materials on the economic, social, and cultural life of past generations. Here some people may be heard pleading: "This shortcoming is inevitable because even if we were to turn upside down all the available books and documents we would not find more or better." To this we will readily reply that historic research cannot be based exclusively on old books and scripts, but also on ancient vestiges, on stories, popular songs and verses, and anything else that belongs to unrecorded history.

With regard to the history of mountain peoples, no materials have been collected. As regards the history of revolutionary movements, besides a few recent materials dealing only with the period under French rule, such momentous events as the peasant movement under the Nguyen dynasty (18th century), the peasant revolt like that led by the Tay Son brothers, have not inspired any close study or systematic and scientific research.

As far as literature is concerned, we have not yet studied or realized the huge treasure handed down to us by our forefathers. Take this thing called humanism, for instance; here as elsewhere the only data available were drawn from the French books themselves. Nothing was said or written about the real Vietnamese humanism which had flourished on the background of Viet Nam realities in the past centuries during the struggles of our intellectual elite against Vietnamese feudalism or foreign aggression. This humanism can readily be found in the works by Han Thuyen, General Tran hung Dao, Nguyen Trai; in such masterpieces as Kimvankieu, Chinhphungam, Tancungoan; in the poem by Le quy Don, Hoxuanhuong, Nguyencongtru, Caobaquat, Turuong; in such eloquent prose writings as "funeral orations in memory of the war dead."

The same Vietnamese humanism is also percolating through our popular philosophy with its specifically Vietnamese spirit and its own means of expression, which are the popular songs, the "comparisons", the nursery rhymes, the proverbs and sayings, the humoristic stories by Trangquynh, etc.

In the matter of geography, the too simplest books written by colonialist authors for government schools under French rule were unable, or, rather made it a point not to show us the picturesque and inspiring landscape which made up the natural beauty of our land. As a matter of economic geography, we knew nearly nothing about the inexhaustible mineral woodland, agricultural and sub-marines resources of our country. With regard to human geography, we did not know all about the races inhabiting the Viet Nam territory, their various social and economic institutions, their manners and traditions, their culture and languages, etc....

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In the domain of philosophy we only referred to western thinkers when commenting on the old schools of thought. We did not strive to study and comment from a new standpoint on the philosophical doctrines of the East like Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism, which had for many thousand years dominated the thought of half of mankind, including our own people, and this stamp is still fairly visible among men of our generation.

In the domain of political economy nobody has ever paid serious attention to such important problems as the land tenure in ancient Viet Nam, the Asian methods of production which prevailed in our feudalistic economy and are still prevailing in the coastal and upland areas of Viet Nam.

It is also to be regretted that research in geology, natural sciences, agriculture, medicine, and other sciences have not yet made full use of materials available in large amount in our country.

Indeed we cannot overnight use all the materials drawn from daily realities however ready they may be. This is a gigantic, longstanding, continuous, and systematic process. The first step to be taken in this direction is just to pave the way for future research. A radical and definite change of direction is required if we want to give our national culture and education a popular and national basis. Like history and literature, other natural and social sciences must also benefit from a center of study and a basis for thought and analysis.

In short, a people's education must follow principles:

1. To frame the national consciousness of the people by the study of national history.
2.
3. To give our education a truly national character by checking upon the people's studies and realization on the daily and manysided realities of national life.

Without these 3 principles, which are bound up together, no really national education hopes to survive.

II. - A SCIENTIFIC EDUCATION:

A scientific culture is not exactly one in which natural sciences hold the first place or play the leading role. "Scientific" means anything that is opposed to the passive spirit, to the conception of eternal nature, and, in history, to the brainstuffing methods, to the rote-learning of such learnings and teachings as would impede human progress. "Scientific" also means all that is opposed to bookishness, to the hoarding of a knowledge not readily utilizable. Science is the reflection of reality having realities as its criteria; it constantly changes and improves according to the development of realities, and aims at the realization of the motto, "Study and Act"; in brief, a scientific education is an instrument for freeing the people from the shackles of thought.

Such an education is obviously incompatible with the principles laid down by the imperialist educationists. The main defects of the French-sponsored education were:

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1. Its enslaving character.
2. It turned men into obedient machines.
3. It was cumbersome and slow because its principles remain unchanged for many decades.
4. It did not come into touch with realities. It maintained a wide gap between study and action.
5. It lacked a serious civic education.

In short, the education imposed upon our people by the French imperialists was antiscientific, since it was aimed at the complete subservience of our nation.

The main task ahead of a new democratic education must, therefore, be:

First, to wipe out once and for all the vestiges of the old imperialist education which still can be found in our program, textbooks and teaching methods and in the organization of school and study.

Those vestiges cannot be cleared up overnight by a number of government decrees or decisions. This work is bound up with the transformation of thought which is a long-standing and continuous undertaking.

Such work requires an efficient coordination of the administrative and educational systems, and the training of a new teaching personnel, especially for primary and high schools, has a decisive importance. The personnel problem must be solved by:

1. Re-educating old teachers.
2. Training new teachers.

While the training of new teachers will be taken up by the newly created training college, the re-education of old personnel can go to the teachers' union, which, if it is reorganized, can do fine things in this organization of the professional and political studies of the teachers.

Second, the new scientific education must keep in close contact with, and reflect the life of the people. This task has partly been outlined in the principle of nationalism in education.

All the learning imparted to pupils in natural and social sciences must be based on the daily realities of national life in Viet Nam. However, to reflect the life of the people is not to grasp and describe dispassionately the various aspects under which it manifests itself. A scientific education must be a motivating power capable of furthering the progress of society in all directions. It must bring about the "cohesion between knowledge and action" which is the primary aim of any progressive education, because a new culture and education based on a progressive understanding of nature and human life must not only enable the people to learn, but also to transform and improve their living conditions.

Third, a new and scientific education must be dynamic, that is, it must constantly adjust itself to the progress of the people to natural and social realities both at home and in the world. The gravest and most hazardous disease suffered by the French-sponsored education is that it remains unchanged for many decades. French primary education is now nearly the same

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as it was 60 years ago when electricity, wireless, telegraph, and atomic energy were still to be discovered. And yet the ruling classes in France have not as yet taken any step toward revising the spirit and basis of the old education. In French secondary schools a lot of time is being wasted on fancy matters having no practical interest. As regards university students, they are spending long years mostly on theoretical studies. To top it all, there are as yet unsettled conflicts the regime of favoritism still prevailing in that country.

Such rottenness and depravity, no doubt, will not be tolerated in our new education.

What does "Dynamism" in education mean? A dynamic education and society in the safe of the people [sic] and of the world but also lays particular stress on the needs of the nation at each definite stage of its history. For instance, the new education, in order to be scientific, must cope with the war of resistance. Furthermore, wartime education itself must be divided into several stages corresponding to the different phases of the resistance. The main task to be fulfilled by wartime education at the stage of preparation for the general counter-offensive must not be the same as in other phases. It will not be enough to teach pupils general notions on politics or to tell them about their duties as citizens of a country at war or give them some additional military training.

The same rule applies as well to the teaching of natural and social sciences which must aim at meeting the needs of the people and the army in their present fight for freedom.

Indeed the framing of such progress is a great work which requires the close cooperation between all branches of education and other branches of national activity. For instance, if the wartime teaching of history is to center around the struggles against foreign aggression both in Viet Nam and in other countries, historians are not in a position to do the work fruitfully unless they be assisted by revolutionary organizations or personalities.

Fourth, a new and scientific education must enable the energy and ability of the youth to develop harmoniously. To this effect, two erroneous tendencies must be avoided:

1. To attach equal importance to all the matters taught. This method sacrifices thoroughness of knowledge to its shallow generality. The opposite tendency would be to allow the young pupils to take too keen an interest in a given matter at the expense of others. In progressive countries pupils are taught according to their age and degree of intelligence. Thus before entering the universities, the young men have not only a sound knowledge of all matters but also a deepfelt predilection for a definite art or science. This result is obtained through a gradual process of guidance. After class or on holidays, primary school pupils go to the children's cultural institutes, the children's gardens, or other places where sciences and arts are taught to them in a simplified manner under the guise of attractive games and toys. Meanwhile, youths from the high schools and universities, as well as government officials and employees, go to their own clubs where, in addition to routine entertainment, they can study literature, music, singing, theater, painting, mechanics, or electricity, etc; or they are taught to drive and repair motor vehicles, combines, and tractors; or they take lessons in gymnastics, skiing, and skating; or they play soccer and tennis, etc.

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In our country such a large scale organization is for the time being impossible. However, we can guide and direct children and the youth in realistic studies which may prove helpful to the war of resistance.

Fifth, the new education must underline the all-embracing and concrete task of inspection officials. Under the French rule the "inspectors" only concern after each visit to a school was just to decide on the promotion of the teachers. As regards experiences in the art of teaching, they are not only kept away from the teaching body as a whole, but also from the teachers of the same school and the same classes.

In the new democratic education the intercourse between inspectors and the inspected must be based on new principles. The inspectors must not solely compare the teachers with one another with a view to promoting or "firing" them, but, instead they must confront and analyze the works done by teachers and pupils themselves. Of course, the question of promotion has its own import; however, it must be subordinated to the main task which is the progress of education which depends largely on both teachers and pupils. The faulty idea of inspection work entails the faulty conception of human dignity and honor. The inspectors must go to school to gather experience to study and to help improve the works of the teachers. In their turn, teachers must look upon inspectors as their guides and helpful friends.

Furthermore, inspectors would not fulfill their tasks if their contacts were confined to individuals. They must gather and impart experiences to all the teachers on such occasions as teachers' and progressors' sic conferences. They must condense the matters published in textbooks, education reviews, or magazines into principles and theories and make them known to the whole teaching body.

Sixth, a scientific education must develop the critical spirit and the intellectual curiosity of the pupils. In this respect, teaching

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The most efficient way to develop the pupil's critical spirit is to link up theoretical learning and practical experiment, to realize the cohesion and unity between study and action. The very criterion of science is its faithfulness to life and to realities. We must, therefore, revise our educational programs, especially those concerning such degrees as would not readily harbor the brainstuffing and bookish methods. For instance, we must make an all-over change of the program of law study such as it was followed by the former French-sponsored university or by the law colleges in France. We must teach the students the fundamental economic, social, and political cause which led up to the framing of the legal system of each country.

Law students of the first degree must be taught the history of philosophy, political economy, and general political notions before they will climb up to the second degree. Provided with these notions they will have a critical spirit keen enough to be able to understand the old legal systems. Only then will they be allowed to handle law books. At the third degree, students can be taught to "create", that is, to take part in the framing of legal codes according to the spirit and extent of the people's progress.

Last, the new and scientific education must ensure a close intercourse and coordination between different branches of science on the one hand, and between sciences and other social activities on the other hand. Law students, for instance, must be acquainted with the propaganda movement among the people because this movement is bound up with many other activities which must all be mirrored in jurisdiction. The land rent reduction, for instance, is a

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typical question which is likely to interest all practical-minded students. On their part, medical students must pay attention to the reconstruction of collective villages. Students of political economy must be familiar with the workers' and peasants' movements, etc.

In short, a new democratic and scientific education must follow up realities, that is, the everyday life of the people, not only in order to help them understand but also modify nature and society and subsequently improve their living conditions.

III. - AN EDUCATION FOR THE GREAT MASSES:

When we say, "Our national education, like our national culture must be popularized", some people may object: "Why on earth should we do it? We would simply lower the standard and value of education by spreading it out to the masses."

To this we will reply: "That has absolutely nothing to do with popularization." The culture and education prevailing under the colonialists, feudalists, and capitalists, and other regimes which tolerated or encouraged the exploitation of man by man, were the privilege of a social minority, of those who defended the interest of the ruling classes. Under socialism - of which the new democracy is but a transitory stage - culture and education are no longer the private property or concern of a few wealthy or socially high ranking people. They must become the joy and business of the great masses of the people, which is the first step toward bridging the gap between manual and intellectual workers and towards building up a society in which class antagonism no longer exists. With the liquidation of the private property regime, differences between social classes in the intellectual sphere will die gradually.

To popularize education under the new democratic regime only means to pave the way to the admission of the great masses of the people into the higher spheres of learning and thought from which they have been and still are barred by the regimes of oppression and exploitation.

What are thought, culture, and science but the syntheses of experiences gathered from the process of man's struggle against nature and his fight for freedom, equality and happiness? What was the mainstay of that struggle but the working people themselves who had for so many centuries piled up all the material and moral treasures of humanity, who had turned forward the wheels of history? Was it not a staggering fact that the men who have built up the huge and beautiful castle in which we have been living all these centuries are now forbidden its entrance and are standing outside looking bitterly or wrathfully at the work they have done? And yet this state of things still prevails under the regimes of oppression and exploitation.

It behooves the new democratic revolution to wipe out such preposterous conditions of national culture and education. Only when their closed doors have been flung wide open to the great masses of the people, will science, art, and thought really be unfettered and will develop with a strength hitherto unknown in history. Why? Because nobody can and impetus than these who have themselves laid down the basis of these achievements. Take, for instance, the Stakhanovitch movement which was launched throughout the Soviet Union in 1935. As Stalin has put it, this movement had "raised the workers up to the level of the engineer". Switching over to other countries, one may ask: "Should not the victories of the Red Army over German nazism and of the Chinese Liberation forces over the . . . be rightly regarded as epoch-making victories of human science and knowledge themselves?"

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Back to our country, we can readily see that no comparison is possible between what our people know today and what they knew before the August Revolution or the start of the war. Four years ago, the number of Viet Nam who could fire a rifle shot - let alone military "strategy" - was tiny. Today there are scarcely any regulars, guerrillas, or militia who have not at one time or another fired a shot or killed a "French". They all have a sizable knowledge of military tactics and strategy. Any young woman from the remotest village is familiar with collective life, understands why the "more production" campaign has been launched and how it must be carried out. Any old fisherman on the Clear River (tributary of the Red River watering Tuyenquang 70 miles northwest of Hanoi) knows that the patriotic emulation movement was an evidence of President Ho Chi Minh's clear-sighted policy. Not a few arms factory workers can make mortars or bazookas, while many peasants can make hand grenades and explosives. Nearly all five-year-olds can tell an "old lady" (French one engined plane) making supply or reconnaissance flights from a fighter plane whose only business is to kill and scare. A young woman at the stern of a sampan may be heard telling another woman at the bow about the "value" of "victory will be the outcome of long standing resistance". (By Truongchinh) A small village in Sontay province, North Viet Nam, has defeated at least a score of French onslaughts.) An old woman selling tea on the roadside was telling you she hated the "white" Chinese who came here some years ago to bore and worry our people, but that she rejoiced over the recent Red victories.

Now, are not the "things known" which we daily see or hear among the mud covered and ragged group of the Viet Nam people, the very rudiments - naive and simplified indeed - of what we call science, art, or thought, and which are being "popularized" by the war of resistance?

To serve the great masses of the people, to promote and diffuse all our manifold human knowledge among the people, to help them to clamber up into the higher spheres of science, art, and thought and grasp the invisible but delectable laws which underlie the evolution of nature and which can shift the whole of mankind from the era of darkness and slavery into that of light and liberty: such is the primary task and concern of a culture and education for the many.

It may be recalled here that the first step we have made toward the realization of an education for the many - which was also a great deal of progress not only from our national point of view, but also in the eyes of any other nation in the world - was the anti-illiteracy campaign. This movement, which was initiated by President Ho Chi Minh and the people's organizations after the August Revolution, has developed to an incredible extent ever since the war began.

It is impossible, for the time being, to tell in an accurate manner the heroic sacrifices made by our people in the cultural field with a view to enabling millions of men, women, and children, to squeeze the first implement of knowledge which leads to the comprehension and ultimately to the transformation of the universe.

While bowing in silent respect before the memory of the gallant national guard guerrilla fighters and militia who have fallen, we cannot forget to pay a glorious tribute to the unknown heroes, the promoters of the anti-illiteracy movement and the countless teachers who have dedicated their lives to the building up, amid the turmoil of the war, of a culture for the people and for the many, a culture destined to be part and parcel of the progressive culture of the world.

The next step is to create special popular courses to follow up anti-illiteracy classes. To raise nearly ten million of the new literate people to primary level within a short space of time will be the gigantic and glorious task before the people's education service and personnel.

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The education dispensed to primary school pupils is one thing; the primary learning to be given to graduates of the anti-illiteracy courses is another. As far as the latter are concerned, serious attention must be paid to the age, living conditions, and social standing of the pupils. Such an education must lean strongly on realities, and the teaching of sciences, history, geography, etc., must be shorn of all its ornaments.

.....
The work must be done definitely so as to give "popular education" pupils about the same standard as that of public primary schools.

To end illiteracy and to promote the people's primary education are the first tasks to be fulfilled by the new education "for the many".

The second task is to enable all children of school age - both from the countryside and from the towns - to attend school regardless of wealth and according to the slogan "a preparatory school for each village". To this end, the government, the public services, and the people's organizations will grant scholarships to poor children in order to help them to buy school supplies. It was with this aim in mind that the "association for the protection of poor pupils" has been created.

Another auxiliary but no less important task is to enable parents to study or take part in social works, such as the "more production" movement. Many village women are missing the opportunity to learn simply because they have too many children. Often children are unable to attend school or even study at home because they have to take care of their younger brothers or sisters. To face this situation, nursery classes must be set up on a nationwide scale in which women of all walks of life must take part. These women will look after all the children under school age in order to give parents enough leisure to attend school or study at home.

The third task of a new "education for the many" is to cut down the high school program and make it more realistic so as to bring the present seven years' terms down to five, or, at most, six years. This will be the more feasible as high school pupils are now learning in their mother tongue. We should no longer follow French education which requires at least twelve years to complete primary and high school courses. This is, no doubt, a great handicap for poor children who have to eke out an early livelihood.

The fourth task of an education for the great masses is to promote, encourage, and assist the self-teaching movement among the people, the army, the public services, and the peoples' organizations so as to enable every one - whatever his business - to learn and improve. After completing the regular courses, these self-taught people may, regardless of age, pass examinations similar to those in public schools. Those who have taken a fair share in the resistance will be favored at these examinations. We may recall in this connection the wrong ideas which occurred to some people with regard to the question of examination. According to these people, all examinations should be suppressed under our democratic regime because they are nothing but the vestiges of the enslaving education imposed on us by the French colonialists. We do not share this view. The aim of learning is knowledge, and the only way to measure our knowledge is to control, to examine, to stop it /sic/. Indeed, examinations under our democratic regime are not the same as they were under French rule. Under the French regime, examinations often were a "matter of luck", a source of injustice, and also a means for the graduates to earn their living or gain social positions. Under the democratic regime, examinations must be carried out by taking into account not only the candidates'

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knowledge, but also their abilities and the efforts they make throughout the school terms. The aim of democratic examinations is to set off the value of the knowledge. To "popularize" knowledge is not to underwrite its merits and quality, as some people may think, but, instead, it is to bring the knowledge of the many into line with that of the minority. In addition, the masses of the people must be assisted in catching up with and eventually in outdoing the minority in the field of knowledge both in quality and quantity.

Thus it is not the maintenance, but rather the suppression of examinations which is undemocratic, because it tends to erase the legitimate discriminations between the learned and the ignorant, between laborious pupils and sluggards.

Last, it behooves the popularized education to bring about a thorough shakeup at the higher degrees of education. The universities must help students to specialize, but the study of each specialty must be closely linked with the corresponding daily activities of the people. Just as a scientific education is based on the principle, "life is the criterion of scientific truth", the motto of an education "for the many" must be "the many are the originators of life and the fountain head of all knowledge." If there were no people, there would be no science. It is, therefore, impossible to think of science outside the daily activities of the people. The knowledge of agriculture acquired by a Vietnamese student from the former French-sponsored university would be useless if, in addition to the theories he had learned, he does not take into account the time-honored experiences gathered by millions of our predecessors; if he does not come close and inquire into the production conditions so as to enrich and vivify his which is at once national, scientific, and popular.

The best method of carrying out the foregoing tasks in a concrete and efficient manner is to bring the students into frequent contacts with the people in all fields of activity. The first step is to be taken by sending students to practice among and help the peasants during summer holidays or after completion of each definite course.

Another means to "popularize" education is to prevent divorce between the students and the people, between school and life. In other words, students and high school pupils must study politics and take part in political life. Besides attending courses on politics - which must be compulsory - they must get used to collective life and tackle social activities. Medical students, for instance, will go out into the countryside once in several months to propagate sanitation measures both by words and by deeds. Public works students will voluntarily build or repair roads, bridges, and river dykes. Would-be teachers will help in liquidating illiteracy, etc. There are many other things which students and pupils can do jointly, for instance, carrying out the campaign for "winter aid to combatants", helping peasants to build up new villages in place of those destroyed by the enemy, etc. In short, a strong students' movement must be launched and promoted. Such a task falls to the Viet Nam youth union and the Viet Nam students' association, which may seek the cooperation of the education ministry. At the present stage of preparation for the general counter-offensive, universities and high schools have the additional task of giving students and pupils an elementary military training and of encouraging them in joining the army.

With regard to the popularization of higher education, we must underline the democratic principles according to which the training of able men should be carried out during this transitory period when former specialists and technicians are scarce and when other people have not the degrees required to enter the universities. During this emergency period we must train a number of specialists and technicians to fill the vacant places which are increasing daily. We cannot do this without placing the interest of the nation high above anything else, without leaving aside all the narrow-minded ideas about specialistry etc which fit only the peacetime period. We want to stress here that during this transitory period, facilities must be

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accorded first to the lower cadres to pull themselves up, so to speak, and ascend to the higher levels, next, to those who have taken part in the revolutionary movements or have rendered distinguished services to the war of resistance, and, last, to women who will have to play an increasingly important part in national reconstruction. All those people should be admitted into the universities and technical schools with greater facilities than today.

These, we repeat, are only special measures called for ^{by} the circumstances. Later, when life will return to normal, when education will be carried on more harmoniously and thoroughly, the choice of cadres will be closer and consequently the educational standard will be higher. We shall need an ever-increasing number of more and more able technicians, engineers, medical doctors, painters, architects, professors, and others. We shall, and must have, such specialists.

Last, the opportunity to learn must be equal for all pupils and students. In brief, an education for the many must make all branches of knowledge and thought the common property of the entire people.

To endow the new democratic Viet Nam with a national, scientific, and popular education is tantamount to pulling down the whole fabric of the feudalistic and imperialistic education which still prevails in the countries of western Europe. Due to the development of the capitalist regime, that classical education has been for the past hundred years the springboard for imperialist powers to split up the world and bring it under their domination.

With the new democracy now gaining the upper hand in many countries of Europe and Asia, a new education and a new culture have come into being and are gathering momentum in these parts of the world. They are the authentic education and culture of the people, for the people, and by the people.

The education and culture of the people are, on the one hand, the legatee of the immortal intellectual treasures handed down by the most brilliant representatives of the past generations. On the other hand, they are being hammered into an extremely forcible weapon to liberate the people.

The capitalist countries of western Europe have constantly claimed Greek-Latin traditions to be the fountain-head of their own education and culture. This is true. These were originally instrumental in removing the shackles of a bookish and superstitious education. However, since the great masses of the people began to take part in political and social life, since the new democratic movement began to spread, the former torch-bearer role of western education and culture has dwindled to the vanishing point. They have become a tool for maintaining the oninous rule of a handful of capitalists and militarists, of western European and American monopolists who have been and are being caught red-handed in numberless crimes and social troubles, unemployment, economic crises, wars, etc., of which labor masses of the whole world and the weaker people are the main sufferers. This education and culture which has thus been used to slay and oppress mankind has become a road block to the progress of knowledge and thought.

Whatever may be the decaying thoughts and knowledge which the ruling classes have set up as the criteria of absolute truth in education with a view to perpetuating their modern slave regime, have been overridden by the gigantic tide of the new democratic movement which is hurtling throughout the world of today. This new historic movement has given

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rise to a new humanism which is the very crystallization of the most brilliant traditions of the thought and knowledge of the past, a humanism in keeping with the newest and most progressive ideals of the human race.

Under the leadership of President Ho Chi Minh, who is the living embodiment of the many-sided intelligence and finest virtues of the Viet Nam people, we will definitely succeed in building a new education going alongside the progress of both the nation and of the world.

F I N I S

"For a New Democratic Education"

by

Nguyen Khanh Toan, translated
from V. N. A.

July 25, 1949

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