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PRINT MEDIA IN THE PROCESS OF DEVELOPMENT IN VIETNAM

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I. GENERAL BACKGROUND

In Vietnam, print media has a long history of contribution to social development. It has helped the Vietnamese people to be aware of needed information and carry on their daily lives uninterrupted. This information ranges from economics, commerce, security, health, laws, farming know-how to the reports on the communal affairs, on the current situations of the country and the outside world. Due to the hard condition of climate and geography of Vietnam and the long struggles against foreign interventions, print media has played a vital role in uniting people to defend themselves against calamities both natural and man-inflicted.

Vietnamese print media is also seen as the protector of Vietnamese traditions and culture. There are some 5500 books written in Chinese (known as *Han Nom* in Vietnamese) and about some 23,000 works on literature inscribed on stone tablets.

In today's reforming process of Vietnam, print media continues to play an even more important role in the development of the country practically in all areas of activities. Vietnamese print media not only introduces Vietnamese people and country to the outside world but also helps Vietnamese people understand more about the cultures and the lives of the people of other countries, strengthening friendship co-operation between Vietnamese people and the rest of the world, particularly countries in ASEAN.

II. TYPES OF PRINT MEDIA:

On the basis of contents, forms of technological methods, periodicity and objectives print media can be classified as follows:

a. Book : further divided into :

- Sociology-politics
- Technology-science
- Vietnamese literature
- Translated literature
- Arts and culture
- Small children's literature
- Foreign literature
- Education books
- Philosophy
- Medicine

- History, etc...
- b. Newspaper :** comprising :
 - Daily newspaper
 - Weekly newspaper
 - Monthly newspaper
 - Two-every-week newspaper (2 a week)
 - Three-every-week newspaper (3 a week)
- c. Magazines :**
 - Monthly magazines
 - Fortnight magazines (2 every month)
 - Once-copy-every-2-month magazines
 - Once-copy-every-3-month magazines
- d. Bulletin**
- e. Periodical**
- f. Calendars**
- g. Others**
 - Maps
 - Postcards
 - Pictures, photos
 - Stamps (postal stamps)
 - Goods stamps, labels, etc.
 - Different kinds of papers

III. THE PROCESS OF DEVELOPMENT OF PRINT MEDIA

The development of print media in Vietnam, can be divided into the following phases/ periods:

1. Ancient Period
2. Period Between Feudalism and Colonialism
3. Revolution Period comprising the following sub-periods:
 - Sub-period between 1930-1945: Birth of Vietnamese Communist Party
 - Sub-period between 1945-1954: Creation of Vietnam Democratic Republic
 - Sub-period between 1954-1975: Temporary Division of Vietnam
 - Sub-period between 1975-1985: Unification of Vietnam
4. Renewal Period

1. Ancient Period :

Before print media came into existence, there were many means of communication. First, information is transmitted orally, meaning people communicated by using speech. In Vietnam of the past, people used rhythmic words to compose folk ballads, songs, old tales in order to be recited and learned by heart with relative ease. Ancient Vietnamese people also made trumpets from buffalo horns, conch shells and use them to transmit sound signals to distant areas. Other sound-making devices such as stone musical instruments, wooden fish, drums, gongs, bells, etc. were also used to pass on messages in sound. Writing gave Vietnamese people an important means communication. Ideas could now be translated into writings inscribed on bamboo sticks, wooden boards, stone tablets, thin laminated gold (known as book gold). Writing system was also used to record Buddhist sutras in the pagodas, to relate the biographies of tutelary gods in family trees giving the family origin, names and ages of family members in the family register. The family records of the poor were made on either bamboo or wooden board while those of the well-to-do were on copper, silver and those of the king on gold. Writings on stone tablets have done much to transmit information from generation to generation.

Print media was introduced rather early in Vietnam. Before the third century Vietnamese people already knew how to make paper and also how to print books. As the record from the ancient books reveals, in 284 Roman tradesmen bought some thirty thousand sheets of paper from Vietnamese paper makers to pay tribute to Chinese Emperor. Also, it has been known that the areas in the Red River delta especially in *Buoi and Lang* villages in Hanoi, traditional paper-making had been in practice for a long time.

2. Period Between Feudalism and Colonialism

From 207BC to 939AD, Vietnam had been victim of three invasions carried out by its northern neighbour, and subsequent foreign domination for a period of 1000 years. During the period of foreign influence, writing and learning activities had been seriously curtailed. Printing was costly and the number of printers and inscribing artists was continually diminishing. Printing and inscribing as a career were no longer held in high esteem and even at times were discouraged. For centuries on end Vietnam had had no names of printers and inscribers recorded or engraved for historical reference.

Towards the end of the 19th century, works by Vietnamese writers began to be published in French. After some two hundred years under the French colonial administration, *Quoc Ngu* (the present Vietnamese language) began to penetrate into the social life at all levels. At last the publication of Sino-Vietnamese classics was suspended. French Language and *Quoc Ngu* were crowned, creating a radical change in printing technique and the environment for newspapers and publications in Vietnam.

Up to this time, printing in Vietnam had vastly developed, due to the adoption of modern printing technology. Vietnam for the first time had the important tool -print media

which was to play a critically significant role in the struggle for the country's independence and re-unification of the Vietnamese people in the years ahead.

By the end of the 19th century, print media of Vietnam had reached a very high level of development with the construction of some famous modern printing houses.

The opening of the 20th century saw many dramatic changes in the socio-political scene of Vietnam. Having occupied three Indochinese countries, French colonialists were set to establish a new colonial empire for exploitation..

3. Revolution Period

It is recognised by Vietnamese historians that the role played by Vietnamese print media in the liberation movements is crucial to the victory against the colonialists and their successors. In this section, the development during the years of the revolution is described.

During 1930 and 1931, revolutionary movements, especially *XoViet - Nghe Tinh* movement, the party's newspapers and leaflets increasingly.

During 1936 to 1939, any publications of the Indochinese Democratic Front were regarded then as the official lines and forum of the Communist Party of Vietnam.

During the period of the Democratic Front, conferences of journalists were held on 27 March, 24 April of 1937 and on 27 August of 1939 in the Central, North and South Vietnam respectively. As a result, the press became even more consolidated than ever. The outbreak of World War II gave an excuse for the French Colonialists to bring back the oppressing measures on the Vietnamese again.

It is in a spirit of fairness that we devote our attention to the so-called open and legal press during this period. By open and legal press means newspapers that were approved and allowed to operate by the French Colonialists and the ruling clique, and nothing more. This category of newspapers was published for large circulation and formed the venue for the French Colonialists to advance their own interest. A scheme of penny-a-liners was opened for writers writing in support of colonialism, friendship between Vietnam and France. Typical writers included *Hoang Cao Khai, Nguyen Van Vinh, Pham Quynh* etc.

The number books published during that period was largest in 1935. were the largest was in 1935. Of 999 books published, 732 were in Vietnamese. other 172 in French; The number of volumes published was highest in 1939 (1,570,000 volumes)

The number of newspapers and magazines widely fluctuated. Most of them were short-lived. Only the newspapers that were financially supported by the French Colonialist tended to last longer.

With the advent of the August 1945 Victory for the liberation movements, Vietnam Democratic Republic came into being, harbingering a new epoch of independence and freedom. The revolutionists took the opportunity to build more publishing houses to

take part in the process of consolidating power. *Su That* publishing house and *Su That* newspapers were established on 5 December 1945.

The French Colonialists were far from giving up their colonial interest. *Ho Chi Minh* made a call for stepped-up resistance on 19 December 1946.

In temporarily occupied areas, the number of publications continued to increase. Besides, books with reactionary contents, there were progressive publications by patriots who supported *Ho Chi Minh* and the liberation movements.

The August 1954 Victory turned once clandestine press into open and legal press.

The Geneva Agreement on the restoration of peace in Vietnam was signed on 21 July 1954.

Decree 282 signed by President Ho on 11 December 1956 called for the restructuring and restoration of print media and in particular the press. Between the years of 1955 to 1957, there were 14 publishing houses in the North, 134 newspapers and magazines combined. During the period of restoration and development of the economy between the years of 1958 to 1960, the press in the North had made a great advance.. Approximately, 1.5 million copies of books were brought out in 1955, and 10 million in 1957, and 14 million in 1960. Altogether there were more than 2,000 books titles published in 1960.

By 1961 the press in Vietnam had reached a very high of development. The press and publishing houses were kept busy and worked in close collaboration with the government and the Party. To assist the Central Committee in studying, mapping out the master plan and advising the press and publishing houses, the Department of Publishing was established, while the Ministry of Culture and Information was entrusted with overseeing all publications and press activities.

According to statistics, between 1955 - 1978, the North produced 31,215 books titles with 529,384,562 copies. In 1975 alone, the corresponding figures were 2,905 and 41,618,000 respectively; compared to 572 and 5,568,626 for 1975. On the average, during that time, there were 1,500 book titles and 26,400,000 copies published annually or 0.8 copy per capita. In the North, there were about 300 printing houses, compared to 1,500 printing houses confined mainly in Sai Gon.

The victory in the spring of 1975 fulfilled the objective of the liberation movements under the leadership of Vietnamese Communist Party. Vietnam now independent and unified. found herself in a new revolutionary period-period of construction and protection of socialist homeland.

Immediately after the liberation, the publishing sector of Vietnam planned to print over 20 million books, millions cultural products of various kinds destined for the South.

During the renewal period the role of print media in Vietnam is to motivate the adaptation of the subsidised system to the market mechanism step by step. In parallel to the adaptation process, print media, would be fully allowed to play out their roles in support of economic, cultural and social development of the country. Such approach entails changes in contents and appearance of the print media. It can be generally stated that the ascent of

Vietnamese print media from 1986 up to the present time stemmed from policy on renewal forwarded by the Party, particularly the policy on the development of the Vietnamese press. The guidance of the Party is clearly spelled out in Decree 61/CT-TW, Decree 08/CT-TW on print media, in the resolution made during the 4th Central Committee of the Party (7th session) on culture, literature and art, in the "*Ordinance on copyright*" issued by the State, especially the "*Law on the Press*", "*Law on Publishing*", "*Civil Code*" in which there is "*Law on Copyright*" passed by the National Assembly that creates the legal framework for the activities of publishing, printing and distributing. (see ANNEX)

IV. NEW CHALLENGES

1. Material Base, Technical Capability, Hardware:

In view of the fact that considerable investment has been made on machines and equipment, expectations have been raised concerning the quality of printing compared with that of the countries in the region. At the same time, there are still many printing houses working with old machines manufactured several years ago. The level of technological capacity of the workers is somewhat below standard.. Only 20% of the workers can meet the requirement for development of modern printing technology. Most of the workers are in high-age group, unfamiliar with the use of computer-aid printing machines. The number of technicians in printing accounts for mere 7.4% of the total workforce; and the number of technicians specialising in printing technology, only 1% of the total workforce. Some printing houses have been refused the contracts to print high-quality products, due to either obsolete equipment and low-standard workmanship of workers, or the capability level of workers does not permit the use of modern equipment. Very few printing houses can produce pattern designs of high quality, while the electronic colour grading machines have not been fully utilised. Book production work still faces difficulty of cardboard binding, and only a few printing houses come near the solution.

Most of raw materials needed for printing industry are produced locally. The quality of paper pulp, consequently of the paper is still low, and cannot be used for printing high-quality products. Material bases such as equipment and supportive facilities for newspapers production in general and for journalists and editors in particular stand in need of upgrading. Professional competencies in foreign languages of journalists and editors working in globalized environment are still limited.

2. Management and Development of the Printing Industry

Clear and succinct formulation of development policy and overall planning for the printing industry of the whole sector and each locality seems to an urgent need. Management skills from bottom to top levels, such as the ability to respond to new situations, to analyse and to process information, to make managerial decisions constitute

new requirements for promotion and career advancement. Managers who are perplexed and confused by modern management and operation, have been slow in responding to the demands and the requirements for the modernisation of printing business.

3. Implementation of Legislation:

The laws on the Press, Publication, and Copyrights introduced not long ago, have effected in various degrees the lives of the Vietnamese people at all levels. People, organs, levels, industries, localities, organizations and social organizations have not understood fully Law articles, their rights and duties for publishing of information publications. Hence, in the process of operation, especially for journalistic, publishing, printing agencies have been found in breach to legislation. Among breaches, there are wilful cases that badly affect the content, quality and development of information publication, cause bad effect for the society, for the role and action of the publishing products. Of which, there are various breached such as: publishing books, newspapers stimulating sexuality, violence; disseminating superstition; lacking educational and aesthetic nature. Breaches of the Law on copyright such as: arbitrarily using foreign works. The copyright protection is new in Vietnam, it is concerned only by the society for some last years. Moreover, at present Vietnam has not signed bilateral agreement with any nation on copyright protection, and has not participated in Berne Convention. Therefore, in legal aspect we have not been subject to the international legislation.

But the policy of Vietnam state is always strengthening and widening multilateral and multidirectional relation with the countries in the world. However Vietnamese state shall show respect for international convention and practices. Therefore, Vietnam signed officially with USA the agreement on copyright and will proceed with participation in the Berne Convention.

V. FUTURE TRENDS

Vietnamese print media will continue to play an important role in the modernisation process of Vietnam as it did in the period of liberation movements. The government of Vietnam may be expected to give full support that Vietnamese print media needs. Future co-operation between the government and the print media may result in reorganisation of the entire printing sector -covering publishing, printing and distributing at both national and local levels. Book production and the operation of modern newspapers, should become more and more efficient, and the production time of books will be reduced. Training will be an on-going activity. Investment from private sectors could be on the rise, while the quality of the production i.e. books and newspapers will be vastly improved.

Larger printing plants will be built and equipped with the state-of-art technology and machines. Financing will be from state capital and credit. Special attention will be given to skilled technicians, modern technology, and management efficiency. Production

capacity of the whole printing industry should posit average annual growth rate of 10% in capacity, with book production accounting for 10-15%; newspaper, magazine, 10-15%; trademarks, packing, 40-50%; other papers, 30-40%. It is expected that by year 2000, approximately 200 billion printing pages will have been produced. The production policy is seen to be changing in the direction of increasing the proportion of high-value products with the average annual growth of 8% of production value. The, "offsetization" of printing process shall be speeded up, especially for mountainous areas and midlands to ensure that offset products shall account for 90% of net production value. Some modern engraving centres in some localities shall be further improved. Capital expenditure will be properly reserved for the modernisation of technological processes before and after printing.

Production of paper pulp and printing paper will be stepped up to supply around 80% of the annual paper consumption. Locally produced printing paper will be managed for efficient utilisation. While material imported will fulfil the demand that cannot be met by local manufacturers. Supply of high quality lacquer and printing ink will be ensured. Feasibility study on the construction of a plant to manufacture pre-coated offset printing plates will be made by a team of experts. Expansion of existing plants producing printing ink into producing other auxiliary materials such as rubber offset plates, rubber rollers etc. is a real possibility.

All these attempts are to ensure an annual growth of 16% in the number of books published, 11% in the number of editions, 10% in the number of printing pages. Before year 2000, book production should reach 16,000 books, corresponding to 33 billion printing pages; 216,300 editions. Cultural documents should increase by 11% in types, 11,4% in editions. By year 2000, the number of books per capita will reach 3,16 (excluding textbooks) with 0.74 editions per person; while cultural documents, 0,6 edition per person; newspaper and magazine, 5.4 editions per person.

Internet -the global communication network which has been in existence for 30 years or so, has been introduced into Vietnam only a few years ago. The government The construction of the national communication network to be connected to Internet has already been approved by the Vietnamese government. Toward this purpose, the Vietnamese Internet Sub-committee has been established and entrusted with the role of studying and formulating of a master plan. Meanwhile, Vietnamese post and telecommunication industry is already in the market to supply Internet services. The project worth more than four million US dollars is to complete the connection of the network to the Internet before the end of the year. In the future, the Internet will form an effective communication network that will enable Vietnamese to have wider access to information and publications in Vietnam than ever.

ANNEX

Organisation Structure

a. Publishing :

- Total number of publishing houses : 40 (central ,28; local,12)
- Labour force in publishing branch:1000 people : approximately 80% graduate with bachelors degree and higher.

b. Press

- Total number of press agencies : 449
- Daily Newspapers : 150 (central 58; local , 92)
- Magazines : 290 (central , 228; local ,62)
- News bulletins : 9
- Other categories of newspapers, magazines : 113 (Central ,59 ; Local ,54)
- Labour force employed by newspapers and magazines of different categories: approximate 7500 people.
- Total number of printing houses : 316 (Hanoi, 85; Ho Chi Minh city ,91). In addition, there are some private agencies engaged in screen printing, silk printing, and others.
- Total number of printing machines : 2,172 units
- Total number of workers : 17,207 people. plus 20,000 people in private-owned printing establishments.
- Total production capital : VND 534,307 million.
- Productivity : 145 billion printing pages per year.
- Imported printing machines from Germany, Japan, U.K like HEIDELBERG CERCURY manufactured in 1996 with capacity of 45.000 roles/minute, CROMOMAN manufactured in 1996, NEW LITHRANE in 1996, ROLAND, CROSSFIELD and SCITEX.

d. Book and newspaper distribution

Total number of book, newspapers distributing units: 110 (Culture-Information sector: 58, Educational sector: 52), 01 book, newspaper import-export company, and book, newspaper retailing shops in the whole country.

Material, Technological Bases :

Development in material and technological bases for printing enterprise in Vietnam has also made great strides. Up to now, there are 1,250 printing machines, including several newly manufactured machines that belong to modern generation of printing machines equipped with automatic controlling system. Change from type piece printing technology for to offset technology was adopted practically by the whole country. Printing can now be effected with high speed with few operators. Production output increases and the quality is better than ever More importantly, the production output has been able to keep pace with the ever-rising demand of the consumers. The possibility of

Vietnamese printing industry to join the printing market in the region and the world, has never been greater.

Training :

A network of the Intermediate and Vocational Schools of Printing Technology form the core of Training Units for the printing industry around the country. The Chemistry Department of Hanoi University of Technologies offers courses on printing technology. while some other colleges also run bachelor degree courses on printing and printing-related technology as part of preparation of manpower for Vietnam's printing industry..

Legal System :

The events of great importance for the cause of development of printing industry in Vietnam have led to the promulgation of the following legislatures:

- a. The Press-Law passed at the 6th session of the 8th National Assembly of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam on 28/1/1989. This Law includes 7 chapters, 31 Articles specifying the role, function, and right of the press, and penalties for violation. The Council of Ministers in the capacity of the Government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam stipulating in details the ways in which the Press Law is to be implemented.
- b. The Publishing Law approved at the 3rd session of the 9th National Assembly of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam on 7/7/1993. This Law includes 6 chapters, 45 Articles specifying the right and obligations of citizens and organisations concerning publishing, printing, distributing of printed materials, governmental control on publication, and penalties for violation. The Government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam also issues Decree No.79/CP dated 6/11/1993 stipulating in details the way the Publishing Laws is to be enforced.
- c. The Law on Copyright .This law deals with copy right in Chapter 1 and part 6 of "Intellectual property right and technological transfer of the Civil Law issued by the Socialist Republic of Vietnam and approved at the 8th session of the 9th National Assembly of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam on 28/10/1995.

The Law on Copyright includes 4 sections with 35 Articles from Articles 745 to 772 that specifying the author' right, and works' owner, the contract to use the works.

In addition, the Government issues Decree 76/CP dated 29/11/1996 which provides guidelines on the implementation of some provisions on the copyright dealt with in the Civil Law.

The promulgation of these Laws creates the legal framework for the development of printing enterprise in Vietnam.