

*INFORMATION***The conference of Vietnam literary and artistic theory and critique**

The Central Committee of Ideology and Culture and the Central Council of literary and artistic theory and critique held a national conference of literary and artistic theory and critique in Hanoi on March 2nd and 3rd 2007. The conference was attended by some leaders of the Ministry of Culture and Information, the Central Committee of Ideology and Culture, the Central Council of literary and artistic theory and critique, the National Committee of the Vietnamese Union of literary and artistic associations, the Vietnamese writers association, over 300 delegates who were artists, writers, literary and artistic researchers and critics in the entire country. Representatives of various committees, branches, news agencies and newspapers also attended the conference to issue reports about it. The conference was organized in order to evaluate the situation of literary and artistic theory and critique after 20 years of carrying out the renovation of the country. The conference also defined the task of literary and artistic theory and critique in the new situation originating from the viewpoints of the Vietnam Communist Party in the field of culture, literature and arts determined by the 5th session of the 8th Party Central Committee. The conference relied on the reality of literary and artistic life which has step by step consolidated, developed and perfected Marxist theory and President Ho Chi Minh's viewpoints concerning literature and arts in conformity

with the reality of life of the country in the new period of time. The conference received over 40 speeches of researchers in all fields of literature and arts: movies, music, stage, dance, photography, fine arts, architecture, folklore and literature...

The speeches brought forward a good deal of exchanged ideas and assessments of the situation of literary and artistic theory and critique after 20 years of carrying out the renovation of the country. The speeches pointed out positive aspects as well as weak points of the above work, the tendencies coming into existence in the literary and artistic life under the impact of the market mechanism and the process of integration and globalization. The speeches laid emphasis on urgent problems of contemporary literature and arts, such as the embarrassment and puzzle in face of too rapid and complicated happenings of an integrating society, the "rephrasing" between the manager and the composer. At the same time the speeches analyzed the profound reasons of the above actual state and defined the task of literary and artistic theory and critique in the new situation to contribute to orienting the composition. They put forward proper measures in order to make effective impact upon the activities and body of literary and artistic theorists, critics and composers.

Speaking at the conference, Mr Hữu Thịnh, standing member of the Central Council of literary and artistic theory and critique

remarked that the real state of literary and artistic critique now is becoming the concern of both the circle of researchers and composers on the one hand and the public showing appreciation of literature and arts on the other. The common opinion of many delegates participating in the conference including researchers, cultural activists, theorists, critics and composing artists of seven types of culture and arts was consentient with the speech by Professor Trần Trọng Đăng Đàn entitled “Extricating entanglement, stopping crisis”. They manifested their worry for the future of literary and artistic theory and critique of the country by many concrete petitions in their speeches.

In general the delegates assumed that it is time to organize the study in order to build a system of Vietnamese literary and artistic theory in the new period of time. It should inherit the achievements, which had been gained, receive with selection from the world literary and artistic theory and generalize new attainments in studying the operation and development of literature and arts.

Besides many delegates laid emphasis on the role of institutions which had organized and led the literary and artistic theory and critique. They should not only pay more attention to creating conditions for the development of literary and artistic theory and critique but also have an objective and scientific plan of which the role of the press and publication must be noticed.

After two days of straightforward and lively discussion the delegates at the conference asserted that it was necessary to continue to renew and build the Vietnamese literary and

artistic theory and critique to become modern, scientific, rich in humane quality, satisfying the need of development of the advanced culture, strongly permeated in national original character.

HIỀN LY

Scientific dialogue: Social changes and the development of the civil society in Vietnam

On February 28th 2006 the University of Social Sciences and Humanity (of Hanoi National University) coordinated with Konrad Adenauer Institute (of the Federal Republic of Germany) to organize a scientific dialogue in Hanoi: Social changes and the development of the civil society in Vietnam.

The participants in the dialogue comprised Dr. Thang Văn Phúc, Vice-Minister of the Interior, Secretary General of the Steering Committee of Administrative Reform of the Government; Dr. Willibold Frehner, Head of Konrad Adenauer Institute in Vietnam; Doctor, Associate Professor Nguyễn Văn Khánh, Director of the University of Social Sciences and Humanity and many scientists from other universities, institutes and branches concerned.

The dialogue was the continuation of 5 years of friendly cooperation between the University of Social Sciences and Humanity and Konrad Adenauer Institute in the framework of five-year program of cooperation (began in 2001). The dialogue was also the first activity in the overall program in 2006 between the two units. It actively contributed to pushing up the cognition of specialists and the society about continued

The speeches delivered at the dialogue not only dealt with theoretical problems such as what are the state, civil society and real democracy, the relation between the state and the civil society, the stages of forming the civil society in history, the manifestations of civil society, the obstructions of forming and operating the civil society, the building of a civil society in the angle of administrative reform...The speeches also analyzed and put forward practical solutions in order to develop the civil society in Vietnam such as the need to strengthen the participation of the people in the state management through the administrative reform, the institutional reform for the purpose of creating the legal foundation for an "equal playing ground" for all economic sectors and all members of the society; the organization of the state administrative machine is to be reformed in order to change the social atmosphere to carry out administrative affairs professionally, modernly, dynamically with highest effect and for the individual to develop freely within the framework of law...

The delegates at the dialogue asserted that the institutional reform was one of the focuses of administrative reform in the past; in reality it has been carried out with relative success in Vietnam. The reforms have brought about trust for investors in the country and abroad, creating the development conditions for various economic sectors, especially the community of private economic sector. At the same time through these reforms the relations between the state administrative organs with citizens and organizations have had basic change beginning to create the image of an

administration serving the people, creating the foundation for the development of the civil society in the new institution.

The delegates at the dialogue assumed that the reform of the state administrative machine in the past in Vietnam has created a broader sphere of operation for enterprises and the community of population. The gradation arrangement according to a clear mechanism is the most effective guarantee for the peoples supervision to the organization and operation of the local authority.

The delegates highly appreciated the development of various types of non-governmental organizations in Vietnam in the past because the developments of these organizations have revealed that the citizen to social problems has paid more attention. The development of these organizations is essentially that of various forms of communal organizations to bring millions of people into the construction and development of the country.

At the dialogue the delegates also dealt with the regulations of democracy at the grassroots. They were consentient with the remark that the Vietnamese Government has always attached great importance to the peoples role in the state management. However the peoples mastership has sometimes been violated in many places and fields; the red tape, authoritarian behaviour and corruption causing troubles to the people by state administrative organs are still a challenge to reform. In the future, Vietnam will be required to strengthen administrative reform, special attention should be paid to the reform of institution.

KHÁNH PHƯƠNG

Seminar: “Trần Đức Thảo: Human and Heritage”

On the occasion of 90th birth anniversary of Prof. Trần Đức Thảo, one of the few Vietnamese philosophers recognized by the world, recently on September 26, 2007, in Hanoi, the Seminar “Trần Đức Thảo: Human and Heritage” was organized by the Philosophy Faculty and History Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanity University, Hanoi National University.

The Seminar, as signified by its name, was on the two main themes and also the contents of exchanges among Vietnamese and Taiwanese philosophy, history, science & humanity researchers. The workshop accumulated over 30 reports by authors of different generations and different specialties dealing with the creative working life of the great intellectual Trần Đức Thảo, analyzing the varied aspects of his life and philosophical thoughts.

The Seminar started with the speech delivered by Asst. Prof., DSc. Lâm Bá Nam, Vice Rector of Social Sciences and Humanity University, welcoming scientists from inside and outside the country who arrived to attend the Workshop. Apart from stressing the topicality and science significance of the Seminar themes, he also pointed out that the research on dialectics and social and historical issues that Trần Đức Thảo had been taken with would continue develop in the changing context of the world and Vietnam over the recent decades.

The introductory report by DSc. Nguyễn Vũ Hào summarized the major stages of Trần Đức Thảo's life and the main philosophical contents that he was interested in while he

was still alive. The report also suggested that scientists should concentrate on explaining the disputes so as to arrive at the unity in presenting and appreciating the human and work of Trần Đức Thảo.

The reports and opinions on the biography of Trần Đức Thảo concentrated on affirming that he was not only the first philosopher of Vietnam that obtained regular training in philosophy but also a talented pedagogue who has left in the heart of his colleagues and students admirations, trust and respect. He was also the organizer, manager who first dedicated himself to constructing and running the operations of a number of university training institutions in Vietnam during the first days of the new regime of Vietnam. Not only engrossed in philosophical studies, he also engaged in compiling, translating a good many valuable documents on philosophy into Vietnamese.

The reports and opinions that analyzed Trần Đức Thảo's philosophical thoughts focused on the following issues:

- *First, regarding the origin of Trần Đức Thảo's philosophical thoughts from phenomenology to dialectical materialism*, the reports by Bùi Đăng Duy, Nguyễn Anh Tuấn, Đỗ Minh Hợp, Phạm Văn Chung, Do Văn Khang, Nguyễn Quang Hưng, Nguyễn Huy Hoàng, Lê Công Su, etc. concentrated on expounding the theoretical and cultural and spiritual settings that affected the formation of Trần Đức Thảo's fundamental philosophical thoughts. The authors' ideas converged on the fact that born in the East - Vietnam as he was, Trần Đức Thảo early acquired the supreme philosophical knowledge of Europe, expressed this loyalty to the tendency towards rationalism which

always regards philosophy as a science originating from the ancient Greek culture. Until the end of his life fraught with ups and downs, he was always a loyal and whole-hearted man in defending Marxist philosophy, resolute to struggle against distortions of Marxism in the direction of subjective idealism, voluntarism, and metaphysical thinking.

- *Second, regarding human nature, the making of human, human specific characteristics, relations between bio and social features, between mankind, nation and class features within human beings*, the reports by Lê Văn Quân, Trần Văn Phong, Nguyễn Thị Thanh Huyền, Lại Quốc Khánh, Cao Minh Công, Vũ Thị Thu Hương, Nguyễn Thị Châu Loan deeply analyzed Trần Đức Thảo's contributions in the spirit of safeguarding the Marxist points of view. The reports touching upon human research methodology pointed out clearly that Tran Duc Thao was a master in applying the Marxist dialectical theories, particularly its key methods such as logical-historical correlation, the relation between the common general and the formal particular, the laws of contradiction, the laws of negativism connected with dialectics of "intermediate stage" transformation to researches on human beings and issues of mankind's historical and social evolutions. These included reports by Phạm Thu Trang, Nguyễn Chí Hiếu, Trần Minh Hiếu, Lê Thúy Hạnh, Trần Thị Huyền, etc.

- *Third, regarding languages, senses, their origins and formations* the issues of Trần Đức Thảo's interest since he was still young and engrossed in until the end of his life so as to complete his points of view; such

reports also partly pointed out the change of Trần Đức Thảo's way of viewing on the origin of language (comparison of the two works written in 1973 and 1993). Several reports explored in a considerably comprehensive manner Trần Đức Thảo's points of view from the dialectical perspective of the "organic perfect whole system", "inorganic body", "activity", "personality" in the relations with the formation of cultural communicative senses and languages; especially, these reports also pointed out Trần Đức Thảo's logical definitions of senses compared with the corresponding ones of others, from that to highlight that the activity approaching method that Trần Đức Thảo used in his researches are still very topical to the present social sciences and humanity in studying individual lives and society, in studying the intercultural exchanges. This field of study by Trần Đức Thảo also contains a good many suggestions that need care and continued clarifications. Reports as such included those by Vưu Hoàng Kiệt, Nguyễn Vũ Hào, Đặng Hà Chi, Nguyễn Thụy Vân, Đào Thi Hữu and Bùi Thị Tình.

The Seminar, conducted in a seething atmosphere of discussions, came to great success and the ideas converged on that: Progressive philosophy always calls for peace and cooperation, and the duty of philosophers today together with other social sciences and humanity workers is to exert themselves to uphold that fine tradition. Expectation of exploring the new topical senses of Trần Đức Thảo's philosophy, turning it into effective moral means to benefit mankind's progress those that should be included in the grounds for historical-philosophical researches - are the

very message that this Seminar was intended to convey to researchers and people concerned.

PHẠM THU TRANG

New animal and plant species found in Vietnam

The species were found in the Thừa Thiên Huế Province – a region known as the Green Corridor. They include two butterflies and a snake, as well as five orchids and three other plants, all of which are exclusive to tropical forests in Vietnam's Annamites Mountain Range. Ten other plant species, including four orchids, are still under examination but also appear to be new species.

“You only discover so many new species in very special places, and the Green Corridor is one of them,” said Chris Dickinson, WWF's Chief Technical Adviser in the area. “Several large mammal species were discovered in the 1990s in the same forests, which means that these latest discoveries could be just the tip of the iceberg.”

The rainforests of the Central Annamites likely existed as continuous undisturbed forest cover for thousands of years, and, as a result, offer unique habitats for many species, WWF says.

The new snake species, called the white-lipped keelback, tends to live by streams where it catches frogs and other small animals. It has a beautiful yellow-white stripe that sweeps along its head and red dots cover its body. It can reach about 80 centimetres in length.

The butterfly species are among eight discovered in the province since 1996. One

is a skipper – a butterfly with quick, darting flight habits – from the genus *Zela*, the other is a new genus in the subfamily of Satyrinae.

Three of the new orchid species are entirely leafless, which is rare for orchids. They contain no chlorophyll and live on decaying matter, like many fungal species. The new other plants include an aspidistra, which produces a flower that is nearly black. Aspidistra-relatives plants are used as houseplants and are able to withstand very low light conditions. And a newly discovered species of arum has beautiful yellow flowers. Arum plants have funnel-shaped leaves surrounding the flowers.

According to WWF, all these species are at risk from illegal logging, hunting, unsustainable extraction of natural resources and conflicting development interests. However, the Thừa Thiên Huế Province authorities – in particular the Forest Protection Department – have committed to conserve and sustainably manage these valuable forests.

“The area is extremely important for conservation and the province wants to protect the forests and their environmental services, as well as contribute to sustainable development,” said Hoàng Ngọc Khánh, Director of Thừa Thiên Huế Provincial Forest Protection Department.

Recent surveys have shown that many threatened species are found in the Green Corridor, including 15 reptiles and amphibians and six bird species. The area is also home to Vietnam's greatest number of white-cheeked crested gibbons, one of the world's most endangered primates. The

Green Corridor is believed to be the best location in Vietnam to conserve the saola, a unique type of wild cattle only discovered by scientists in 1992.

According to WWF, forests in the Annamites also help preserve critical environmental services, such as water supplies for thousand of people who depend on the region's rivers. They also provide non-timber forest resources for local ethnic minority groups who earn more than half of their income from these products.

<http://www.huegreencorridor.org>

Doing Business in 2008: Vietnam Improves Ease of Doing Business, Narrows Gap With Leading Countries in East Asia and Pacific

Hanoi, September 26, 2007 – Vietnam has implemented a number of important regulatory changes over the past year which have improved its business environment and the ease of doing business, according to a new report by IFC and the World Bank.

Published annually by IFC and the World Bank, Doing Business assess the ease of doing business in a country based on 10 factors: starting a business, dealing with licenses, employing workers, registering property, getting credit, protecting investors, paying taxes, trading across borders, enforcing contracts, and closing a business. One of the focuses of this year's report – which covers 178 countries - is to identify which reforms are most effective, where and why. Since 2003 Doing Business has inspired or informed more than 113 reforms around the world.

The report found Vietnam made it easier for business to access credit by broadening the

scope of assets that can be used as collateral. The 2005 Civil Code and Decree 163/2006 allow businesses to use all movable assets to secure debt – present and future, tangible and intangible – by allowing the general description of assets and obligations in collateral agreements. Vietnam also adopted a new securities law that established a securities exchange and trading center. In addition, the country strengthened investor protection through a new enterprise law, which requires investor involvement in major company actions, increases disclosure requirements for related-party transactions and introduces fiduciary duties for company directors.

However, Vietnam has room to improve in a number of areas. The country's lowest rankings fall into three areas: protecting investors, closing a business, and paying taxes.

Vietnam remains among the countries with the lowest protection for investors against directors' misuse of corporate assets. The report says that although the new securities and enterprise laws introduce fiduciary duties for directors, they fail to provide a way to enforce those duties.

It is still difficult to close a business in Vietnam. According to the report, the current mechanism for dealing with bankruptcy in Vietnam can often be difficult and time consuming. For example, a case of bankruptcy in Vietnam will take more than 5 years with a recovery rate of only 18%. As a result, very few enterprises terminate their business using official regulations and procedures.

With regards to the ease of paying taxes, the

report finds Vietnamese businesses are among those who spend the largest amount of time to fulfill tax requirements. On average they spend 1050 hours, equivalent to 130 staff days, to complete procedures relating to paying taxes.

Regionally, the report found that in East Asia and the Pacific the most popular reform was to ease access to credit, with improvement in China, Indonesia, Micronesia and Vietnam. The second most popular was to simplify business start-up, with action in Lao PDR, Malaysia and Timor-Leste.

According to the report, this year, East Asia dropped in rankings on pace of reform, ranked second-to-last among regions on business reform. However, China was a standout in regulatory reform in this period, bucking the region trend. By introducing far-reaching protection of private property right and a new bankruptcy law, it became a star reformer and is among the top 10 reformers in the world. Singapore, for the

second year running, tops the aggregate rankings of 178 economies on the ease of doing business. The runner-up economy in the region is Hong Kong (China) (4), followed by Thailand (15), Malaysia (24), Taiwan (China) (50), Mongolia (52), China (83), Vietnam (91), Indonesia (123), Philippines (133), and Cambodia (145). Lao PDR (164) and Timor-Leste (168) are ranked lowest in the region.

“The report finds that equity returns are highest in countries that are reforming the most,” said Michael Klein, World Bank/IFC Vice President for Financial and Private Sector Development. “Investors are looking for upside potential, and they find it in economies that are reforming – regardless of their starting point” he added. Many of these fast reformers are large emerging markets such as China, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Turkey, and Vietnam.

www.worldbank.org.vn