

Kaysone

PHOMVIHANE

Revolution

in

LAOS



Kay Bone

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in LAOS**

Practice
and
Prospects

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Kaysone Phomvihane, General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Lao People's Revolutionary Party and Prime Minister of the People's Democratic Republic of Laos, was born on December 13, 1920 in Savannaket, Southern Laos. Son of a member of the Lao civil service, he was educated in Hanoi, where he attended a lycée and then the law faculty at Hanoi University.

In 1942, Kaysone Phomvihane joined in the militant struggle of the Lao people against the French colonialists and the Japanese invaders. In August 1945 he took part in the liberation of Savannaket from the Japanese, and in 1947-1949 he led the war of liberation against the French colonialists in north-east Laos, setting up a people's army which, on January 20, 1949, became the People's Liberation Army of Laos (PLAL).

In 1949, Kaysone Phomvihane became a member of the Communist Party of Indochina.

At the First Congress of People's Representatives of Laos (August 13-15, 1950), he was

elected to the Central Committee of the Lao Liberation Front (Neo Lao Itsala), and was appointed minister of defence in the government of national resistance.

At the Second Congress of the Communist Party of Indochina (February 11-19, 1951), it was decided that each country of former French Indochina should form an independent party. On March 22, 1955, the First (Constituent) Congress of the Lao People's Revolutionary Party (LPRP) elected Kaysone Phomvihane to the post of General Secretary of its Central Committee. That same year he was also appointed commander-in-chief of the PLAL.

Kaysone Phomvihane was also one of the organisers of the Lao Patriotic Front (Neo Lao Haksat), founded on January 6, 1956 by the LPRP. In 1959 he was elected as its CC deputy chairman.

In February 1972, Kaysone Phomvihane was re-elected General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Party at the 2nd Party Congress, and on December 2, 1975, the National Congress of People's Representatives of Laos, having dismantled the monarchical system, proclaimed the People's Democratic Republic of Laos and drawn up the programme for socialist development, appointed him prime minister of the PDRL.

Led by Kaysone Phomvihane, the LPRP successfully resolved the tasks of the national democratic stage of the revolution by creatively applying the principles of Marxism-Leninism within the context of the conditions in Laos. Under his direction, the Central Committee of

the LPRP and the government of the PDRL are carrying through the important task of eliminating all traces of colonialism, neocolonialism and the feudal-monarchical system and are laying the foundations of a socialist society bypassing the stage of capitalist development.

He also devotes much of his time and energy to organising the rebuff to attempts by imperialism and world reaction to encroach upon the revolutionary gains of the Lao people, and to further strengthening the organs of popular power.

Kaysone Phomvihane has visited the USSR on several occasions. He headed the delegation from the LPRP to the 22nd, 24th and 25th congresses of the CPSU and also the delegations that attended the celebrations to mark the 50th and 60th anniversaries of the Great October Socialist Revolution. His meetings with Leonid Brezhnev on September 6, 1976, May 16, 1977 and September 26, 1979 were major landmarks in the development of fraternal ties and all-round cooperation between the CPSU and the LPRP, between the USSR and the PDRL and between the peoples of both countries.

After nearly a hundred years of ceaseless struggle against imperialist aggressors, with the last thirty difficult but glorious ones under the wise leadership of our Party, the whole Lao people took power after the national uprising in the historic month of May 1975 that, like a hurricane, swept out the military and political forces of the compradore bourgeoisie, the military bureaucracy, and reactionary feudalists serving American imperialism. On 2 December 1975 the National Congress of People's Representatives abolished the colonial and feudal regime and inaugurated the People's Democratic Republic of Laos. This marked the victorious consummation of the national democratic and the beginning of the socialist revolution in our country.

This was a signal victory unparalleled in the history of our country. Thanks to it the Lao people have rid themselves forever of imperialist and feudal oppression. Since that day, with the country coming out of the sinister shadow of usurpatory rule, the Lao people liberated

themselves for the first time in their history from the bonds of slavery, ignorance, and suffering, and became the true masters of their country, their lives and their future. As it says in the Declaration of the National Congress of People's Representatives of 2 December 1975, this victory "signifies a fundamental change in the destiny of our nation and society, opening a new era of rapid and vigorous progress of our beloved motherland on the road of independence, unity and prosperity, and ensuring the well-being, freedom and happiness of all the ethnic groups for all time."

The victory of the revolution in Laos and the victories of the fraternal peoples of Vietnam and Kampuchea make up one common victory of truly historic and epoch-making significance. This great victory signifies the failure of the bitterest counter-offensive of the chief imperialist power against the world revolutionary movement since the Second World War, a reduction of the imperialist and expansion of the socialist sphere, a breaching of the positions of American imperialism in an important part of Southeast Asia, and the breakdown of its global counter-revolutionary strategy. It meant the end of American neocolonialism in Indochina and vividly confirmed that neocolonialism would inevitably die in the rest of the world. This great victory was an important stimulus for the struggle of the progressive nations, substantially changed the global alignment of forces in favour of peace, national independence, democracy and socialism, and gave new impetus to the offensive against imperialism and reaction.

The victory of our revolution also showed clearly yet again that nowadays it is possible for any nation, however small, to gain victory over imperialist aggressors, as long as it is led by a vanguard—the party of the working class that knows how to apply Marxism-Leninism correctly and creatively to the conditions of the country, and is capable to organise and unite the forces of the nation in conjunction with contemporary revolutionary forces, backed by the socialist system. We assume that the preliminary conclusions drawn from the Party's experience of applying its strategic line, tactics and revolutionary methods during the long and complicated struggle have practical significance for our revolution at the present stage, that of the consolidation of people's democracy and transition to socialism, and will possibly also contribute to the rich store of experience of applying Marxism-Leninism in the revolutions of liberation today.

THE LONG ROAD TO VICTORY

The Lao nation has a glorious history of many centuries. Since 1353, when our country was unified by our national hero King Tiao Fangum to become the Kingdom of Lan Xang, the people have had to wage frequent wars to defend their motherland and to fight for national independence against aggression and domination by Siamese and Burmese feudal lords. The most notable events in our history are the victory of Muong Khuc in 1536, during which King Phothisalat defeated armies invading the country under the Ayuthaja (Siamese) king; the victories of our armies under the wise leadership of King Sayasetha, national hero and liberator of the country, in 1563 and 1569 over the powerful invading armies of the Burmese feudal lords; twenty-four years of unbroken struggle at the end of the sixteenth century against the suzerainty of the Burmese feudal lords, during which, in 1579, our king, who was their vassal, was deposed. From the eighteenth century onwards, the power of the feudal lords declined, and the country was split

into several parts. Taking advantage of this, Siamese feudal lords invaded and established their sway in the country. But our people did not reconcile themselves to defeat and continued this ceaseless and courageous fight against the invaders. The most remarkable event was the national uprising led by Tiao Anouvong in 1827-1828. Although the uprising was not completely successful, it is an impressive page in the history of our people's struggle in defence of their motherland, and is impregnated forever in their memory.

French colonialists invaded Laos at the end of the nineteenth century, and the country found itself under their colonial yoke. Though the aristocratic lords bowed before them, the entire Lao people continued tirelessly to resist the French colonialists throughout the country. Some national actions were very broadly based: the uprising led by Pho Cadouad in the heart of the country in 1901-1902; the armed uprisings in the south under the leadership of Ong Keo and Ong Kommadam, which continued for thirty-six years from 1901 to 1937; the Meo struggle led by Tiao Pha Patchay in 1918-1922 in a number of the northern provinces; the Lu people's movement in the northern county of Sing that lasted from 1914 to 1918; the movement of the Thais in the province of Sam Neua in 1916, and other uprisings by different national and ethnic groups in various parts of the country. But because of certain historical conditions within the country, and of the international situation, these courageous, heroic uprisings launched by the mass of the people

could not be successful. Nevertheless, they are a vivid example of our nation's tradition of unity, and evidence of its unbending determination.

In 1917, the Great October Socialist Revolution was carried out under the brilliant guidance of the leader of the world proletariat, Vladimir Lenin. It signified an enormous leap forward in the development of human society and ushered in a new epoch, the epoch of transition from capitalism to socialism on a world scale. The victorious October Revolution was a beacon of liberation not only for the proletariat of capitalist countries, but for all the oppressed peoples of the world. It lit up the way to liberation movements in all the colonial countries, including the national liberation movement in the three countries of Indochina that languished in the grip of the enormous difficulties caused by the cruel repression and perfidious manoeuvres of the imperialist colonialists.

The truth that emerged from the October Revolution, that "to save the motherland and liberate the nation there is no other path but proletarian revolution", was brought to Indochina by Ho Chi Minh, that distinguished fighter of the world communist movement. In doing this, he united genuine patriotism with Marxism-Leninism, and linked the revolutionary movement in Indochina with the world revolutionary process. In 1930, the Communist Party of Indochina was founded by Comrade Ho Chi Minh, and marked a turning point in the history of the revolutionary movement of the three countries of Indochina. From that time on-

wards, the revolutionary struggle of the Lao people, led by the Marxist-Leninist party, entered a qualitatively new stage under the banner of national democracy. Despite the repressions and persecution of the French colonialists, and later the Japanese militarists, the early Communists, working boldly and selflessly underground, did propaganda work among the people. These comrades laid the foundations for the Party in mines and enterprises, offices and schools, military camps and the police; little by little, they brought together all the patriotic and progressive elements from different sections of the people, organising and raising the masses for the struggle at all levels.

In 1945 the Soviet Army defeated fascist Germany and Italy and militarist Japan, forcing them to surrender unconditionally and thereby ending the Second World War. The great victory of the Soviet Union and of all the revolutionary and progressive forces of the world led to a considerable number of countries dropping out of the imperialist system. This was a great landmark in the development of the world revolutionary process; socialism went beyond the framework of one country and became a world system, and there was a powerful upsurge of the national liberation movement in the colonies and semi-colonies, and of the workers' movement in capitalist countries.

Taking advantage of the extremely favourable conditions created under the influence of the world revolutionary process and the confusion and dismay in the camp of the internal enemies, our Party took well-timed determined action to

rouse the masses to the struggle, and, in coordination with the August Revolution of the people of Vietnam, wrested power from the Japanese militarists and French colonialists. On 12 October 1945 the independence of Laos was announced to the world.

But soon the French colonialists, enlisting the support of American and British imperialists, once more invaded Laos, as well as Vietnam and Kampuchea. A national struggle to resist the French invaders began with the Party at its fore. Here is the situation as it shaped in the country at that time. True to its colonial policy, the French imperialists captured the main towns with the help of an expeditionary corps and Lao mercenaries, clamped down brutally on the people, and restored their rule under an only slightly changed signboard. In 1949 they played out a farce of handing over "independence" to their obedient lackeys and set up a puppet army. They established a so-called Federation of Laos, Vietnam and Kampuchea, run by a High Commissioner and the commander of the army of the French Union.

As for the national resistance movement, we began our activities surrounded by enemies and with the revolution still only in its infancy. The ranks of skilled cadres and Party members were still small in number and our experience of armed uprising only negligible. Everything had to be started from scratch, relying on our own strength and potential. But on the other hand the struggle was closely allied to that of the other peoples of Indochina. We were all fighting a common enemy under the single leadership of

one Party, and in a situation when the world revolutionary process was continuing to grow. Thanks to this the people of Laos were able to combine their struggle with organising, with gradually building up forces, which grew stronger, more mature, and successful.

Following the line of "prolonged, all-round, nationwide resistance", the majority of our forces were transferred, after a certain period of fighting in the towns, to rural areas, where a broad propaganda campaign was started by us among the different ethnic groups in order to rouse them for the joint struggle. The partisan movement was developing, and mass political forces and armed people's detachments were being formed. Particular attention was devoted to setting up support bases of resistance. This was, indeed, considered the central task of the revolution at that particular time.

Our fighters, cadres and Party members used the method of "armed propaganda": while hitting the enemy, they carried on propaganda work, forming a mass base and expanding the revolutionary forces in every possible way. As a result support bases were set up in many parts of the country, where we established revolutionary power and formed popular armed forces together with mass organisations. Gradually, stage by stage, suitable methods were applied to do away with feudal and prefeudal forms of exploitation, and an improvement came about in the material and cultural life of the peasant masses; the unity of all the nationalities grew stronger and stronger.

From the first support bases the resistance

movement spread throughout the country. The revolutionary forces kept growing in size and strength. On 20 January 1949 the armed forces of the Free Laos (Lao Itsala) movement, now the Peoples' Liberation Army of Laos, was established. On 13 August 1950 the first congress of the National Resistance Front passed the decision to set up the Lao Liberation Front (Neo Lao Itsala), adopted the twelve-point political programme of the Front, and inaugurated a resistance government. This was a new step forward in the development of the people's resistance movement in Laos.

The victory of the people's revolution in China and the creation of the People's Republic of China at the end of 1949 stimulated the resistance movement in the countries of Indochina. In 1950, Operation "Border" of the fraternal Vietnamese armed forces and the people of Vietnam breached the blockade of the French and American imperialists, thereby making it possible for the revolutionary forces in the countries of Indochina to receive direct help from the socialist countries. On 11 March 1951, the United Resistance Front of Laos, Vietnam and Kampuchea was set up on the basis of equality, mutual assistance and respect for each country's sovereignty to intensify the struggle against French imperialism. This helped to strengthen the unity and cooperation between the armies and peoples of the three countries. In 1953, acting on the above principles, our armed forces, supported by Vietnamese volunteers, launched several successive attacks and liberated large areas in different

parts of the country, including areas in the provinces of Sam Neua, Xieng Khouang, Kham Mouane, Attopeu, the Bolovens Plateau, and so on. Later on, in the spring of 1954, we liberated the province of Phongsaly and a large part of the province of Luang Prabang, breaching the enemy front on the river Nam Ou. These operations were timed to coincide with the historic battle fought by the heroic people of Vietnam and their army at Dien Bien Phu.

Having suffered a crushing defeat on all fronts in Indochina, the French imperialists were compelled to sign the Geneva Agreements of 1954, in which France recognised the independence, sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of Laos, Vietnam and Kampuchea. These agreements granted the revolutionary forces of our country legal status, and recognised the provinces of Sam Neua and Phongsaly as an area of the Pathet Lao forces, thus coming under the direct control of the revolutionary forces of Laos. The victory in the war of resistance against French imperialism was an enormous achievement for the Lao revolution. It precipitated a flood of national feeling throughout the country and opened up broad possibilities for the Party to prepare for a new stage in the revolutionary struggle.

Soon after the Geneva Agreements had been signed, the American imperialists, who had from the start been interfering in the war in Indochina, hurried to take the place of France and invade our country, reckoning that they could turn it into a new kind of colony and a military base for attacking the socialist coun-

tries—first and foremost the Democratic Republic of Vietnam—so as to stem the revolutionary tide in Southeast Asia.

On 22 March 1955, the People's Party of Laos (now the Lao People's Revolutionary Party) was set up, heedful of the new situation and the requirements of the struggle at this new stage. It was the successor to the splendid cause of the Communist Party of Indochina in Laos, taking on the historic task of guiding the people of Laos in their struggle to liberate their motherland, and against the American imperialists. A new period of difficult and intense struggle began—a period of the most remarkable and and triumphant struggle in the history of our people.

1954-1963 were years of struggle against the hypocritical counter-revolutionary strategy of the American imperialists and their henchmen, who, alternating two-faced peaceful actions with undisguised counter-revolutionary violence, tried to smash the achievements of the Lao revolution.

Following the letter of the 1954 Geneva Agreements, all the revolutionary forces of our country were concentrated in the provinces of Sam Neua and Phongsaly at the end of the rainy season of that year. The day this took place became a national holiday—a holiday commemorating the unity of all the nationalities in the country, while these two provinces—the areas where our forces were concentrated—became a beacon of hope to all the people of Laos.

But the American imperialists were stepping

up their interference in Laos and launched feverish preparations for an aggressive neocolonialist war in Indochina. They arbitrarily included Laos, together with South Vietnam and Kampuchea, in the "defence" zone of the aggressive SEATO bloc, which they had set up in September 1954. In Laos itself they put in power the reactionary government of Katay Don Sasorith, reorganised the puppet army, increased their military and economic aid to their hangers-on and began to implement a neocolonialist policy, reckoning that they could break the resistance of the people. The government of Katay Don Sasorith, forced as it was to enter into negotiations with us, deliberately made all kinds of unreasonable demands with the aim of torpedoing the bilateral talks and finding an excuse to provoke civil war in the country. In the middle of 1955, acting on the orders of the American imperialists, it sent two-thirds of their puppet army to the two northern provinces where our forces were concentrated, and at the same time subjected the population of the rest of the country to cruel repression and persecution.

Weighing up the alignment of forces within the country and the general tendency that events were following in Southeast Asia and the world as a whole, our Party worked out the following policy: to rouse the people for an all-out struggle against the American interventionists and their mercenary lackeys for a peaceful, independent, sovereign, united and prosperous Laos, and gradually and steadily to develop the Lao revolution (from proceedings of

the 1st Plenum of the Central Committee of the People's Party of Laos elected by the First Congress of the PPL). In accordance with these guidelines, our Party raised aloft the *banner of peace, neutrality and national concord*. It expanded the national united front and (on 6 January 1956) set up the Lao Patriotic Front (Neo Lao Haksat) which gathered together all the patriotic and progressive forces and currents in the country. At the same time, the Party put a great deal of effort into strengthening and enlarging the revolutionary forces, and took urgent measures to strengthen and increase the armed forces. It guided the courageous struggle of the army and the people in the two provinces where the Pathet Lao forces were concentrated in order to defend their inviolability and, at the same time, frustrate the major military offensive of the enemy. Parallel to this, the Party began a broad political struggle, involving in it various sections of the population in the other parts of the country, including Vientiane. Thanks to skilful combination of political, military and diplomatic methods we forced the enemy to assume the defensive, and created confusion in his ranks. Thus were thwarted the evil designs of our enemies, who had set out to destroy the gains made by the people in the resistance period. The American imperialists and their lackeys were forced to sign the Vientiane Agreement of 22 October 1957, and to consent to the formation of the first coalition government in which the Lao Patriotic Front was allotted a worthy place.

While accepting these conditions, the Americ-

an imperialists and their lackeys cherished hopes of enticing our forces away from the support bases, cutting the ground from under our feet and then, using other methods, to make short work of the revolutionary forces. They gambled on the coalition government, expecting to lure our Party to a path of purely parliamentary struggle and thus to undermine its revolutionary policy. Besides this, they used various perfidious methods, such as blackmail, bribery and corruption, to sap the authority of the revolution among the people, and to erode, and thereupon isolate and finally destroy, the revolutionary forces. But our enemies miscalculated, being unable to understand and properly appraise the unbending will of our cadres, revolutionary soldiers, and the entire people of Laos; they could not imagine that all their schemes and calculations could be overturned by the just cause of the revolution.

Holding high the banner of peace, neutrality and national concord, in Vientiane and several other large cities, our Party, through its tireless revolutionary enthusiasm, was able to keep the revolutionary forces intact even though we were still in many ways weaker than the enemy and encountered various difficulties. What is more, we managed to establish direct contact with people from different sections of society in districts then under the control of the enemy, to spread our influence throughout the country, and to launch a struggle of unprecedented scale using all the available legal and semi-legal methods. Taking advantage of the powerful political movement of the masses, the Party

forced the coalition government to pass the Constitution of 1957, which contained a number of progressive clauses, concerning, for example, the democratic rights of the people, equal rights of men and women, equality of all nationalities, abolition of the "Kouang lam" system of supplementary requisitions and unlawful taxes, and the use of Lao as the written and spoken official language. All this provided a legal basis for extending the struggle of the masses for peace and social progress. The prestige of the revolution kept rising among different sections of the population, while the extreme right-wing reactionary forces found themselves more and more isolated, divided, and uncertain. This was when a third force appeared on the political stage, gravitating towards peace and neutrality. We established a working relationship with it, which ensured an important victory of the Patriotic Front at the supplementary elections to the National Assembly in May 1958.

The tactics of "enticing the tiger out of its lair" and the "peaceful reforms" of the American imperialists had failed. Frightened by the way the revolution was developing, they tried to suppress it by armed force. On 18 August 1958, the reactionary Sananikone clique, urged on by the Americans, overthrew the coalition government, denounced the Vientiane Agreement, imprisoned and massacred thousands of our fighters and patriots, blockaded two of our battalions that had been incorporated in the national army with the subsequent intention of wiping them out, and, finally, in July 1959,

perfidiously arrested a group of our leaders who had stayed on in Vientiane and continued to work consistently for our just cause defending the lawful status of the revolutionary forces.

Finding itself in this extremely difficult position, the Party was quick to change its tactics and adopted the principle of combining political with military struggle. On the one hand, we continued to hold high the banner of justice, peace, neutrality and national concord, striving to win public opinion both inside and outside the country to our cause, to disunite the enemy's ranks and step up the political struggle in the country, and, on the other hand, we supplemented this by actively rousing the masses to armed struggle in order to support the political struggle.

At the direction of the Party, our second battalion, finding itself encircled by enemies, demonstrated remarkable resourcefulness and bravery to break through the enemy blockade and return to the old revolutionary bases. The salvos it fired announced to the entire people that the Party had decided to take up arms and renew the struggle. Led by the Party organisations, all the peoples of Laos, headed by the Party cadres who had been sent for work among the masses during the first unification of the country, rose everywhere in a single wave and took power in many rural and mountain regions. In response to the appeal of the Party, a mass movement began in the villages and towns against the denunciation of the Vientiane Agreement, against the undisguised violence and repressions, and against the policy of stirring up

civil war followed by the American imperialists and their lackeys. This movement took in soldiers and officers of the army and police, as well as the civil servants. The successful escape from prison in May 1960 of the unlawfully arrested leaders of the revolution had far-reaching political consequences at home and abroad. The event inspired the masses to rise up, while throwing the enemy into disarray and uncertainty.

In these conditions, the American imperialists decided to make use of the services of the extreme right-wing group led by Phoumi Nosavan, which operated as the so-called Committee for the Defence of National Interests, to tighten the persecution and repression of the people and to launch a desperate attack on the revolutionary forces. But these actions provoked nothing but still greater indignation among all sections of the population, created dissatisfaction in the army and police, and even among a certain section of higher civil servants, and helped them to understand the justice of the revolutionary cause. All this finally led to the patriotic coup of 9 August 1960 in Vientiane.

Taking account of this important development, the Party decided to support the forces that performed the coup, helped them set up a government based on peace, neutrality and national concord, and activate neutralist patriotic forces, established links with them, took part in a joint struggle against the counter-offensive of the enemy, and aided them for some time to hold Vientiane. Thus the Party created conditions in which revolutionary forces could be

activated in various areas, and stepped up the nationwide struggle. Then on the crest of powerful political and military upheavals in the country, we combined head-on battles with flanking manoeuvres, and launched a rapid strategic offensive. Catching the enemy unawares, we liberated the important zone of the Plain of Jars—Xieng Khouang on 1 January 1961.

Making the fullest possible use of the coalition of revolutionary and progressive patriotic forces, and also of the legal status of the new government, we did our best, on an official footing, to get the maximum assistance from the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, the Soviet Union, and other socialist countries. Thanks to this we were able in a brief space of time to strengthen the revolutionary forces in different ways, and particularly the army, to build up military pressure on the enemy coupled with a stepped up political offensive, broaden the network of support bases, and create an unbroken liberated zone stretching from the north to the south and taking in two-thirds of the country inhabited by a third of the population.

Fearing a still more crippling defeat, the American imperialists and their lackeys were forced to consent to tripartite talks at Hin Heup and Namone, and then to a new Geneva Conference on Laos. However, they made every effort to drag out the negotiations, and at the beginning of 1962 launched a large counter-offensive in a bid to regain the initiative; for this they concentrated their crack mobile troops at Luang Namtha, including infantry and air force units of the puppet army, with technical support of the

Thai army. But our armed forces and the people, using every possible means, inflicted a crushing defeat on the enemy, routed the main forces of the puppet army and frustrated the designs of the American imperialists, who, in order to put pressure on us, had concentrated a force of marines along the Thai coast for deployment to Laos if their adventurist plans paid off. Defeated on many fronts, notably at Luang Namtha, and heavily criticised by progressive public opinion throughout the world, the American imperialists and their henchmen were forced to sign the Geneva Agreements on Laos of 23 July 1962, which were signed by 14 countries. The Agreements officially recognised the provisional coalition government set up a month before on the understanding reached by the three Lao sides in the Plain of Jars. This was a great victory, and one more landmark in the rapid development of the revolutionary forces, and the consolidation of their positions.

The American imperialists planned to play for time in which to reorganise and strengthen the puppet army and prepare for a "special war" in Laos, as well as South Vietnam. This is why, immediately after the tripartite coalition government had been set up, they began making demagogic pronouncements and started to persecute progressive elements who wanted strict observance of the Geneva Agreements. They used bribes and handouts to entice some unstable figures in the government of that time and the neutralist armed forces over to their side, in order to destroy the alliance of the progressive patriotic forces, and to isolate the

Patriotic Front by means of the insidious "two against one" tactic. On 1 April 1963 they went to the length of foully assassinating Quinim Pholsena, the Minister of Foreign Affairs in the coalition government and leader of the progressive patriotic neutralist forces. By doing this they, in substance, undermined the basis of the coalition government, grossly flouted the Geneva Agreements, and again unleashed hostilities in Laos.

The period between 1964 and 1973 was a period of struggle against Johnson's "special war" strategy and Nixon's subsequent doctrine of "redoubled special war". During Johnson's administration, on 17 May 1964, the US Air Force first bombed the liberated areas. During this period, the American authorities put a vast amount of modern armaments at the disposal of the rightist armies in Laos and doubled the strength of the puppet army. Besides, they set up large military units under the command of their henchmen, the fascist clique of Kouprasit-Sananikone, and flooded the country with thousands of their military advisors who actually exercised control over the activity of the Vientiane administration. With a puppet army that was nearly 50,000 strong, dozens of battalions of Thai mercenaries, supported by their own air force, the American imperialists began escalating the war in Laos while at the same time conducting a limited war in South Vietnam, and a war of annihilation in North Vietnam. The "special war" in Laos grew more and more bitter. The first of these military operations was Operation "Sam Sone" (Three Arrows), in

which more than 30 battalions took part, aiming to seize the strategically important areas of Vangvieng, Salafukun, Kiukatiam and Miang Sui at the junction of the provinces of Vientiane, Luang Prabang and Xieng Khouang. From the end of 1964 onwards they carried out a few more operations, each one bigger than the last, such as "Sonsay 1", "Sonsay II", "Mangxon", and "Khottabong", treacherously attacking liberated areas in the centre and the south, and the operation "Thanong Kiet" in which they launched dozens of attacks on our positions on the "steel" height of Phoukout, and so on. At the beginning of 1967 using four mobile brigades, the enemy attacked and seized the area of Nam Bac with the secret intention of wiping out the liberated zone in the north of the country.

Our Party displayed self-possession and composure in this tense situation. Carefully weighing its forces and the forces of its internal and external enemies, seeing that there were weak spots in the so-called "unimaginable might" of the USA, the Party reaffirmed its view that the revolution would inevitably triumph providing good use was made of the nation's potential, the advantages issuing from military cooperation with the army and people of Vietnam, and the existence of the three revolutionary streams of our time. Hence, the Party chose an offensive strategy and worked out flexible and realistic revolutionary methods and ways of struggle. In view of the new situation, it decided to raise the banner of struggle for national liberation and against American imperialism. Under this banner it united the army and the people to repulse the

enemy. At the same time, it extended and rebuilt the liberated areas as a separate state, converting them into a reliable rear for the nationwide struggle. Using its offensive strategy, the Party worked out tactics to pin down and then wipe out the enemy, and based the solution to the Laos question on an alliance of various national forces directed to frustrating the American imperialists' plans of a local war in Laos. That the strategy and tactics chosen by the Party at this stage of the revolution were correct is demonstrated by the fact that the Patriotic Front mission and units of our army remained in Vientiane after the elimination of the tripartite coalition government, by the adoption of the four-point action programme of the Patriotic Front and the patriotic neutralist forces at the National Conference for Political Coordination in October 1965, and also by the military actions on various fronts.

In response to the Party's appeal to unleash the struggle for national liberation and against the American imperialists, the entire nation came into active motion. Parallel to the armed struggle our forces grew, energetic measures were taken to increase production and make us self-sufficient, and intensive building was launched in the liberated areas. Partisan operations were combined with army actions on the fronts, home-made weapons were used alongside modern armaments, the enemy was hit on the ground and in the air. As a result, all enemy attacks were beaten off, and the liberated areas came out intact. At the same time, forays were made to penetrate the rear of the enemy and set

up support bases there for the partisan detachments, for extending the struggle in the enemy-controlled zone, and spreading the people's war to all parts of the country. There were many brilliant initiatives by the people both at the front and in the rear—the movements to destroy enemy secret agents, to redouble security, to set up anti-aircraft defences, to join the army and workers' detachments, to further the political struggle, to set up bases, to increase production, to combat illiteracy, promote hygiene and medical care, and so on. These movements extended to all parts of the country and involved all segments of the population.

In January 1968 our troops attacked Nam Bac. During this operation four rightist mobile regiments were destroyed and approximately 5,000 enemy soldiers and officers were put out of action. As a result of this great victory the rightist troops, one of the two main strategic forces which it had cost the American imperialists vast resources to set up, were routed. After this, the army of the right was seized by panic. At the same time, it enabled us to inflict a number of strikes on other fronts and still further extend the territory of the liberated areas. Meanwhile, the "local war" strategy pursued in South Vietnam by the American imperialists suffered total failure as a result of the national offensive launched by the army and the popular uprising that took place during the "Chet" spring holiday of the fraternal people of Vietnam. This threw the Johnson administration into confusion. It was forced to halt the bombing of the Democratic Republic of Viet-

nam and begin negotiations in Paris. To reinforce and broaden the front of national unity in the country, to win the sympathy and support of progressive world opinion and to further isolate the aggressive forces of the American imperialists and their lackeys, a twelve-point political programme was passed at a special Patriotic Front conference on 31 October 1968, concerning a peaceful, independent, neutral, democratic, united and prosperous Laos. This opened the way to a peaceful solution of the Laos question.

But American imperialism did not want to admit defeat. At the beginning of 1969 the Nixon administration worked out a new aggressive strategy, the essence of which lay in stepping up military pressure and the "special war" in Laos to the limit, in "Vietnamisation" of the war in Vietnam, and escalating the aggressive war in Kampuchea. At the same time, the Nixon administration used various insidious political and diplomatic tricks to try and limit the significance of the struggle of the three peoples of Indochina, to regain the initiative, and to force us to accept conditions favourable for the Americans and their stooges.

Laos was turned into a testing ground of the Nixon doctrine. In the middle of 1969 the American imperialists and their lackeys began Operation "Kou Kiet" (Retribution) in an attempt to seize the Plain of Jars. Nearly 50 battalions went into battle, including most of the special-purpose crack troops activated by the American imperialists as a shock force, which they maintained and which were under their

direct command. Several Thai infantry regiments and artillery battalions took part in the operation. The offensive took place under cover of the American Air Force using strategic B-52 bombers. At the same time, the enemy began an unprecedentedly barbaric and inhuman war of annihilation against large, densely populated areas of the liberated zone in the hope of breaking the people's resistance to the American imperialists and their lackeys. Those were the most difficult and tense days in the battle of the people and their armed forces. The fight was on for every strip of land, and each success was paid for with the blood and sweat of our soldiers and people.

As the American imperialists got down to their "reinforced special war" in the framework of the Nixon doctrine, we had to endure tremendous ordeals. However, despite everything, our Party retained its faith in the correctness of its strategy, that of concentrating all resources in the struggle against the American imperialists and their henchmen, mobilising the people and the army to overcome the hardships and to fight the enemy, subordinating the life of people in the liberated zones to the problems of the grim war, extending the struggle in all possible directions in the areas controlled by the enemy, and creating the conditions essential for victory over the enemy. We had carried out an operation in the area of the Plain of Jars—Xieng Khouang in the beginning of 1970, during which a crushing blow was inflicted on the enemy's special purpose forces. The regions they had previously seized were completely cleared and the enemy was driven back to its lair in the region of Sam

Thong-Long Cheng. Thus, the efforts to put the Nixon doctrine into effect in Laos were frustrated. Soon we inflicted a blow on the enemy in the south, in the provinces of Saravane-Attopeu, both of which were almost completely liberated. In addition to these military strikes the Party launched a political offensive, publishing on 6 March 1970 a five-point proposal on settling the Laos problem. There was one more event of extremely great importance at this time—the April 1970 Summit Conference of the Peoples of Indochina. Those attending the conference solemnly confirmed the combat solidarity of the armies and peoples of the three countries, and their determination to wreck the scheme, under the Nixon doctrine, “to fight the war in Indochina with the hands of the Indochinese”. They reaffirmed the aim of bringing the struggle of the three fraternal countries of Indochina to full victory. The brilliant success of this historic conference raised the fighting solidarity of the three peoples of Indochina to a new level and secured the broad solidarity and massive support of progressive and peaceloving peoples of the world, while causing deep rifts and confusion in the enemy camp, including the ruling circles of the USA.

But despite everything, American imperialism continued to rant and rave. To make up for their defeat in Laos, South Vietnam and Kampuchea, the Americans decided to go the limit. In February 1971 they massed more than 40,000 Saigon puppet troops and, cooperating with the Vientiane army and Thai mercenaries, under powerful cover of the US Air Force, mounted an

attack unparalleled in scale on the liberated areas in the south of Laos, in the area of Road No 9. They counted on cutting the strategically vital lines of communication between the three countries and on dividing the joint liberated zone.

With the close cooperation and broad support of the army and people of fraternal Vietnam we fought the enemy tooth and nail for forty-three days in the south of the country and managed to wreck the strategic "Lam Son 719" operation of the Americans and their puppets. Developing our success, we inflicted successive blows on the enemy on other fronts and won important victories. For example, we completely liberated the Bolovens Plateau, and created a favourable strategic situation there. The remarkable victories of our army and people on the war fronts, along with those of the armies and peoples of fraternal Vietnam and Kampuchea in the spring of 1971, inflicted a crushing blow on the Nixon doctrine, demoralised the puppet armies and regimes in Vientiane, Saigon and Phnom Penh, and undermined the aggressive intentions of the American imperialists.

Developing the political offensive to back up the military operations, the Patriotic Front put forward a number of new proposals on 24 April and 22 June 1971, which added details to the previously advanced five principles for solving the Lao question. In particular, they demanded that the Americans should immediately stop the bombing of the liberated areas, and appealed to the two embattled Lao sides to cease fire on all fronts and begin negotiating the restoration

of peace and national concord. But the American imperialists and their stooges were obstinate and went out of their way to delay the talks. Finally, sustaining a series of defeats on various fronts and under pressure of progressive world opinion, and this also in the USA, they were forced to agree, in October 1972, to begin negotiations with us on the basis of our proposals.

Thus, the struggle for national liberation against American imperialism ended in a great, complete, and convincing victory. The revolutionary forces, hardened by the bitter fighting, especially by the battle against the Nixon doctrine, grew rapidly in size and strength. By now the liberated zone made up four-fifths of the entire territory of our country, including the regions of greatest strategic importance, and embraced more than half the population. Thus it could be characterised as a real state. Economic, cultural and social development was carried out most successfully in the liberated zone, and the first shoots of socialism began to appear. In agriculture the movement for joint land cultivation became widespread, the area under crops increased continuously and production grew and new agricultural techniques were introduced. Traditional crafts were revived, and a number of industrial enterprises were set up to produce certain consumer goods and agricultural implements. The system of communications was extended, a thousand kilometres of new roads were built and a network of state and cooperative shops came into being. The financial and monetary systems were set on a firm and inde-

pendent foundation. Education and public health made particularly rapid progress, and the mass movement for education and culture became widespread. The movement for hygiene, preventive medicine took in the whole country, including the mountain regions inhabited by national minorities, as did the movement for a progressive way of life.

With all this going on, the Central Committee of our Party decided to call the Second National Party Congress at the beginning of 1972. After a review of the international and internal situation, the Congress summed up some of the results of the victory of the revolutionary forces, analysed and gave a unanimous evaluation of the nature and peculiarities of Lao society, set various political tasks, and determined the direction and forms of struggle during the people's national democratic revolution and the direct transition to socialism bypassing capitalism.

The Second Congress of the Party was a most important event in the political life of all our people, a landmark in the political and organisational development of the Party—the organising and inspiring force behind all the victories of our revolution. The decisions of this historic Congress became a guiding star for the Party, the armed forces and the entire people in their struggle against the country's enemies, and set the tasks to be carried out by the Lao revolution in the years to come.

While the peoples of Laos and Kampuchea were achieving their victories, the army and people of fraternal Vietnam mounted a strategic

offensive on all the fronts of South Vietnam and repulsed the piratic B-52 raids on Hanoi and Haiphong. It was a Dien Bien Phu in the air, which finished off the Nixon doctrine, which was in its death throes, once and for all. In the face of complete defeat at the hands of the three peoples of Indochina, and for the sake of a so-called "peace with honour", the American imperialists were forced to sign the Paris Agreements on Vietnam and to agree to withdraw all their armies and the armies of their satellites from South Vietnam. As for Laos, after their crushing defeat on the military, political and diplomatic fronts, the accomplices of the American imperialists had no choice but to sign an agreement on restoring peace and national concord in Laos. It was signed in Vientiane on 21 February 1973, and signified that the long aggressive, neocolonialist war fought by the American imperialists in Laos had ended in their complete and final defeat. In accordance with the agreement, a Provisional Government of National Unity was set up, along with a National Political Coalition Council, in which both sides were represented by an equal number of representatives. The capital of the country Vientiane and the former capital Luang Prabang were neutralised and given special status. All this was an enormous historic victory and crowned the eighteen-year-long struggle of our armed forces and the entire people for national liberation against the American imperialists and their henchmen. This victory opened new horizons for bringing the revolution to complete and final victory.

By mobilising all the forces of the nation, now on the upgrade, the national democratic revolution was carried out on a nationwide scale during the years 1973-1975. This took place in peaceful conditions and in a particular situation: the country was divided into three parts—the liberated areas, areas controlled by the enemy, and neutralised areas. Each of these had its own authority: revolutionary authority, the authority of the Vientiane side, and that of the central coalition.

After the Vientiane Agreement had been signed, the Party, with its slogan of “peace and national concord”, changed its methods of struggle, laying chief emphasis on a combination of mass political struggle by different sections of the population with legal struggle within the organs of the coalition in order to make the enemy abide strictly by the concluded agreements. To this end our Party strengthened its leading and directing role, and transferred part of its cadres and forces to this sector of the struggle, so as to further the development of the useful features of the various organs of the coalition and make the maximum use of the rights they gave the revolutionary forces. Making skilful use of a rich arsenal of methods, we forced the other side to agree to our demands, and thus created a legal basis for mass struggle. This was how we used the 18-point action programme of the coalition government, the agreement fixing the neutral status of the two cities, etc.

Using various revolutionary methods, aware of the reactionary and diehard character of our

adversaries, and taking into account the experience of participating in two coalitions, the Party held that the revolutionary violence of the masses was and always had been the basic means of attaining final victory; that the revolutionary strategy must always remain an offensive strategy. This is why the Party considered it its basic task to strengthen and expand the revolutionary forces all round, while at the same time continuing the struggle on the political, legal and diplomatic fronts. With this aim in mind it strengthened the liberated areas in every way, established massive armed and political forces, conducted broad-based agitation and organisational work among different sections of the urban population, carried on propaganda in the army and police of the adversary, cultivated the ability of the masses to employ all forms of struggle from the lowest to the highest, and created new support points and forces of the revolution inside the lair of the enemy.

Thanks to the Party's realistic rallying slogans, conscious of the dependable backing of the patriotic forces, and having gained a legal basis for struggle, various sections of the population in enemy-controlled areas and in the neutralised cities, especially workers, young people and students, who had long conceived a deep hatred for the thoroughly corrupt bureaucratic and military clique, came into motion, becoming more and more deeply and actively involved in the common struggle. Their demands grew constantly—from calling for democratic freedoms, for higher living standards, and for effective measures against corruption, right up

to doing away with American "aid" organisations, expulsion of American advisers, dismissal of reactionary officials, and the like. More and more people joined the mass struggle that was developing rapidly and energetically. These included government workers, small traders, petty proprietors, Buddhist monks, servicemen's families and even some soldiers and officers in the enemy's army and police. This paved the way for the growth of mass actions in various parts of the country into a movement to take power into their own hands. Specific examples of this are: the courageous action of the Vientiane power station workers, who initially demanded the dismissal of reactionaries from the station, and then took control of it; the unremitting forty-two-day struggle of the peasants and other sections of the population in the Kham Mouane district of Nong Bac, ending in their establishing their own authority over the entire district; the energetic protest movement of young people and students in Vientiane, Pakse, Savannakhet and other cities, demanding that Americans be expelled from the country, mercenary reactionaries be dismissed from authority, and that the neocolonialist education system foisted on them be abolished, etc.; and the insurrection in the 102nd battalion of the Vientiane army, during which the rebellious soldiers and officers, supported by various sections of the population, managed to establish control over the town of Houei Sai. All this showed that it really was possible for the people to gradually take power.

While a revolutionary situation was taking

shape in Laos, the struggle of the fraternal peoples of Vietnam and Kampuchea culminated in a great victory. Of especial significance was the successful strategic offensive launched by the army and people of Vietnam in April 1975. These events created the best possible conditions for our revolution. In view of this unique historical turn of events, our Party decided to call for a general uprising, for a general offensive, and urged the people to take power in the shortest possible time. It was planned to take advantage of the favourable positions of the revolutionary forces in all three zones and deliver three strategic blows: a mass uprising, military pressure of the revolutionary armed forces, and the demoralisation of the enemy army. Compounded with the legal struggle, this would open up and give full scope to the potential of the entire nation, unleash a decisive struggle, and rain unceasing blows on the enemy in all directions. All forces and means would thus be brought into play to gain decisive ascendancy over the enemy, leading to the abolition of the reactionary state apparatus and its instruments of repression, and putting into effect the Party's strategic plans.

In accordance with the Party's decisions and in view of the far-reaching changes in the three zones, an urgent dislocation of our troops began on 6 May 1975, with the effective support of the masses, to the main centres of the enemy zone, and first of all into such large cities as Vientiane, Pakse and Savannakhet, which were centres of enemy control, in order to put firm military pressure on the enemy. Simultaneously,

stormy actions of various sections of the population were begun under guidance of rebel committees in the enemy strongholds. Impressive demonstrations and meetings took place, condemning the crimes committed by the American imperialists and exposing the treacherous nature of the Lao reactionaries. This caused panic and confusion in the enemy camp. At the same time uprisings flared up in many of the enemy military units, which finally saw that the revolutionary cause was the right one. These units broke away from the enemy army and supported the struggle of the masses. Under this massive onslaught of the people and our army American military and civilian personnel, and the reactionary leaders and militarists, were forced to pack their bags in haste and leave the country. The enemy army and police, left leaderless, like a snake without its head, demoralised and disorganised, did not, on the whole, dare to put up any resistance.

While this was happening, we launched full-scale activity on the legal front, in the organs of the coalition government. It was, for instance, on our initiative that the government passed decisions on reorganising and redistributing responsibilities in the Ministry for Defence, and issued orders for armies to stay where they were, not to resist the people, remove the cruellest of the army commanders from their posts, turn in armaments to the arsenal, participate collectively in seminars, etc. As a result the remaining military and police units were compelled to turn in all their arms and military equipment to the patriotic armed forces and the people.

The old organs of government power, from provincial down to the lowest echelon fell to pieces one by one. In a few places reactionaries in disguise and political time-servers organised pseudo-uprisings in order to evade the effects of the revolution, or paraded as "progressive patriots" so as to infiltrate the people's revolutionary committees which had only just been set up. But they were quickly exposed and punished by the people. On 23 August 1975 a mass meeting attended by many thousands took place in Vientiane to mark the establishment of the revolutionary administration in the city and province of Vientiane. This was the culmination point of the setting up of revolutionary bodies of power at all levels and in all the districts previously under enemy control. Although at this point the coalition government remained nominally in power, the enemy zone had virtually ceased to exist.

In view of this situation, the National Congress of People's Representatives, elected by vote at provincial people's assemblies, convened in Vientiane on 1 December 1975. The Congress accepted the King's abdication, the resignation of the coalition government, and consented to the dissolution of the National Political Coalition Council. It also unanimously passed a series of historic decisions: on the abolition of the anachronistic monarchical regime and the inauguration of the People's Democratic Republic of Laos; on the formation of the Supreme People's Assembly; on the appointment of the President of the country and creation of the Government of the People's Democratic Republic

of Laos, and on the national flag, anthem and official language of the country. All the nationalities of the country, along with our brother countries, and our friends all over the world, received word of the brilliant success of the Congress, which completed its work on 2 December 1975, with deep gratification. This historic event marked the victorious culmination of the people's national democratic revolution in our country, and opened a splendid new chapter in the history of Laos, in which our people became the true masters of their country and destiny, and set out on the radiant road of building socialism under the guidance of the Lao People's Revolutionary Party.

* * *

From the day the revolutionary flag first began to flutter in the Vientiane sky as a symbol of our people's right to independence, to the day when it became the flag of the People's Democratic Republic of Laos, we traversed a difficult path full of ordeals and self-sacrifice. How many selfless heroes laid down their lives for their country, and how much effort and energy was expended, and blood spilt, by the patriots of Laos for the sake of our glorious victory!

These were years of glorious struggle in the history of our nation. In all the many centuries of Lao history, the country has never had to undergo such gruelling trials as it did in these thirty years.

Our ancestors had to withstand the aggression

of feudal states at more or less the same level of socio-economic development as our own. But our latter-day enemies were great imperialist powers with a colossal military and economic potential, a century ahead of us in technology and armaments and with a great deal of experience in conducting wars of aggression. The people of Laos, the makers of their history, have never before achieved a victory so splendid, so complete and final as that of today. This victory did not just restore the independence of Laos, an independence that had been flouted for more than two hundred years. It also made our multinational people the genuine master of their country after long years of living in slavery, poverty, backwardness and ignorance. They are masters of a country that is now fully independent, free, and on the road to socialism. In our deeply loved motherland, this victory made the cherished hopes and aspirations of the Lao people come true.

This magnificent victory was first and foremost a victory of the correct line and wise leadership of our Marxist-Leninist Party, the Party of the Lao working class which alone expresses the interests of all the working people in the country and of the entire nation, creatively applying the principles of Marxism-Leninism to the specific conditions of the country, our Party correctly determined the revolutionary strategy, tactics and methods of struggle, took up the banner of national democracy, and united all the nationalities of the country in a single national front, based on the alliance of workers and peasants. It managed to combine

the armed struggle with the political struggle, to coordinate the actions of the national forces with the three revolutionary streams of our time, made maximum use of the contradictions in the enemy camp to split its ranks and isolate it, gradually forced the adversary to give ground, going from one victory to the next, and, finally, seizing a historically favourable moment, led the revolution to final victory. Thanks to this creative application of the correct line and policy, the LPRP leadership played a decisive role in the final victory of the revolution in our country.

This great victory was the result of the solid unity of our entire people and the indestructible sense of communion between the army and the people, both of which were filled with determination to rout the aggressor. True to their fine national traditions and under the leadership of the Party, the people of Laos demonstrated unprecedented patriotism, heroism and will power in the course of the revolution. They did not shrink from sacrifices, fighting the enemy while continuing to work, and amassing strength for a long-drawn-out struggle. Their guiding principle, "The more persistent you fight, the stronger you become, and the more quickly you win", proved to be fully justified. Our army, initially consisting of small partisan detachments armed with antiquated guns and handmade weapons, gradually matured and became strong thanks to the care and attention of the entire people, and fought heroically on all the fronts to which it was directed by the revolution.

The millions of tons of metal rained upon it

by the enemy the army countered with hatred, courage, resourcefulness, and close unity with the people. It parried the enemy's every blow, and hit him without mercy. Countless heroic deeds highlight its history, and it covered itself with legendary martial glory. Its many glorious victories and heroic feats further enriched the glowing traditions of joint courageous and irrepressible struggle passed down to us by our ancestors. The brightest and most splendid chapter in the history of Laos had begun.

This was also a victory for the martial solidarity between our people and the fraternal peoples of Vietnam and Kampuchea, a victory for the unity that reposed on ardent patriotism compounded with genuine proletarian internationalism. Linked by their single colonial past, faced by a common enemy, and brought together by a common hatred and common ideals, the three fraternal nations stood shoulder to shoulder in their struggle, helping and supporting each other, and creating favourable conditions for each other in fighting the common enemy. The indissoluble and active communion between the peoples of Laos and Vietnam, between our own and the Vietnamese people's armies, between the Lao People's Revolutionary Party and the Communist Party of Vietnam, was and will remain one of the decisive reasons for the victory of our revolution both in liberating the motherland and in defending and building up the country in the new stage.

This great and historic victory was also made possible by the generous help and support of the

liberation struggle of the Lao people by the world revolutionary movement and all the progressive forces of the world. In the struggle fought at a time when the three revolutionary streams continually delivered powerful blows on imperialism, our people had the enormous, fine, and effective aid and support of the peoples of the Soviet Union and the other fraternal socialist countries based on the splendid principles of proletarian internationalism. Besides, it had substantial material support and help from some of the liberated states and other friendly countries, and from the movement for peace and democracy, and from all progressive mankind. This tremendous aid and solidarity increased the strength of our people and were a factor of vital importance, ensuring our victory in the long, glorious struggle.

But the correct and creative leadership provided by the Lao People's Revolutionary Party was the most important and fundamental of all the factors accounting for the success of the revolution.

**LESSONS TO BE DRAWN
FROM THE VICTORIOUS REVOLUTION
IN LAOS**

The great victory of our revolution was not just another affirmation of the immutable truth of the modern age that oppressed and exploited peoples are able to liberate themselves and overcome aggressive imperialism. It also provided some lessons on the application of Marxist-Leninist strategy, tactics and revolutionary methods in conditions of national democratic revolution in small countries at a low economic, cultural and social level.

Several basic lessons can be drawn from the rich practice of the victorious revolutionary struggle in Laos.

**1. THE NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC REVOLUTION.
THE ESSENCE OF AND INTERCONNECTION
BETWEEN THE TWO FUNDAMENTAL PROBLEMS
OF THE REVOLUTION AND THEIR SOLUTION**

Many factors play a part in bringing about victory in a revolution, but the most important of all is the correctness of the strategic course

charted by the Party. This course must be directed to solving the chief contradictions in the society concerned. At the same time, the policy of developing the revolution must be aligned with the objective laws of the modern age.

Laos is a country with a colonial past. It endured aggressions of the imperialists and fell under their sway. All our basic national rights were usurped by the imperialists. This is why, from the moment it came into being, first as the Communist Party of Indochina and then as the Lao People's Revolutionary Party, the Party was faced with the immediate task of expelling the colonialists, liberating the nation, and winning the independence and freedom of the country to realise the aspirations of all Lao patriots.

The distinctive feature of colonialism in the imperialist epoch is that the imperialists enter into collusion with the most reactionary circles in the colonial countries to establish and maintain their domination. In the past, colonialists colluded with the feudal gentry, whereas under the new type of colonialism it is collusion between the colonialists, the feudal gentry and the compradore bourgeoisie, who don the garb of "nationalists" and "democrats" in order to mercilessly exploit and oppress the people. So, in order to get rid of the imperialist colonialists it is essential, at the same time, to get rid of their support—the reactionary classes of society. And in order to mobilise and strengthen the national forces, it is essential to win basic democratic freedoms for the working people, who comprise the majority of society and who

ultimately determine the fate of the liberation movement.

This is why the revolution to liberate the country must simultaneously be democratic in content. Our Party's strategic policy was directed precisely to both the national and the democratic objectives, in accordance with the specific features of our country and with the needs of the time.

As a political organisation of the working class, following Marxist-Leninist theory, our Party saw that *the national and democratic problems were always closely connected with the class problem.*

In each historical period, the class which represents the most advanced mode of production also represents the nation and has the potential to become its standard-bearer. In Europe, for example, the bourgeoisie at one time represented the most advanced mode of production, and therefore carried the banner of national democracy. It headed the bourgeois revolution and, having overthrown the decayed feudal system, set up the capitalist system based on the principles of bourgeois nationalism and democracy. But after capitalism grew into imperialism, the bourgeoisie began to hinder the development of their nations and took to enslaving other peoples, fully losing their leading historical role.

But the working class represents a new, socialist mode of production. From the moment it first comes into being it is the sole class, therefore, capable of uniting and leading all the working people, the entire nation, in the struggle

to overthrow capitalism, liberate the nation, build a new, socialist society, and set society and nation on the path of progressive development. The power of the three revolutionary streams of modern times, which began growing in the period of the Great October Socialist Revolution, serves as constant and graphic evidence of the historical role of the working class.

This truth was also corroborated by events in Laos and all Indochina. Ever since the French colonialists established their domination over our country, different kinds of national movements never ceased to spring up within it, led by different classes and sections of society, including the feudal gentry and tribal chiefs, as well as the bourgeoisie, petty bourgeoisie, and intelligentsia. All these movements, to a greater or lesser degree, were of a bourgeois national democratic character. But none of these movements could in practice end in victory, since the essence of their struggle and the direction in which they developed did not meet the basic demands of the masses and were at odds with the objective laws of the times. Hence they could not involve all the nation's forces nor secure international assistance and support against the nation's enemies.

The victory of the Great October Socialist Revolution, which opened up the way to the liberation of all oppressed people, elicited a lively response of the patriotic movement of our people. And so our Party took shape, the Party of the working class. The first political programme of the Communist Party of Indochina (1930) stated that *the first thing to do is to*

bring about the national democratic revolution and thereupon effect a direct transition to the socialist revolution, bypassing the capitalist stage. This proposition was extended in the political programme passed at the Second Congress of the Lao People's Revolutionary Party (1972). The latter says that "once the people's national democratic revolution has been brought about, the conditions are created on a countrywide scale for the direct transition to socialism bypassing the capitalist stage of development, and for active participation in the struggle for peace, national independence, democracy and socialism throughout the world".

It is therefore quite obvious that, right from the beginning, our Party regarded the national liberation revolution in our country as a national democratic revolution that was to be achieved under the leadership of the working class, and that conformed to the principles of proletarian revolution. The tasks of this revolution were not confined to just winning national independence and democracy; the revolution also had to lead the country to socialism and communism. Furthermore, the Party always considered the national democratic revolution in our country a component part of the world revolutionary process.

The Party's general policy during the national democratic revolution was consistently revolutionary and profoundly scientific. Suiting the basic goal of the revolution, the Party's general policy determined its strategy, tactics, and specific forms and methods of revolutionary struggle. Putting our Party line into practice

meant the following: raising the national banner, the banner of democracy under the leadership of the working class and its vanguard, the Marxist-Leninist party; setting up a broad, united national front based on the alliance between the working class and the peasantry under the guidance of the Party; establishing organs of worker-peasant power and a worker-peasant army under the leadership of the Party; applying flexible tactics; using various means and forms of struggle to solve all the tasks of the revolution with reliance on the revolutionary violence of the masses, unleashing a struggle to overcome the imperialist aggressors, the feudal gentry and the compradore bourgeoisie; simultaneously preparing the political, economic, cultural and ideological conditions for socialism while bringing about the national democratic revolution; making the best possible use of patriotism and the national forces in close association with proletarian internationalism and the revolutionary forces of our time, and also fulfilling other tasks. All of this ensured the full victory of the national democratic revolution in our country, and presented favourable opportunities for immediate transition to the socialist revolution.

The general policy of "raising the banner of national democratic revolution under the leadership of the Party of the working class, and heading to socialism" is, as we see it, not merely the right line for the revolution in Laos, but also fully meets the laws governing the development of the struggle for national independence and democracy in the modern epoch.

Working out the correct general line is extremely important for the fate of the revolution. The Party can lead the revolution to victory only if it works out both a strategic and a specific tactical course of action, taking account of the real situation in the country at each stage of the struggle. The Party analysed the character of Laotian society and the basic contradictions within it, and determined the substance and the basic tasks at all stages of the revolution, along with the aims and the alignment of forces in the revolution at various sectors of the struggle. Moreover, it analysed and evaluated the relations between the classes and the possibilities for demoralising the enemy forces, so as to correctly define the basic tasks and political goals at each stage, and direct the spearhead of the revolutionary struggle at the enemy who is the most dangerous at the particular moment. This meant that the Party had to show a creative and scientific approach to its leadership of the revolution; it needed to know the general laws of the revolution and how it would develop. It also needed a thorough understanding of social practice, in order to provide correct solutions for problems without deviating to "left" or "right". This was especially important in a country such as ours, where the population is made up of many nationalities and ethnic groups and where there is an insufficiently high level of class differentiation, while the social standing of the classes and different sections of society, and the relations between them, have specific features.

Before becoming a colony, Laos was a de-

centralised feudal state made up of several principalities and peopled by many mountain tribes and nationalities. The country had a private, scattered, subsistence type of economy of the early feudal variety. The French colonialists, though they did introduce some elements of capitalist economy in our country, continued by and large to rely on the feudal lords and kept the feudal and prefeudal forms of exploitation. They also supported the reactionary feudal culture in order to consolidate their rule and to oppress the people, notably the peasantry and the working people of different nationalities. To sum up, during this time *Laos was in form a colony, and in content a feudal state.*

Immediately after the French colonialists had been expelled, there began the intrusion of American imperialists. They tried to set up a social basis for neocolonialism in Laos, using the feudal gentry, the nobility, the militarists, and the compradore bourgeoisie, and with their help put together a puppet regime under the guise of independence, in order to implement a neocolonialist policy and make our economy an appendage of their own. At the same time they disseminated their decadent culture to poison our people's consciousness. During this period, *Laos was a new type of colony, a semi-feudal state.*

Thus for nearly a century the basic contradictions in the country were, first, between the entire Lao nation and the imperialist aggressors, initially the French and then the American, together with their local mercenary accomplices,

and, second, between the working people, chiefly peasants of different nationalities, and the compradore bourgeoisie and the feudal lords. Both these contradictions were organically linked and therefore had to be resolved at the same time. Thus, *the struggle waged against the imperialists and their stooges was inseparably linked with that waged against the compradore bourgeoisie and the feudal lords.* In any case, insofar as imperialism and its henchmen—the compradore bourgeoisie, bureaucracy, militarists and reactionary feudal gentry—were the most hostile and dangerous force, *it was against them that the spearhead of the struggle for national independence had to be directed.* Solving one of the contradictions created the conditions for conclusive resolution of the other, and for the liberation of all the working people. In the course of the struggle against the imperialists and their henchmen, it was also essential *to gradually settle the fundamental question of the democratic revolution,* that of doing away with exploitation and injustice, gradually increasing the role of the working people, especially the peasantry of different nationalities, with the aim of creating the maximum unity of all the forces of the nation, demoralising and isolating the adversary, and concentrating forces against the chief enemy at the particular time.

Having worked out this strategic line, the Party carried two banners at once for several decades—that of the nation and that of democracy—and correctly determined the link between the two strategic tasks. It was precisely thus that the Party was able to unite and rouse the major

rity of the population, from all sections of society, for joint struggle against the imperialist aggressors and their reactionary henchmen, and bring it to full and final victory. But this line of strategy was correct and creative not only because it was based on a thorough analysis of the main contradictions in Laotian society, which established the chief contradiction on which to concentrate our basic forces. What also made it correct and creative was that it determined the essence of the tasks of the national democratic revolution, taking account of the special features of the social structure and the level of society achieved.

Laos is a thinly populated country, but its population consists of many nationalities and ethnic groups. With no central authority it was split up for a very long time into different parts. The sense of national unity was therefore lacking. Besides, the ruling classes and imperialists, particularly the Americans, took advantage of this for their own ends, whipping up the enmity and mistrust that existed between the various nationalities and ethnic groups, and also using such insidious methods as that of planting seeds of reactionary nationalism opposed to the revolution. This is why the essence of our national revolution was not just to drive out the imperialist aggressors and their henchmen, not just to win national independence, but also "to awaken an awareness of national unity, to achieve the equality of all within the framework of the one big family that is the Lao nation, to eradicate the narrow-minded prejudices and enmities between nationalities, and to develop as

far as possible the fine traditions and potentials of all for the benefit of liberation and defence of the country" (from the Political Programme adopted by the Second Congress of the Lao People's Revolutionary Party, 1972). Such was one of the main ways to unite the entire country into a single whole for the joint struggle against the nation's enemies.

From the very first days of resistance to the colonialists, the Party gave top priority to unifying the different nationalities, viewing it as a strategic matter essential for mobilising the masses, uniting the revolutionary forces, and setting up support bases of resistance. Putting a series of programmes into practice, the Party helped the various nationalities to rid themselves of the feeling of hostility they had previously felt for one another, introduced political equality and in many ways improved the condition of the people. From cultivating a feeling of love for their native place, their nationality and ethnic group, the Party went on to develop a sense of national unity and patriotism among all the nationalities of the country, and to bring out the great potential of each nationality to harness it to the cause of national liberation. This made it possible for the Party to set up support bases for the revolution in areas settled by different nationalities, to broaden its ranks, establish armed forces, lay a foundation for the Party, and forge close solidarity among all the nationalities in the support bases of resistance in various parts of the country.

In the period that followed, once large liberated areas had been formed and revolution-

ary organs of power set up, the conditions arose for our Party to develop economy, culture, education and health care in areas settled by different nationalities, to expand national development, train skilled national personnel, educate a national intelligentsia, create the conditions for a gradual elimination of inequality between various nationalities, exercise their factual equality in all fields and enable each of them to make its own maximum contribution to the great cause of the revolution. While establishing national unity, the Party always kept to the class position of the working class, striving to resolve the national question with good effect and forestalling such harmful tendencies as great-power chauvinism or narrow nationalism.

Thanks to the Party's correct policy, the forces of the revolution grew rapidly throughout the country. Each day the power of the solidarity of all the nationalities of the country became more apparent. The intrigues of the enemy, directed at dividing the nationalities, came to nothing. So did the most dangerous and perfidious strategic scheme of the American imperialists, that of using national strife to set up special-purpose troops to counter our revolution. It may be said that the Party's creative application of the strategy of national revolution in the specific conditions of Laos—that of radically solving the problems of crushing the imperialist aggressors and their henchmen, and of securing the equality of all nationalities in the country—had decisive significance for the complete victory of our people.

As regards the fundamental question of the

democratic revolution, the Party decided that Laos being an agrarian country where the working peasantry made up the overwhelming majority of the population, democracy *primarily and chiefly means democracy for the peasantry*, while liberation of the nation *primarily and chiefly means liberation of the peasantry*. Our agriculture is petty and scattered, extremely backward farming at the mercy of the elements, implements and farming techniques are most primitive and limited. Not only did the multinational peasantry suffer from the feudal and prefeudal forms of exploitation, but also from its total dependence on the whims of nature, and was in the clutches of every kind of superstition and harmful custom. This condemned the peasants to want and suffering, to disease and ignorance, and affected all the clans and tribes. In countries at an advanced stage of feudalism such slogans as "Land Reform", and "All Land to the Tillers", are strategic in the national democratic revolution and extremely important in drawing the peasantry into the revolutionary struggle, whereas in Laos the slogan which fully reflected the cherished hopes and urgent needs of the peasants was "Joint Struggle, Growth of Production, Better Material Conditions, and a Higher Level of Culture", together with the appeal to abolish the various forms of feudal exploitation.

For this reason the democratic revolution in Laos had to tackle two fundamental tasks: *winning democratic rights, abolishing feudal exploitation and developing production, and improving the condition of the peasantry in all*

respects. The first task was gradually solved as the revolution developed, by means appropriate to the specific relations between the peasants and the feudal gentry in each particular area, and inside each ethnic group, so as to unite the broadest forces and direct the spearhead of the struggle against the most dangerous enemy. The second task was solved before the others, even while the bases of the revolution were being established. In the initial stage the population was helped to increase production, health services and education were established, and the beginnings of a new way of life were cultivated, and so on, to rouse the masses in the provinces and organise them for the joint struggle. Once the liberated areas had been established, the organs of power and the mass revolutionary organisations took part in mobilising the population and stimulating production, in drawing up recommendations and helping with the solution of such varied problems as, for example, the provision of agricultural tools, draught animals, seeds, irrigation schemes, organising the population for joint production, improving agricultural techniques, etc. Measures were also taken to develop culture, education and the health services with the aim of gradually improving the life of the peasantry.

The Party managed to define and solve these two fundamental problems after studying and drawing the correct conclusions from its great experience of working among the people in different rural areas and among the different nationalities. This, among other things, testifies to the creative treatment of the strategy of

national democratic revolution in our country. Thanks to this the peasants of the different nationalities gradually became convinced in the revolutionary cause and began to link their fate to the revolution, resolutely marching with the revolution to its victorious conclusion.

In the setting of the neocolonialist regime imposed by the Americans, the mercenary ruling clique ruthlessly persecuted the population of the regions under enemy control. Using its privileged position and special rights, it strengthened its hold on the economic life of the country, undermining the pillars of the national economy. This had ruinous consequences for the working people and also for other sections of the population. Thus demands for *democratic rights, for an improvement in living standards, and for the abolition of the privileges and advantages of the compradore bourgeoisie, the bureaucracy, militarists and national feudal gentry*, were consonant with the aspirations of the majority of the people and had a magnetic attraction for the population in the enemy zone. On a few occasions, these slogans brought the struggle of the masses in the towns to a high revolutionary pitch—especially at the time of the national uprising for the seizure of power in 1975, and played a prominent role in the victory of the revolution.

The fundamental questions of the national revolution and those of the democratic revolution are closely linked and organically interdependent, insofar as each fundamental question has a *national character, on the one hand, and a definite democratic character, on the other.*

Solving the national question offers the conditions for solving the question of democracy, and vice versa. It would therefore be incorrect to set the "national" before the "democratic" or to attach greater importance to the "national" as compared with the "democratic".

At the time when our efforts were concentrated on the struggle against the American aggressors, the compradore bourgeoisie, bureaucracy, militarists and reactionary feudal lords, the "national" and the "democratic" were equally important for the solution of the most vital problems, because both the plunderers and traitors of the nation, and the most brutal of the people's oppressors, were targets of the revolution. The slogan "Put back the enemy step after step, destroy the enemy bit by bit, go from one victory to the next" reflected the notion of "stage of struggle" in resolving both problems—the national and the democratic—at each specific period.

At the same time, insofar as the national and democratic questions are always closely connected with the problem of the class struggle, one must, to solve any concrete problem, make a detailed analysis of the class relations in social practice, in order to avoid a dogmatic mechanical approach, especially in such conditions as those in our country, where the differentiation into classes is insufficiently clear-cut. In any case, the national and democratic problems must, in the final analysis, be essentially dealt with simultaneously. This means that at the same time as liberating the nation and winning independence, all power in the country must im-

mediately go to the people.

When raising the banner of national democracy, one must be able to differentiate between strategy and tactics, between the fundamental and the immediate questions. But most important of all is that one should never, in no circumstances, forget the class essence of the revolution and of its final aims. In some cases, therefore, for tactical reasons at this or that stage, we did not emphasise the leading role of the Party, did not talk about socialism, but instead focussed attention on peace, neutrality, national concord, coalition government, and the like. But some of the fundamental questions of the people's national democratic revolution should be tackled immediately. These include making sure that the revolution is led by the Party of the working class, setting up the alliance of workers and peasants, establishing the people's armed forces and organs of the people's power under the guidance of the Party, and later, in the course of the revolution, developing and expanding them. At the same time the Party must, in the appropriate conditions, immediately begin to set up an economic and cultural base for people's democracy as the precondition for the transition to socialism.

Such are the basic lessons of our Party's work, drawn from the successful implementation of its policy of national democratic revolution over thirty years. Now, the revolution has entered a new stage, the stage of socialist revolution. The content of the revolutionary tasks has changed accordingly, *the banner of national democracy has become that of national independence and*

socialism. But the lessons drawn from putting the Party's strategic line into practice remain as important as before, because the essence of the slogan of national democracy, adhered to for thirty years, is the essence of the national democracy of the working class marching to socialism. The political, economic, cultural and ideological preconditions created by the Party under this banner now constitute a sound basis for building a socialist society in our country. Using the accumulated experience in the new conditions, the Party will no doubt achieve victory at this new stage of the revolution too, thanks to its consistent revolutionary character and mastery of Marxist-Leninist science.

2. CREATION OF A LASTING WORKER-PEASANT ALLIANCE UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF THE PARTY

The alliance of the working class and the peasantry is one of the fundamental principles of Marxism-Leninism, one of the essential conditions of any revolution carried out under the leadership of the working class. The peasantry, comprising the overwhelming majority of the people of Laos, is the direct producer of material wealth for society. At the same time, it endures tremendous oppression, and thus constitutes an enormous force with a developed revolutionary character and great potential. This makes it the natural and most trustworthy ally of the working class, the hegemon of revolution. "A people's revolution", as Vladimir

Lenin said, "one actually sweeping the majority into its stream, could be such only if it embraced both the proletariat and the peasants... Without such an alliance democracy is unstable and socialist transformation is impossible."¹ This is why the utmost development of the revolutionary potential of the peasantry, under the leadership of the working-class Party, and the creation of a lasting alliance between the working class and the peasantry, constitute one of the basic principles of Marxism-Leninism, and serve as one of the essential conditions for the victory both of the national democratic and the socialist revolution.

The question of the worker-peasant alliance is of particular significance in Laos. Under the colonial regime and feudal system our agriculture was small-scale and extremely backward, and the peasantry, making up about 90 per cent of the population, lived in poverty and ignorance. Time and again it rose with arms in hand against the colonialists and their henchmen. "The peasantry of our country is a large productive and revolutionary force of society, it is one of the two main forces of the revolution" (Political Programme passed at the 2nd Congress of the Lao People's Revolutionary Party, 1972). Although our Party arose in an underdeveloped country with an indistinct differentiation of classes, and with a working class only just coming into being, it was still able to become the sole leader of the revolution and

¹ V. I. Lenin, "The State and Revolution", *Collected Works*, Vol. 25, pp. 416-17.

to lead it to full and decisive victory. This victory was of course conditioned by several factors, but the decisive one was that our Party was able to create a lasting alliance between the working class and the peasantry. "All the victories won by the revolution and the growth and development of the revolutionary forces were conditioned by the Party creating and reinforcing the worker-peasant alliance and rousing the peasants to fight for a new life, against the imperialist aggressors and their henchmen, traitors to their country" (Report on the Political Programme of the Party at the 2nd Congress of the Lao People's Revolutionary Party, 1972).

In setting up the alliance of workers and peasants the most important thing is for the working-class party to have the correct political line, *enabling it to mobilise the peasants for revolutionary struggle*. This line must meet the cherished aspirations and vital interests of the peasants, taking the working-class position into account. The peasantry is one of the major forces of the revolution, but it does not represent any definite mode of production, and for this reason does not have its own independent political line for its own liberation. Only the working class and its vanguard, armed with the scientific revolutionary theory of Marxism-Leninism, and possessing a firm and consistent revolutionary line, can combine its basic interests with those of the peasantry and of the nation as a whole, and thus correctly define the aims and methods of revolutionary struggle, making it possible to bring about the complete

liberation of the nation, and of the peasantry in particular. This is borne out by the many years of struggle in our country, including the 30-year-long national democratic revolution. While mobilising the peasantry and putting the worker-peasant alliance into practice, our Party never ceased to be aware of the fact that the peasantry has a powerful charge of revolutionary feeling, and that this becomes an enormous force only when the peasantry follows the working class and is under its leadership. *The peasantry becomes a powerful detachment of the revolution only if it is together with the working class.* The working class was weak in Laos because of the colonial regime and feudal system. The peasantry was the basic productive force of society, and all our revolutionary organisations and forces consisted chiefly of peasants. This is why we would have most certainly been deflected from the right revolutionary path and would have moved away from the principles of Marxism-Leninism and scientific socialism, if we had not, from the very beginning, established the leading role of the working class with regard to the peasantry, and if we had not been guided by the only correct ideology, that of Marxism-Leninism. This is one of the most important conclusions to be drawn from the experience of revolutionary struggle in our country.

It was precisely because the Party took the standpoint of the working class as its approach that it was able to come to a correct and creative evaluation and solution to the peasant question, a solution which corresponded to the general laws of society's development, and to the

specific features of Laos. One should thus consider the question of liberating the peasantry in close connection with that of liberating the nation as a whole. The peasantry in Laos is made up of many different nationalities and ethnic groups, whose relations with one another remain complicated to this day. The nationalities and ethnic groups were oppressed by their own reactionary leaders, and moreover, the imperialists and feudal gentry had cultivated inequality, enmity and hostility between them, carrying out the policy of "divide and rule". Thus, the struggle against the ruling classes, against their policy of whipping up national strife, the attempts to eradicate the backward notions held by different nationalities, and the continued efforts to strengthen national unity—to put the real equality between the ethnic groups into practice—were not just strategic tasks of the national revolution, but were among those most fundamental issues whose solution helped mobilise and organise the peasantry as one of the basic forces of the revolution under the leadership of the working class, and thus to create the forces necessary for the liberation of the nation and of the peasantry itself.

The liberation of the peasantry in a colonial, feudal country must usually be accompanied by land reform, the expropriation of feudal property and the implementation of the slogan, "Land to the Tiller". But agriculture in Laos was subsistence farming, the level of production was extremely low, survivals of prefeudal forms of exploitation were still strong and the peasants, oppressed by feudal gentry and officials, dragged

out a miserable existence. Agriculture lacked sufficient basic production components, such as agricultural tools, draught animals, irrigation, farming techniques, etc., which caused the productivity of agriculture to remain low. Thus, although the peasants worked themselves to the bone, and despite the favourable natural conditions, they still could not provide for themselves. Moreover, they were trapped by mysticism, superstition and harmful customs, which made their lives even harder and more depressing, and this ultimately also slowed down production. This is why the liberation of the peasants in Laos required that all forms of prefeudal exploitation and all the privileges and advantages of the local rulers be abolished, on the one hand, and, on the other, that all the potential and forces of the revolution be used to satisfy the elementary requirements of production and to improve the peasants' lives. It was necessary to establish conditions for expanding production, to introduce the achievements of culture, science and technology into the peasants' lives, and to gradually improve their material and cultural standards. These were the pressing needs and cherished aspirations of the Lao peasantry. But the peasants could not solve their problems on their own. Only the Party, from its working-class standpoint, could find an all-embracing and scientific solution to the problems of the peasantry in Laos.

The Party used special methods to mobilise the peasantry and create the alliance between the workers and peasants. A particular feature of the revolution in Laos is that the political

struggle, right from the very beginning of the revolution, went hand in hand with armed struggle. Thus, in many localities and ethnic regions, the first contacts between peasants and workers came about through the armed forces and the Party's propaganda detachments. Our cadres, Party members and soldiers in the armed forces and propaganda detachments combined armed struggle with propaganda work and helped the peasants to improve production and the conditions of life. At the same time, they conducted explicative work, propagating the national and democratic programme of the Party in the rural areas. In turn, the peasantry, once this enlightening and organisational work had been carried out among them, immediately joined the armed revolutionary struggle, i.e. the highest form of revolutionary struggle. *The propaganda work done by the armed forces in mobilising the peasantry, and the creation during the armed struggle of an alliance between the workers and the peasants, are important features of the revolution in Laos.* Not only did this correspond to the specific features of the revolutionary struggle in Laos, linking the peasants with the armed forces of the Party and helping them to understand the policy and methods of revolutionary struggle. It also led to the formation of a dependable fighting solidarity between the working class and the peasantry, which was tried and cemented in the process of the armed struggle. The political awareness of the entire peasantry of Laos grew in the hard and long-drawn-out struggle by the side of the working class. The peasants understood that

their basic needs could only be fully satisfied by first bringing about the complete liberation of the nation. *This resulted in the peasants identifying their feelings of patriotism with their understanding of democracy, their national feeling and their class consciousness*; tight bonds linked the peasantry with the Party, and the alliance between the workers and peasants became even more enduring.

In the work with the peasantry and in forming the alliance between the workers and peasants in rural areas, the Party selected creative and specific methods appropriate to the particular features of each area. Thus, in the *ethnic mountain areas*, where local princes and tribal leaders still had influence over the common toilers, the Party, while appealing directly to the masses, also worked with the local chiefs. We did this to create opportunities for direct contacts with the masses, to rouse and organise the peasantry, and then, relying at this stage on the peasants, to draw the princes and chiefs into the revolution and convince them gradually to stop oppressing and exploiting the peasants. *In rural areas controlled by the enemy*, the Party started straightaway with propaganda work among the peasant masses. It called upon them to oppose requisitions, the high poll-tax, the press-ganging of men into the army, labour conscription, repression, and to demand democratic rights, abolition of the privileges and special rights of enemy henchmen, and the right to manage their own lives. The level of the demands made in different parts of the country differed according to the alignment of forces in each specific

case. The process of developing democracy was carried out *in the liberated areas*. The revolutionary organs of power mobilised the masses while exercising their leadership and helping them to expand production, improve the conditions of life, and ensured that the working peasants of all the nationalities and ethnic groups had the right to be sole masters of their fate.

While these methods were being used to form the alliance between the peasants and workers, mass organisations were set up and consolidated under the leadership of the Party, the armed forces continued to grow in size and strength and revolutionary organs of power were established and continually strengthened. *The alliance of workers and peasants became one of the most powerful of the Party's tools in the revolutionary struggle.* This explains why, while the national democratic revolution was being brought about, all the organs of the people's power in the liberated areas, furthering the standpoint of the working class, were able to carry out democratic reforms, to expand production and improve the life of the population, and, in effect, exercised the dictatorship of the workers and peasants under the leadership of the Party. After this revolution was accomplished, the rock-like alliance between the workers and the peasants made it possible for the people's democratic state, led by the Party, to get down to carrying out the historical tasks of the dictatorship of the proletariat. These included realising the socialist revolution and the building of socialism while bypassing the capital-

ist stage, and putting into practice the cherished dreams of the peasants and of all the working people in the country: liberation from oppression and exploitation, from poverty and ignorance, and achievement of a happy, civilised life.

3. SETTING UP THE UNITED NATIONAL FRONT BASED ON THE WORKER-PEASANT ALLIANCE LED BY THE PARTY

The Party's Political Programme of 1972 stated: "The solid unity of the entire nation is one of the factors determining the fate of our country." The history of our people, going right back to earliest times, bears this out. During the national democratic revolution the question of uniting all the potential forces into a broad national front based on the worker-peasant alliance and led by the Party with the aim of splitting, isolating and then wiping out the enemy, was one of the strategic issues of decisive importance determining either victory or defeat. Hence, at all stages of the revolution, including the period of struggle to save the country, and against American imperialism, the Party, while following its general strategic line and working for its tactical political goals, continuously put forward a concrete united front policy, doing so in various forms and using the appropriate tactical slogans. This was directed to bringing all the people together, regardless of their social position, nationality and creed, to winning all the patriotic and progressive elements to its side, to neutralising as many of the enemy forces as possible, and thus to focussing the spearhead of

the attack on the imperialist aggressors and their stooges.

At the beginning of the forties, when the Party was working underground among the masses, using the slogan "Fight the French, Expel the Japanese and Win Independence", the Alliance for the Independence of Laos, which was one of the forms of the united front acting under the leadership of the Party, managed to unite workers, young people, civil servants and the urban poor (including Vietnamese emigrés living in Laos). It also won the cooperation of the Free Lao Front (Lao Itsala) of the intelligentsia and progressively disposed petty bourgeoisie. With the surrender of militarist Japan, the Party seized the favourable opportunity and called on the people to rise up and take power. On 12 October 1945 Laos was proclaimed an independent state.

When the French colonialists again invaded the country, the Party set up the Lao Liberation Front (Neo Lao Itsala). The slogan was "People of All Nationalities and All Sections of the Population, Regardless of Class, Social Background, Creed, Sex, and Age, Unite in the Struggle Against the French and for National Independence". The Lao Liberation Front used this to rouse people of all nationalities and all social backgrounds to fight for national liberation and counter the interventionists. The Front fulfilled its historic role brilliantly, overcoming the French colonialists.

In the period that followed, suiting the new conditions of the revolutionary struggle and making use of the experience it had accumu-

lated, the Party worked out a new united front policy. Creative and correct application of this policy brought remarkable success. American imperialism, applying its neocolonialist policy, became the chief enemy of the country at this new stage of the struggle. On the one hand, the American imperialists took advantage of the independence and democracy that had been formally declared and resorted to all kinds of insidious political and economic tricks to deceive and cajole the masses. On the other hand, they launched fierce armed attacks directed at destroying the revolutionary forces and unleashing barbaric military operations in our country. The patriotism felt by all the people of Laos who went through the struggle against the French colonialists grew deeper, the revolutionary forces became more battle-hardened, and the justice of their cause became more and more obvious. The political prestige of the Party grew constantly, both inside and outside the country.

In this situation, *the Party worked out a new united front policy*. Relying as before on the alliance between the working class and the peasants, this new policy was aimed first of all at securing the solid unity of the working people of all nationalities, and simulataneously at an alliance with the neutralist forces and members of the upper strata of society who resented the interference of the American imperialists and the mercenary policy of their puppets. The intention of such an alliance was to split the enemy ranks and isolate and then destroy the principal enemy. Thus the Lao Patriotic Front

(Neo Lao Haksat) came into being, succeeding to the cause of the Lao Liberation Front and taking on its historic mission at the basic stage of the revolutionary struggle.

The Lao Patriotic Front stuck to the letter of the Party's united front policy for twenty years under the banner of national democracy and the slogan of "*Peace, Neutrality, Independence, Democracy, Unity and Prosperity*". This policy was carried forward by flexible and skilful tactics, using different forms of cooperation with other forces ranging from coordinating operations in each specific case to formally organised alliance, from political alliances to military alliances, from joint actions in various mass organisations to cooperation with individual groupings in the very machinery of the central authority. Not only did the united front policy bring together people of all nationalities and ethnic groups from the main sections of society, it also helped draw people over to our side from other social groups, even including some people from the ruling echelon.

One of the most important results of the Party's united front policy applied during this period was that *it attracted the intermediary forces to our side and established political and military cooperation with the patriotic neutralist forces, the most progressive section of the intermediary forces*. The patriotic neutralist forces came from circles of the intelligentsia, civil servants, students, the national bourgeoisie and Buddhist priests, who wanted a peaceful settlement of the Lao question and were dissatisfied with the interventionist policy of American imperialism,

and the policy of the imperialists and their yes-men of whipping up a civil war. Later on the neutralist forces were joined by several figures of the ruling echelons from the officers corps, the so-called parliament and others. There was a particular increase in their numbers after the Patriotic Front published its political programme at the beginning of 1956, setting the slogan of peace, neutrality and national concord. The patriotic neutralist forces took an active part in the struggle of the masses against the American imperialists' intervention and against the policy of civil war followed by the Americans and the reactionary forces of Laos. They also played an important role in drawing up the Vietiane Agreement of 1957. These forces coordinated their action with ours in the first coalition government on such important questions as the supplementary parliamentary elections, the passing of the Constitution, which included a number of progressive clauses, the promulgation of laws giving the people democratic rights, etc. All this demonstrated the *practical cooperation* (not formally organised) between the revolutionary and the intermediary forces.

The perfidious actions of the American imperialists and ultrareactionaries, who used demagogic pretexts to do away with the coalition government and install a fascist dictatorship, were resisted energetically by the masses, leading to a deep split in the enemy camp and helping to bring about the progressive coup of August 1960. The work done by our Party brought the intermediary forces to an understanding of our point of view. They agreed that it would not be

possible to realise the principle of peace and neutrality until the American imperialists and their reactionary henchmen were defeated and national independence was gained. Thus the struggle of the intermediary forces took the necessary direction, making it even more large-scale, while they themselves became an important political force possessing their own army. The cooperation between the Lao Patriotic Front and the patriotic neutralist forces reached a new level—it became formally organised practical cooperation. Both sides carried out joint actions in accordance with a common programme and under the common leadership provided by the Liaison Committee of the Patriotic Forces, an organ of our coalition. But as far as organisation was concerned, each side remained independent. The next step forward was the transition *from political cooperation to political and military cooperation*. The armed forces of both sides coordinated their operations and supported each other in the joint regions of the two sides and in regions controlled by one or the other side. They operated according to a jointly worked-out programme, but each preserved its own organisation, leadership and military command. The form that this cooperation took was of tremendous significance in increasing and strengthening the revolutionary forces of the nation and played a very important role in the victory of our revolution during the struggle to save the country from the American imperialists.

The cooperation with the intermediary forces enriched the Party by providing it with the valuable experience they had gained in their

policy of a united front. It may be summarised as follows.

In a semi-feudal country suffering from colonial oppression, such as Laos, with an insufficiently clear-cut differentiation into classes and with an as yet poorly developed capitalist class and working class, the intermediary forces play a very important role in all spheres of activity, especially the social and the cultural. The position and interests of these strata were encroached upon by the American imperialists and their stooges. Therefore, they developed patriotic and progressive tendencies and in certain conditions demonstrated their ability to accept the line set by our Party in the national democratic revolution. Thus, with the Party taking the right approach, they were able to act as an accelerating force on the movement of the masses, especially in the towns. Our Party had to fight in every possible way for these forces, and to draw them over to its side in order to expand the progressive people's movement. Once the solid unity of the working people of all nationalities had been established, *one of the Party's most important tasks of the united front policy was to draw the intermediary forces over to its side, and to establish cooperation with them.* This was the outcome of the all-round and correct analysis of the situation that had arisen in the country.

The act of drawing the intermediary forces over to its side was always one of the strategic features of proletarian revolution. It was of particular significance in the national democratic revolution and was witnessed in many countries.

But usually it is a matter of drawing these forces into a united front led by the Party and setting them against the reactionary forces. In Laos cooperation with the intermediary forces had its own specific character. Having evaluated the role and potential of the intermediary forces and the relation of strength between the revolutionary and counter-revolutionary forces, *the Party charted a transitional stage*. It recognised the existence of the intermediary forces in the national democratic revolution and viewed them as an independent political force with its own organisation and with regions under its control. What is more, the Party helped them to establish themselves and to develop, and entered into an alliance with them. During the struggle against the ultraright reactionaries who had gone of their own free will into the service of the American imperialists and were counting on making short work of the revolutionary movement, the existence of intermediary forces, initially aiming just for peace and neutrality, was favourable for the revolution because it enabled us to operate "two against one" and isolate the ultraright forces. Even the American imperialists were forced to recognise the danger of such a situation. They therefore tried immediately, at any price, to bring the intermediary forces under their control. They resorted to bribes, handouts, and all kinds of other methods to try and prevent these forces from going over to the revolutionary side. After the treacherous actions of the American imperialists had failed, they set out to destroy the intermediary forces. However, making good use of the latter's progressive

tendencies, coupled with the magnetic pull of the revolution in general, we were able to win their confidence and make them long-standing fellow-travellers of the revolution.

In its alliance with the intermediary forces, our Party always remembered that by virtue of their social position, and under the influence of external factors—the magnetic force of the true cause and the successes of the revolution, on the one hand, and the blandishments, bribes and splitting tactics used by the enemy, on the other—these forces were inclined to waver and vacillate. *The intermediary forces are always liable to turn in one of two directions:* either to the left, to the path of struggle and closer alliance with the revolutionary forces, or to the right, to the path of compromise, eventually leading to collusion with the forces of reaction and imperialism. The alliance with the intermediary forces thus signified both *unification and struggle*: it was necessary to undertake active work with them and develop their initiative, but at the same time it was essential to keep up a constant struggle, to frankly expose the mistaken tendencies of these forces, nip in the bud their defeatist sentiments, and protect their ranks from being infiltrated by enemy ideology and hostile elements. Even after a split developed within these forces, the Party continued to maintain its position of cooperation with them. We reinforced our links with the progressive elements and at the same time sharply criticised their right-wing segment for entering into a deal with the American imperialists. Nevertheless, even in this instance we continued

as before to stand up for their neutrality and fought for them in an effort to preserve the barrier between them and the forces of the ultraright, to prevent them from forming a bloc with the extreme right, and always leaving them the option of rejoining the revolution. The consistent, high-principled and sincere policy of the Party as regards the united front between the revolutionary and the intermediary forces resulted in the two sides enjoying a close relationship. The intermediary forces gained confidence in the Party and resolve to march with the revolution. Furthermore, in taking this standpoint the Party helped many people on the right-wing of these forces to recognise the true face of American imperialism and its mercenary henchmen, and to perceive the revolution as a just cause. Thus, they were able to make a definite contribution to the victory of our revolution.

As in the case of solidarity with members of the upper strata of society, a detailed study had to be made of the possible *forms of cooperation* with the intermediary forces, in order to find the appropriate ones. While the revolutionary forces were still insufficiently strong, cooperation was based on common points of view on such problems as peace and neutrality, and at times just on certain particular, specific questions. This is why *the Party followed an individual approach to each side, each group and even to individuals, at each specific stage and on specific problems* (for instance on the question of consultations between the sides, on that of supplementary parliamentary elections, on the

Constitution with progressive clauses, and so on). To have set up an alliance that was not essential to the particular period would only have damaged the all-round cohesion of forces. The struggle which preceded the negotiations on setting up the coalitions is evidence of the enemy's insistence, each time save the last, that we act with the neutralist forces as one party. Thereby the enemy reckoned on winning more seats in the coalition organs, and also on holding back any further growth of our forces, and restricting the activity of the united front within its own framework.

As the revolutionary forces became stronger, as their authority grew and the revolution developed, the alliance of the different forces gave rise to more long-term common aims and tasks. To implement these aims it became necessary to find a *form of organised alliance with a corresponding programme* which would help coordinate the efforts made and the joint actions, while preserving the independence of each side. At the same time, this enabled us to carry out a policy of "both unity and struggle", indispensable in strengthening and expanding the united front. An even broader united front provided the organisational form necessary for such an alliance. It encompassed not only the Patriotic Front and the patriotic neutralist forces, but also other patriotically-disposed forces and groupings. The Patriotic Front played the basic role in this united front, as a result of which the Party's leadership in it was assured. This, in particular, demonstrates the creative approach taken by the Party to the united

front. All these steps were ultimately directed to uniting all the patriotic and progressive forces and tendencies, and simultaneously to disrupting the ranks of the enemy and maximally isolating him.

The military alliance was a specific form of cooperation of the various forces of the country. That such an alliance was set up is evidence of the fact that during the national-democratic revolution the armed forces of two different political forces may, in certain conditions, enter into a military alliance to fight the common enemy of the nation. Yet an army is a weapon of force, and each army has its class essence. Thus, *this form of cooperation can only exist in a situation where the revolution provides the conditions and opportunities for gradually changing the essence of the army of the allied forces, and for it to become an army serving the people.* Here, the questions of paramount importance are to set the aims of the struggle, to create new relations between the army and the people, and between the officers and the soldiers. Of the utmost importance is revolutionary political work in the army of the allied forces, the development of the revolutionary ideology among the fighting men and constant heightening of the consciousness of the ranks, as well as patient explanatory work among the officers. One must never forget that the independence of all the forces in the alliance must at all times be respected. *The independence of each side must be based on the unity of aims of the alliance, i.e. the struggle for national independence and for the interests of the people.* The experience of

cooperation with the army of the neutralist forces confirmed that without the gradual conversion of the army into a revolutionary force, the allied relations between the two armies finally break down. If the class essence of the army of the neutralist forces is not changed it sooner or later becomes a force opposed to the people and the revolution.

Establishing an alliance with the neutralist forces and drawing other sections of society over to its side was a considerable achievement of our Party, which it accomplished on its own. But it is only one aspect of the Party's united front activity, a very important, but by no means the most important, aspect of its work. Side by side with the correct line taken by the Party, it was the unity of the working people of all nationalities, based on the alliance between the workers and the peasants, which guaranteed the success of its work in setting up the alliance with the other forces and in drawing them over to the side of the revolution. Without this powerful support, the revolution is not able to draw the intermediate forces and other sections of society over to its side, however flexible its tactics and however dynamic its methods. Conversely, if a united front has a reliable foundation in the shape of an alliance between the workers and peasants, then, despite any disruptive tactics of the enemy or the vacillations and wavering of the ally, especially in a period of complex and intensive struggle, the alliance will nevertheless remain intact. This is why in its work in the united front the Party must never cease to take *preventive measures and fight off the deviations*

to the right which usually express themselves in a weakening of attention to the unity of the basic sections of society and in underestimating the role of the alliance between the working class and the peasantry; in concentrating only on winning the upper strata of society to its side and failing to pay enough attention to the interests of the people; in emphasising only unity and slackening the struggle within the united front for fear of splitting it, and in not daring to increase the level of struggle suiting the course of events. At the same time one should *take preventive measures to combat sectarianism and dogmatism*—the fear that the united front may become too broad or the level of struggle too high. This tendency usually surfaced after the enemy broke up the coalition or after a split appeared in the ranks of the allied forces.

These are some of the lessons drawn by the Party from its work in the united front during the revolution. They make it quite clear that establishing a broad united front and a coalition led by the Party and uniting all the forces of the nation to defeat the enemy, is only possible if one is able to lean on the masses on the basis of the alliance between the working class and the peasantry, and only if one is able, on this basis, to analyse the changes occurring at each stage in the relations between the different sections of society and evaluate any new opportunities in working out flexible and dynamic tactics.

4. REVOLUTIONARY VIOLENCE AND THE COMBINATION OF THE TWO DIFFERENT FORCES AND THE TWO FORMS OF STRUGGLE—ARMED AND POLITICAL—TO DEFEAT THE ENEMY

Revolution is a bitter struggle of classes. As Lenin said, “the basic question of every revolution is that of state power”.¹ In leading the people to revolution, our Party set the aim of overthrowing the old system and transferring power to the people, in order to build a new society in which the people would be the true masters of its destiny. But the imperialists and the ruling classes never give up power of their own free will. This is why the ultimate aims of the revolution can be achieved only by revolutionary violence. The thirty years that our people spent fighting for the freedom and independence of their country fully confirmed the reactionary essence of the imperialist aggressors and of the local ruling circles who were in their service. Moreover, these thirty years show clearly that revolution with force is the only way for the people to win their right to an independent life.

Revolutionary violence is the violence of the masses. The national democratic revolution in Laos was a cause espoused by all patriots and forward-looking people in the country. Thus, the revolutionary violence in Laos was necessarily that of the overwhelming majority of the

¹ V. I. Lenin, “The Dual Power”, *Collected Works*, Vol. 24, p. 38.

population, first and foremost that of the working people, who were cruelly exploited. The masses have many ways and means to demonstrate their will and determination to struggle. Generalising the practical experience of the revolutionary struggle, one can say that the violence of the masses takes two forms, those of political and armed struggle, used together and separately. It is thus necessary to set up the means of violence to bring about a revolution, i.e., the political forces of the masses and the armed forces of the people.

The political forces of the masses are the forces of all the people taking an organised part in the revolution. They include the revolutionary classes and the sections of the population with patriotic tendencies, of all different nationalities, combined in a broad national united front based on the worker-peasant alliance led by the Party. In our country the political forces of the masses included the various mass organisations making up the Laos Patriotic Front—the neutralist patriotic forces in touch with the Patriotic Front and also organisations of the masses in towns controlled by the enemy, i.e. all the organisations influenced by the revolution and supporting the slogans put up by the Party at various stages of the revolution.

The political forces of the masses served as the basis for the creation of the Party's revolutionary forces, the source from which we drew our cadres, and the school in which Party members were trained and hardened. It was the political forces of the masses that at all stages of the revolution led the active struggle against

the enemy, making good use of many different methods, ranging from struggle for economic interests, for improvements in the standard of life, and for the preservation of cultural values, and up to fighting to secure vitally important political rights. When the revolution became an armed struggle, the political forces of the masses were not just a source from which the people's armed forces drew strength and reinforcements, but also became an important striking force in their own right. They always combined their efforts with the operations of the armed forces, in order to keep up sustained political as well as military pressure on the enemy. During the unification of the country the political forces of the masses became a local strike force, coordinating their actions with the legal struggle taking place in the various coalition organs, forcing the enemy to fulfil his obligations, and holding in check the enemy's reactionary measures. At the same time, they provided vital support for the Party whenever it was necessary to alter the course of the struggle to suit new circumstances. In periods when the revolution was on the upgrade, as for instance during the national uprising and the all-out offensive on the enemy, the political forces of the masses always acted as an instrument of violence, and were of decisive importance. Together with the armed forces they undermined the morale and the fighting spirit of the enemy troops. They began by paralysing the reactionary machinery of state, then abolished it altogether, and, taking power themselves, gradually established complete popular sovereignty.

As the political forces had such an important strategic role, one of the main tasks of the Party was to mobilise and unite the masses, turning them into a powerful political force of the revolution. Particularly important here was *the work of organising the masses*. Since the political forces of the masses were an effective means with which to fight the enemy, it was essential to draw the masses into various organisations and thus to increase the strength of the masses in their struggle against the enemy. This also made it possible to carry out educational work to unite the people and also to exercise single-minded leadership of the mass struggle. The work done in organising the masses must conform to the political line of the Party. Leaning on the workers and peasants, who comprise the bulk of the masses, the Party must set up base organisations of the masses and at the same time make skilful and creative use of different forms of organisation to draw the remaining sections of society into the general current of struggle.

At all stages of the revolution we went first of all to the peasant masses of all nationalities, carrying out propaganda and educational work and transforming them into a firm and reliable political force. It was precisely this force that played an important part in the setting up and maintenance of support bases of the revolution during the mass movement of 1959-1960 to resist the colonialists, and during the long-drawn-out war of the people to save the country from the American aggressors, and also during the national uprising and the general offensive of 1975. While carrying out work among the

peasantry, the Party made use of its underground support bases in the towns, leaning on the working class and various other sections of society there, and taking every possible advantage of the available legal opportunities, to bring the urban population into the different organisations and draw them by degrees into the struggle under slogans of the Party. When the national uprising to seize power was at its height, the Party was thus able to fling the vast and powerful political forces representing different sections of the urban and rural population from all areas into the decisive battle. The Party transformed the political forces of the masses into a mighty weapon, which worked with the armed forces to completely destroy the reactionary machinery of state, wipe out the existing regime, and bring the national democratic revolution to complete victory.

At the same time as it organised the political forces of the masses, *the Party worked to set up the people's armed forces*. One feature that distinguishes our revolution is that from the first day to the last it involved armed struggle. Therefore the creation of our country's armed forces also had a specific character. These armed forces were established on the basis of the political forces of the masses and came into being at the earliest stage of the revolution, at the same time as the mass organisations. To begin with, they were individual groups set up to maintain public order, and small partisan detachments operating in rural areas and set up within the framework of the rural organisations of the masses. At the first stage of the revolu-

tion, the most active elements in the different organisations making up the Free Laos Movement joined the partisan detachments, involving themselves both in the legal and illegal political struggle and in the armed struggle (the partisan form). From these initial units, in the course of simultaneous political and armed struggle directed to activating, consolidating, and expanding partisan support bases, the Party created and developed massive armed forces. These armed forces were part of the local mass political forces, and supported the political forces of the masses as a whole.

As the armed and political forces grew, the Party worked gradually to set up *a regular army*. At first it comprised units of the local people's militia, then military units on separate fronts, and finally regular army units which were deployed from one strategically important area to another, depending on the situation. Whenever these regular army units went into action, they bolstered the political forces of the masses, and the stronger the political forces became, the more powerful the armed forces grew as well.

As these two forces developed, enriching and strengthening each other, our *armed forces became the military and political strength of the Party*. At all stages of their development—from separate uncoordinated detachments to organised military units—the armed forces carried out two tasks. The first of these was that of destroying the armed forces of the enemy and maintaining the revolutionary support bases, and the second was work among the population, setting up, strengthening and enlarging the

revolution's political base. These tasks were interrelated, with the specific situation determining which of them came first for each subunit of the armed forces.

The above-mentioned characteristics and role of the armed forces in our country give us grounds to assert that our armed forces *were the revolutionary armed forces of the entire Lao people, and first and foremost of the working people, notably the working class and the peasantry, under the direct leadership of the Party.* This is why our armed forces were always a reliable bulwark for the Party and the most important instrument of revolutionary force in the armed struggle, as well as a valuable support in the political struggle. At the same time they were an instrument of the dictatorship of revolutionary power, and are now a weapon of the people's democratic state in combatting internal and external enemies, and in defending the gains of the revolution. They are flesh of the flesh of the working class, and are armed with the Marxist-Leninist teaching. During the process of the revolution the armed forces assumed three different forms: the regular army, the people's militia, and the partisan units. All three were similarly important in strategic terms; they coordinated their actions in the process of struggle, thus heightening their combat efficiency, and serving as a reliable base for the people's war in our country.

In view of this the Party always kept to the principle of ensuring a high political and military capability of the armed forces. It worked unceasingly therefore, to establish and improve

four different types of interrelations: relations between the army and the people, between the cadres and the rank-and-file soldiers, between soldiers of different nationalities and ethnic groups in the army, and between our army and the armies of other countries. It worked out the correct correlation between quantity and quality, between organisational and ideological work, between men and weapons. It continuously developed factors of morale and political factors to raise the fighting capacity of the army. It also worked constantly to ensure supplies and arms for the army. At the same time, the Party rigidly followed the policy of both fighting and continuously consolidating and increasing its strength. Despite the need for conducting constant, difficult, costly, and tense warfare for many years, and despite the general backwardness of the country, our armed forces always fulfilled their mission with honour as the instrument of revolutionary violence and the dictatorship of the workers and peasants, and remained wholeheartedly faithful to the Party. They were staunch and courageous in all situations, continued to develop and to accomplish all the tasks set them by the Party at all stages of the revolution—in the period of military operations, the period of the coalitions, and the period of the national uprising and the victorious general offensive of 1975.

With two strategic forces at its disposal, *the Party succeeded in correctly combining two forms of struggle*—the armed and the political—to accomplish revolution, liberate the country and people, and build a new society. The imperialists

and their stooges from the reactionary camp kept resorting to counter-revolutionary force and tried to use various means, military and political among them, to suppress the revolution in our country. To bring the revolution to victory it was thus necessary for the Party not just to follow the right political line, but also to be able to apply the appropriate means and forms of struggle, so as to make maximum use of the revolutionary forces, to inflict blows on the enemy's most vulnerable spots, and to secure maximally large-scale victories. To fulfil these tasks, the Party combined armed and political struggle. That the methods of struggle selected by the Party were the correct ones, and that they were creatively worked out, is clearly borne out by the thirty years of the victorious struggle of the revolutionary forces.

After the national uprising of 1945, the French colonialists once again committed an undisguised military intervention in our country and trampled on our national rights and interests. This situation made *armed struggle a forced form of struggle in our revolution*. But to rally the people for armed struggle, it had been necessary to carry on broad propaganda and educational work, to rouse and organise them, and to involve them in various forms of struggle, from the lowest to the highest. Legal forms of activity were used, as were partisan actions, and various legal and semi-legal forms of political struggle against the repressive activity of the enemy. Then, the struggle took the form of frontal conflict, open warfare to defend their homes, and to strengthen the revolution's

support bases. The combination of armed and political struggle had been used to fight the colonialists, and later it became a regular revolutionary practice in our country. The policy of "general, all-round resistance" the Party adopted in the war of resistance therefore envisaged the combination of armed and political struggle.

As the revolutionary forces and movement grew, ever new forms of armed and political struggle were worked out, differing in aims and scale. In the course of the revolutionary struggle the role and significance of each of its forms became more precise and effective.

The initial task of the *armed struggle* was to bring about the destruction of the enemy armed forces, bit by bit, to help maintain and expand the support bases, to continuously harass the enemy in the rear, and to ensure the conditions for the political basis to be set up and expanded. Later, the tasks gradually increased. Ultimately our armed forces learned to conduct successful military operations against large enemy forces—from the strategic forces of home reaction to the armed forces of American satellites. Their operations confounded all the strategic concepts of our enemies. They defended the liberated areas and established their sovereignty in them. At the same time, they maintained pressure on the enemy, enlarging the liberated areas. The armed and the political struggle supported and supplemented each other. The armed struggle served as an effective support for the political struggle of the masses and their movement for the right to be the masters of their own country and their own lives. It also provided

reliable support for the Party at the negotiating table in the coalition organs, and made it possible to carry out work aimed at demoralising the enemy army. It was particularly important during the third coalition. After our troops had been stationed at strategically important points in the two neutralised cities, and after decisive action had been taken to cut short any enemy sallies, and particularly after the lightning deployment of our troops to the principal towns in enemy-controlled areas, the armed struggle again became a factor of strategic importance. It enabled us to gain a decisive advantage over the enemy, undermined the fighting spirit of the enemy army, led to a cardinal change in the situation and established the conditions for a decisive uprising of the masses to seize power.

The political struggle in the period of resistance to the colonialists took the form primarily of demands made by the masses in various parts of the country. These demands concerned problems affecting their vital interests, such as military and labour conscription, persecution and repression, and so on. It developed on still broader scale and in all different forms during the struggle against American imperialism. As a result of the victories on the battle-fields and the pressure our armed forces put on the enemy, and as a result of the combination of the revolutionary violence of the masses with the struggle at the negotiating table and in the coalition organs, *the political struggle became one of the most important means of struggle at that time*, and yielded splendid results. The enemy was forced to negotiate and to sign agreements

favourable for the revolution. In particular, the enemy had to agree to the setting up of coalition organs on our terms and to carry out a number of progressive measures. All this created favourable conditions for a further intensification of the mass revolutionary struggle. This had many consequences: vacillation and division appeared in the enemy ranks, the intermediary forces went over to the side of the revolution, mutinies took place in the enemy army, and part of the enemy forces broke away and formed patriotic neutralist armed forces, which entered into a fighting alliance with the People's Liberation Army. At the final stage of the struggle to liberate the country from the American imperialists and their stooges, the political struggle of the masses reached high intensity, especially in the towns, which led to a revolutionary situation arising in the country. The "three strategic blows" which we then simultaneously inflicted on the enemy completely destroyed crucially important enemy organs and abolished the entire ruling apparatus. All power in the country was transferred to the people and a people's democracy was set up. This was accomplished in a very short time and without a bloody civil war.

The thirty years of our struggle show that the revolution in Laos took different forms in different stages. It began with a *national uprising*, then passed through two consecutive stages of a long and bitter *people's war*, which alternated three times with negotiations and the establishment of coalition governments, and ended with an *all-out uprising and general offen-*

sive, which led to all power being handed over to the people. The struggle took characteristically different forms at each stage, but the combination of the two basic ones—the political and the armed struggle—was common to them all. The general uprising of 1945 was characterised by joint actions of the masses and their self-defence armed forces, equipped with the most primitive of weapons. During both stages of the people's war, *the main form was that of armed struggle*, even though political struggle was also extremely important, especially in the areas controlled by the enemy. It was during the coalitions that the political struggle of the masses came to the fore, combined with legal struggle in the organs of the coalition. At the same time our armed forces were kept ready for action to repulse any armed provocation launched by the enemy and to defend peace. This made the political struggle very effective. In the period that began with the uprising of May 1975, the final stage of the national democratic revolution, both forms of struggle materialised into the “three strategic blows”. The armed struggle manifested itself in the deployment of troops, in their occupying the enemy's nerve centres and in applying pressure to help the political struggle.

This goes to show that at each stage of the revolution either *the political or the armed form predominated, but that both were the basic forms of the revolutionary struggle in our country, and that both were of decisive importance*. The armed struggle was of directly decisive importance in destroying the enemy armed forces, in frustrating enemy military and politi-

cal designs, and in setting up favourable conditions for the political struggle. The political struggle was in turn a very important and active means for consolidating and developing the successes of the armed struggle; it brought about a split in the enemy ranks, demoralising, weakening and isolating them, and in conjunction with the armed struggle and the pressure put on the enemy by the armed forces eventually secured the final victory of the revolution. Armed struggle was characteristic of all the stages of our revolution, as the country had to endure two consecutive stages of the long-drawn-out people's war. Nevertheless, it always went hand in hand with the political struggle. At the final stage, during the general uprising and all-out offensive, the combination of the political struggle of the masses with the powerful pressure applied by the armed forces, was of decisive significance. The moment is, of course, of vital importance. But it would undoubtedly have been impossible to avoid unnecessary bloodshed using just the armed forces and the armed struggle alone. Furthermore, it would have been impossible to have won such a rapid, decisive and complete victory in the May uprising of the historic year 1975. Conversely, the political struggle, although of prime importance at certain stages, could only support and develop the revolutionary offensive thanks to successes of the armed struggle and the pressure of the armed forces. At the highest point of the May uprising, the political struggle did become a colossal force. But if the requisite dislocation of troops and their deployment had not been carried out,

which made the enemy lay down arms, it would have been no easy matter to abolish the reactionary government. Thus, *the coordination of action by the political and armed forces, and the combination of armed and political struggle, were an indisputable factor in the victorious revolution in Laos.*

There is one more factor of great importance in the leadership of the revolutionary struggle and in the combination of its armed and political forms: *the correct choice of form to be used as the main one at the particular stage and timely passage from one form to the other according to the changing situation.* Disregard of this factor would have stopped the revolution moving forward, and could even have set back the revolution. During the revolution, the Party passed three times from armed to political and legal struggle, and twice it did the reverse, depending on the place and time. Each time there was a change-over from one form of struggle to the other, the revolution made a qualitative and quantitative leap forward. This was especially marked at the time of the third coalition. When the revolutionary situation came about in the country, our Party took advantage of the historically favourable moment to make a rapid change in the direction of the struggle, and went over from political and legal struggle to several different forms: political struggle of the masses, armed struggle, organising mutinies in the enemy army, and putting pressure on the legal front, so as to bring the national democratic revolution to its victorious end.

Being able to guide the armed and the politic-

al struggle at the same time is one aspect of the art of handling revolutionary methods and is decisively important in developing the revolution. The Party needed a deep understanding of its own position and that of the enemy, it needed ability to correctly evaluate the alignment of forces and the potential of both sides, and it needed skill to make in-depth analysis of the internal and international situation. Only then could it clearly decide which method was to be used, and correctly choose the time for going over from one to the other at each specific stage. *But most important of all were the Party's understanding that revolutionary violence was essential and its mastery of offensive revolutionary strategy.* Using one of the two forms of struggle and passing from one form to the other was intended to strengthen the offensive thrust of the revolution and to select the means to raise the revolution to a new level, not to keep it in the same place and far less to set it back. Once it had been decided which form of struggle was to be used, it was necessary to make maximum use of the element of revolutionary violence inherent in it, while its other elements were to play a subsidiary role, setting up the conditions for bringing it about but not substituting it. Thus at all stages of the political struggle, even when the legal struggle in the coalition organs was of extreme importance and was essential for that particular period, nevertheless *the most effective form of struggle was always the political struggle of the masses*, all the other forms of struggle being used maximally as means of stimulating the struggle of the masses.

The thirty years of continuous revolutionary struggle in our country essentially come down to a process of setting up two different forces, weapons of revolutionary violence, and to the correct and creative combination of the two forms of struggle—the armed and the political. This is the basic lesson to be drawn from our experience of applying revolutionary methods to the specific conditions prevailing in Laos. This lesson was born out in the course of revolutionary practice that our country went through.

5. PRINCIPLED APPLICATION OF THE POLICY OF COMPROMISE

A coordinated armed and political struggle involving the use of two forces of revolutionary violence of the masses was the principal method used during the national democratic revolution in our country. But the revolution, being a long and complex struggle, is inevitably forced to overcome the various obstacles set up by the ruling circles to prevent it reaching its ultimate goal. These circles resort to repression, fraud, corruption and other means in their fight against the revolution. These obstacles cannot be overcome immediately. The revolution is therefore compelled to change its methods. In some cases, the offensive against the enemy is conducted openly, while in others in a roundabout way, by means of “necessary compromise”, so as to consecutively overcome the existing obstacles; gradually change the alignment of forces, and attain superiority which makes it

possible to win final victory. In this lies the art of waging the struggle which allows to go from one success to the next. Our Party has used this method in a timely, active and sagacious manner whilst directing the revolution in our country.

To go from one success to the next means that at each stage of the revolution, in a specific situation and specific moment, one must correctly and minutely determine the concrete goals in conformity with our realities and those of the enemy, with the situation in our country and on the international scene; it means that one must apply methods of struggle matching the conditions and possibilities of the revolution, so as to attain the set objectives with maximum effect and thus create a possibility for raising the revolution to a still higher level, and to lay a still more solid basis for implementing the ultimate goals of the revolution.

While moving from one success to the next, towards the final victory of the revolution, we came up against a highly specific problem—the struggle at the conference table and the creation of a coalition government. Taking part in the coalition governments and fighting within the coalition bodies—which were set up three times in different historical conditions and with varying alignments of forces—our Party skilfully used political negotiations, in coordination with other forms of struggle, to consolidate the gains of the revolution and to guide the revolution through the zigzags of this struggle. The well-known Leninist compromise tactics applied in the concrete conditions of the revolution in our country brought us remarkable success.

The question whether or not a compromise is necessary, and what compromise is principled, has long been a controversial issue in the international communist movement between true Marxists-Leninists, on the one hand, and dogmatists, conservatives and opportunists, on the other. Lenin, the great leader of the proletarian revolution answered this question quite clearly: "The Communists must exert every effort to direct the working-class movement and social development in general along the straightest and shortest road to the victory of Soviet power and the dictatorship of the proletariat on a world-wide scale... We have only to say ... that we recognise only one road, only the direct road, and that we will not permit tacking, conciliatory manoeuvres, or compromising—and it will be a mistake which may cause, and in part has already caused and is causing, very grave prejudice to communism."¹

In his work "On Compromises", Lenin wrote: "The task of a truly revolutionary party is not to declare that it is impossible to renounce all compromises, but to be able, *through all compromises*, when they are unavoidable, to remain true to its principles, to its class, to its revolutionary purpose, to its task of paving the way for revolution and educating the mass of the people for victory in the revolution."²

After the victorious completion of the struggle against French imperialism, we were

¹ V. I. Lenin, "'Left-Wing' Communism—an Infantile Disorder", *Collected Works*, Vol. 31, p. 103.

² V. I. Lenin, "On Compromises", *Collected Works*, Vol. 25, p. 305.

confronted by a new trial—the intervention of the US imperialists into the affairs of our country. Using the forces of the puppets in their service, they blocked the revolutionary forces concentrated in two provinces and tried to annihilate them. In these conditions, our Party launched a struggle for starting talks with the enemy in an attempt to support the armed defensive struggle of our forces in the two provinces and the political struggle of the inhabitants of the other ten provinces. When, in that period, we agreed to a coalition, we aimed to repulse the intervention of US imperialism, lift the blockade of the two provinces, and by taking advantage of our legal status to expand the influence of the revolution, to win over new forces, and thus prepare for a new stage in the struggle. In turn, the enemy reckoned, by hiding behind the screen of “national concord”, on splitting our ranks and, using bribes, on winning over some of the people, isolating the rest and thereby absorbing our forces in a peaceful manner.

The first coalition government was created in 1957 under the slogan of peace, neutrality and national concord. Our participation in the first coalition, in addition to the struggle in other fields, proved highly favourable for the revolution. The enemy had miscalculated, for our forces were not only not destroyed, but expanded to spread over the entire country and the mass political movement grew even more to become increasingly strong and active. The struggle of our representatives in the coalition bodies, in coordination with the mass political

struggle, forced the coalition government to pass some progressive measures, putting the struggle of the popular masses on more of a legal basis, and new breaches appeared within the enemy ranks. Confronted by the growth of the revolutionary and progressive forces, the enemy overthrew the first coalition government, which had existed for about a year, and turned to a policy of terror and repression. This also compelled us to change the direction of our struggle and turn to armed struggle, combined with political action. Our major subsequent victories, the mighty struggle of the popular masses and the deep breach in the enemy ranks again forced the enemy to come to the conference table. This time our enemies reckoned on slowing down our victorious military offensive and on winning time in which to reorganise and expand their forces for a new military strategy. We, in turn, wanted a useful respite in order, on the one hand, to prevent the intervention of US forces, which were then already being deployed in Thailand and were ready to invade our country, and on the other, to gain time in which to consolidate and make use of the success of the revolution and the growth of its prestige on the international scene, and also to disorganise the enemy ranks still more.

The second coalition government was set up in 1962. At that time, we still had no decisive advantage over the enemy. Yet, the revolution's positions and power had become considerably stronger than before, partly because of the emergence of the patriotic neutral forces which had allied themselves to those of the revolution.

It is absolutely clear that, in agreeing to set up a second coalition government, the enemy wanted to make use of the respite to prepare a new military strategy in Laos and Vietnam. That is why the second coalition government, existing for less than a year, was also overthrown. After that, for ten years we had to wage a hard and continuous war in the course of which all the strategic designs, military doctrines and strategic forces of US imperialism and its accomplices were crushed one after the other; as a result, the enemy was again compelled to return to the negotiating table, to sign in February 1973 the Vientiane Agreement and to form a third coalition government.

By the time the third coalition was formed, our authority and political positions were considerably stronger than before; we possessed greater military power, and had liberated regions taking in 80 per cent of the country's territory and over 50 per cent of its population. Our task was to put an end to any interference or military presence of US imperialists and their satellites and to deflect ultraright reactionary forces so as to turn the coalition government into an instrument for implementing the political programme of the Patriotic Front, coordinating its activity with that of other revolutionary forces and thereby uplifting the revolution to a new stage. The two years of struggle that took place within the framework of the third coalition were actually two years of action by all the revolutionary forces simultaneously in three aspects involving legal struggle, mass political struggle and vigorous action by the revolution-

ary forces, in order to crush the resistance of the reactionaries, unite all the forces, further isolate the enemy and organise and prepare the masses for an uprising, thereby creating the material and moral prerequisites for an uprising aimed at winning power in the whole country.

From May 1975 onwards, under the pressure of a mass movement accompanied by three strategic blows and the legal struggle inside the coalition bodies, all power in the country gradually passed into the hands of the people, and on December 2, 1975 the third coalition government, set up to prepare the conditions for bringing about an irrevocable downfall of the old system and self-dissolution, submitted its resignation to the National Congress of People's Representatives.

The twenty years of national democratic revolution that have elapsed since the day US imperialism began its interference and attempted to establish its neocolonialist sway in our country have demonstrated that our participation in the coalitions was exceedingly important in pinning down enemy action aimed at unleashing a war; it gave us time to consolidate and expand our forces and, most importantly, it created the conditions needed to lift the mass political struggle in the enemy-controlled areas to a higher qualitative stage. Each our participation in the coalition government had increasingly revealed the righteous cause of the revolution, activated the movement of the masses, led to a further growth in the national support given to the revolution and our struggle against the reactionary action of our enemies, and further

divided and isolated the enemy ranks. This was because the correct strategy and tactics of our Party met the interests and aspirations of the broad popular masses, and also made it possible to use the contradictions within the enemy camp to split their ranks. This was also because our people were full of patriotism even though they were under the enemy's yoke, they constantly looked up to the revolution. Numerous intermediary strata of our society, hating the policy of repression, and the war and treachery pursued by the Lao reactionaries, increasingly sided with the revolution. Yet, this is chiefly explained by the fact that the revolution possessed sufficiently strong *real* power and encompassed various spheres of the struggle. All this forced the enemy to carefully assess their forces each time they intended to use counter-revolutionary violence. In the long run, *the correct strategic and tactical line, the struggle of the principal classes, the support from the intermediary strata, and the presence of real revolutionary forces* were the principal factors determining the success of our struggle in the coalition bodies.

To join a coalition is to accept a "necessary compromise". But the essence of this compromise changed according to the alignment of revolutionary and counter-revolutionary forces and the historical conditions prevailing in each specific instance. At each particular moment, when determining the possibilities for compromise, the Party must carefully study its own situation, that of the enemy, and of the world, and analyse in detail all the contradictions in the

enemy camp so as to use them to further its own interests, and it must also take into account the positive and negative aspects of the international situation in order to determine the degree and nature of the compromise. At such times, the Party must always remember Lenin's precious recommendations: "The more powerful enemy can be vanquished only by exerting the utmost effort, and by the most thorough, careful, attentive, skilful and *obligatory* use of any, even the smallest, rift between the enemies, any conflict of interests among the bourgeoisie of the various countries and among the various groups or types of bourgeoisie within the various countries, and also by taking advantage of any, even the smallest, opportunity of winning a mass ally, even though this ally is temporary, vacillating, unstable, unreliable and conditional."¹

The purpose of our participation and struggle in the coalition was to further accelerate the onward march of the revolution, to create the conditions for moving the revolution to a still higher stage, rather than retaining the status quo or retreating; hence, *in agreeing to any sort of coalition, one should not let participation in it lead to any loss in revolutionary gains or to the containment of the struggle of the popular masses.* In distinguishing revolutionary and opportunist compromises, Lenin wrote: "It is entirely a matter of *knowing how* to apply these tactics in order to *raise*—not lower—the *general*

¹ V. I. Lenin, "Left-Wing' Communism—an Infantile Disorder", *Collected Works*, Vol. 31, pp. 70-71.

level of proletarian class-consciousness, revolutionary spirit, and ability to fight and win.”¹ In the conditions of the revolutionary struggle in Laos and accounting for our experience, this meant preserving the independence of the revolutionary forces including various mass organisations, defending the liberated regions, using all possible means to preserve our armed forces, the principal instrument of revolutionary violence, and ensuring a certain freedom of action for the revolutionary forces and basic democratic rights for the people so as to maintain and develop the offensive gust of the revolution and, in case of need, to turn to other forms of struggle. These were the two essential conditions necessary to ensure a principled compromise in conditions of a revolutionary struggle in our country.

One can make concessions to the enemy in relation, for instance, to the number of people in the government, as well as to the specific posts, qualifications and certain organisational forms accepted both by the enemy and ourselves. However, the coalition should not lead to any reduction in the combat ability of the armed forces or to a lower fighting spirit in the popular masses; neither should it bind the revolutionary forces hand and foot. In joining the first coalition during the blockade, when the positions and forces of the revolution were much weaker than those of the enemy, we agreed to reduce our armed forces and to let them be included within the Lao Royal Army; at

¹ Ibid., p. 74.

the same time, however, as our military units became part of the Royal Army, they retained their independent organisation and, moreover, their reduction made it possible to transfer some of our regular workers and fighters to conduct political work among the masses in various areas of the country, to create a political foundation and make due preparations for the possible resumption of the armed struggle in the period to come. However, despite the fact that formally and nominally our armed forces were now part of the Royal Army, and were reduced in number, the combat efficiency of the revolutionary forces was not actually weakened. On the contrary, once the enemy betrayed the country, the whole of Laos instantly found itself, at the call of the Party, in the throes of a broad massive armed and political struggle.

The activities in the coalition represented one form of class struggle. Inside the coalition, our aims and those of our adversaries were diametrically opposite. We took part in the coalition to strengthen the influence of the revolution, win over additional forces, expand the offensive, split and isolate the enemy, and together with other forms of struggle, to impel the revolution forwards and thus eventually to transfer all power into the hands of the people. The enemy, on the contrary, took part in the coalition in an attempt to do away with the revolution in some other manner and, if their forces were insufficient, to try at least to slow down its development, limit its scope, and win time for consolidating their forces, to preserve the existing regime, and then start a counter-offensive. The

coalition was the result of a struggle involving revolutionary violence; it showed the actual alignment of forces in the particular conditions, rather than the "good intentions" of the enemy.

By virtue of the class nature of the struggle during the coalition, the enemy, even though occasionally compelled to take progressive measures in the interests of the popular masses and to give some important posts in the government bodies to the revolutionary forces, nonetheless always left himself the right to actual control over government activities and retained a coercive apparatus so as to overtly and covertly hamper coordinated progressive reforms being put into practice. Hence, *we never had any illusions concerning the possibility of fundamentally restructuring the social order by means of a coalition government.* If any measure really did prove useful to the revolution and the popular masses, it was solely because of the close coordination of the struggle within the coalition government with the struggle of the popular masses. In certain cases, this still required pressure from the armed forces and even partial armed struggle. Lenin said in this connection: "...Limiting the class struggle to the parliamentary struggle, or regarding the latter as the highest and decisive form, to which all the other forms of struggle are subordinate, is actually desertion to the side of the bourgeoisie against the proletariat."¹

¹ V. I. Lenin, "The Constituent Assembly Elections and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat", *Collected Works*, Vol. 30, p. 272.

During the coalition, *legal and semi-legal struggle were closely combined with our Party's underground, illegal work.* The coalition provided broad opportunities for mobilising and politically educating the masses in regions under enemy control. During each coalition, our Party used the possibilities that existed to do legal and semi-legal work through the principal revolutionary organisations and the progressive organisations of the intermediate strata, for example youth and student organisations, to involve tens of thousands of people in the struggle being waged under Party slogans. During the coalition, the mass movement in the areas controlled by the enemy became unprecedented in its scope and took place in very diverse forms. This movement served as a powerful support to the revolution and forced the enemy on to the defensive and disorganised his ranks. However, while power remained in the hands of the enemy, open legal struggle constituted only one, in no way principal, aspect of the Party's activity. Hence, during the coalition, the Party had to be able to use the open struggle of the popular masses to create the basic forces of the revolution. At the same time, the Party had to be able to preserve these forces, and also the Party organisations, without letting the enemy know this. Moreover, the Party always had to exercise vigilance and be prepared to immediately switch over to working in illegal conditions in case of a changed situation resulting from the enemy's perfidious actions. The experience of participation in the three coalitions shows that the Party should always *struggle against "legalism"*, which

leads to the forces of the revolution being exposed to the enemy, against the principle of the Party's underground organisation being violated, against any underestimation of the work done to consolidate the Party and other principal mass organisations, and against the fear of transgressing in case of necessity the limits of the existing law. As for the Party members and regular workers delegated to the coalition bodies, the Party had to constantly remind them of the position and tasks of a revolutionary fighter, to teach them to do their best in every suitable case to rub shoulders with the masses so as to convey to them the voice of the revolution, to teach them to fight tendencies of alienation from the masses and against delusions that the enemy "seeks national concord", delusions leading to a weakening of the fighting spirit of the popular masses.

The coalition is just one form of the Party's struggle in specific conditions; it is not the chief form of revolutionary struggle, however, since it cannot in itself lead to the downfall of the old system. During the coalition, the Party was always fully aware of the fact that in the end, power can only be taken away from the imperialists and their stooges, and transferred to the people through an uprising and revolutionary violence, thus fulfilling the strategic task of the revolution. Therefore, the Party had to be able to join a coalition when such a need arose. But at the same time, it also had to be able to drop out of the coalition as soon as the latter started to get in the way of revolutionary development, particularly when a revolutionary situation arises

in the country. Lenin taught that “when legal and illegal, parliamentary and non-parliamentary forms of struggle are combined, it is sometimes useful and even essential to reject parliamentary forms”.¹

For instance, during the historic uprising of May 1975, when the revolutionary struggle was on the upsurge, the popular masses came out with the demand: “Down with all reactionaries; no coalition with enemies.” And this was correct, since the coalition government, despite its progressive eighteen-point programme, had become an anachronism. In this situation, further participation in the coalition would only hold back the revolutionary gust of the masses, and would impede further growth of the revolution in which case we would find ourselves trapped by the enemy. On the contrary, we had to support the demands of the masses without delay, to put the forces of revolutionary violence into use to compel the enemy to lay down arms, and to break down the reactionary state machinery together with all its instruments of coercion so as to start immediately on setting up bodies of popular power. That is precisely what our Party did; as a result, it gained complete and final victory in the national democratic revolution on a nationwide scale.

The experience of the Party’s leadership in the revolutionary struggle in Laos indicates that, no matter how important the participation in the coalition was to the revolutionary cause in

¹ V. I. Lenin, “‘Left-Wing’ Communism—an Infantile Disorder”, *Collected Works*, Vol. 31, p. 35.

our country, it nonetheless remained only a tactical manoeuvre en route towards the strategic goal. The Party had to be able to use the form of a coalition struggle in implementing its policy, aimed at winning victory step by step. Yet, participation in a coalition should be supported by the revolution's real forces and be closely combined with various forms of struggle involving violence on the part of the popular masses. Only in this case is it possible to raise the revolution to a new and higher stage. In the end, only by using revolutionary violence is it possible to crush the old social system and take power, thus reaching the revolution's ultimate goal.

**6. SETTING UP AND UTILISING
A FAVOURABLE SITUATION
FOR MAXIMUM ACTIVISATION
OF ALL THE REVOLUTIONARY FORCES
TO DRASTICALLY BREAK UP
THE REACTIONARY STATE MACHINERY
AND WIN COMPLETE VICTORY**

In our country, the revolution started from naught and gradually accumulated strength. These conditions meant that our Party had to have the skill of directing the revolution, the skill involved in timing the various forms and methods of revolutionary struggle, of attaining success, and marching from one success to the next.

When certain favourable internal and external conditions were taking shape, our Party momen-

tarily took advantage of this to increase all the revolutionary forces and to raise the revolution to a new stage, bearing in mind the need to achieve maximum success for the revolutionary cause with minimum sacrifices on the part of the people. In this the Party saw not only its duty, but also its political responsibility.

In our time, a time marking the transition from capitalism to socialism, a time in which a powerful offensive is being launched by the three revolutionary streams of today, the world is constantly witnessing changes of truly historical significance, which highly favour the development of revolutionary movements in different countries. But could we take advantage of the favourable situation to raise the revolution in our country to a new height? This depended primarily on the efforts of our people, and also on the resoluteness and ability of the Party to act speedily and effectively in such situations.

Being the leading force behind the revolution, our Party always realised that, on the one hand, energetic action in setting up and developing the subjective factors of the revolution in our country were basic and decisive for the revolution; but, on the other hand, it is also highly essential to *be able to create a favourable situation and take advantage of it both in the internal and external plane* so as to march from one success to the next and prepare the conditions necessary for the final victory.

In May 1945, as a result of the great victory of the Soviet Army over fascism, a turn of epoch-making significance took place in the international situation. A mighty upsurge of the revolu-

tionary movement began in Indochina. Despite the fact that at that time the subjective possibilities for a revolution in our country were extremely limited, the Party, taking advantage of the unique historical situation, led the Lao people, in close cooperation with the fraternal peoples of Vietnam and Kampuchea, to the August 1945 Revolution. On October 12, 1945, for the first time after many years of enslavement, the Lao people declared their country's independence to the whole world. A new stage in the struggle for national liberation began in Laos.

In 1959, the US imperialists and their accomplices, who had betrayed the cause of national concord, put a block in the way of the people's aspiration for peace and independence, and this caused anger and indignation among various sections of the population. In this situation, the Party made correct and well-timed changes in its tactical line, rallied the whole people of the country and roused them to the active struggle, which culminated in the coup of August 1960. The Party immediately took advantage of the situation in the country to rapidly expand the national united front, obtain international support, and to build up the forces of the revolution at an unprecedentedly high rate. As a result, the revolution leapt forward; two-thirds of the country's territory and half of its population were liberated, and a tripartite coalition government was set up under the terms that we had proposed. All this served as a reliable foundation and stimulus for the further development of the revolution.

Using these invaluable lessons of revolutionary practice, our Party wisely and creatively solved the problem of setting up a favourable situation and utilising it in the final stage of the national democratic revolution in our country, and carried the revolution to complete and final victory.

After signing the Vientiane Agreement in February 1973, we were able largely to restrict US interference in Laos. Relying on the increased real forces of the revolution and combining mass political struggle with legal struggle in the coalition bodies and with resolute measures against the adventurous military action perpetrated by the ultraright militant circles, we compelled the enemy to accept and fulfil a number of clauses in the Agreement which were highly favourable to the revolution, including the clause on neutralising Vientiane and Luang Prabang. Up against the increased authority and influence of the revolutionary forces, and faced with the serious defeat of US neocolonialist strategy in Indochina, a deep split occurred within the ranks of Lao reactionaries. The struggle of various social strata, particularly in urban areas, flared up with remarkable vigour, and the intermediary forces continued increasingly to side with the revolution. A revolutionary situation had taken shape in the country, and the question of the revolutionary forces taking power became a real one.

Our Party had always maintained the opinion that *one can only come to power through the use of revolutionary violence*, not through reforms or changes in the coalition government, since the bourgeois state "cannot be superseded

by the proletarian state (the dictatorship of the proletariat) through the process of 'withering away', but, as a general rule, only through a violent revolution".¹

The question was how to apply tactics involving the use of force so as to take and hold power without starting a new civil war. Several notable events in early 1974-late 1975, such as the capture by workers of the Vientiane Power Station, the uprising of peasants and other sections of society in Nong Bac (Khammouane Province) and establishment of their power there, the action taken by young people and students in Vientiane, Pakse, Savannakhet and other towns, and mutinies in the enemy army in Houei Sai, confirmed the possibility of capturing and retaining power in various districts through the simultaneous action of the masses in the provinces, pressure on the part of revolutionary armed forces, mutinies in the enemy army and through pressure via the coalition bodies. Moreover, this made it possible for us to contain retaliatory action launched both inside and outside the country. The enemy was still trying to suppress the revolution and was offering desperate resistance to the insurgent masses; however, by skilfully combining various methods and taking suitable steps, we managed to parry the enemy's counter-measures and prevent new war flaring up in the country. In these conditions, the Party developed the following tactics for taking power: popular uprisings in certain parts of the country

¹ V. I. Lenin, "The State and Revolution", *Collected Works*, Vol. 25, p. 400.

and the capture of local government bodies as a precondition for organising a national uprising and capturing power all over the country. In conformity with these tactics and under the direct leadership of the Central Committee, the Party organisations, the army and the people started active, all-round preparations for this uprising: the revolutionary forces in all the three zones were aligned and strengthened; the political and armed forces were consolidated; agitation and propaganda in the enemy army were stepped up; activity in the coalition bodies was increased to compel the enemy to satisfy the legitimate demands of the popular masses and pass laws to serve as the legal foundation for a mass uprising all over the country.

It was precisely during this period that the great victory of the people of Kampuchea and, particularly, the great and powerful offensive of the army and people of Vietnam in the spring of 1975—completely frustrating the neocolonialist strategy of US imperialism in these two countries—had a powerful influence on the revolutionary process in our country. A unique historical *moment* that occurs once in a thousand years had come for the people to win power on a nationwide scale.

The question of a favourable situation and of preparing the forces to meet it has always been of decisive significance for all revolutions. Our Party was fully aware of the combined result of these two factors: only in the presence of forces is it possible to *set up and utilise a favourable situation and, vice versa, a favourable situation itself multiplies forces and underlies the emerg-*

ence of new forces. Hence, a favourable situation is also a force in itself. As the revolutions in Laos, Vietnam and Kampuchea were closely related and as their geographic position had turned them into a united fighting front, the objective situation which resulted after the complete victory of the revolution in two fraternal countries and particularly in Vietnam had tremendous significance for the revolution in our country. The thunder of victory in Vietnam and Kampuchea announced the imminent and inevitable downfall of all the lackeys of US imperialism in Laos. At the same time, these victories served as a powerful impulse in the struggle of our people and created favourable conditions for swift development of the revolution in our country.

Lenin, the great leader of the world proletariat, wrote that one must be able to choose the right moment and act resolutely: "History will not forgive revolutionaries for procrastinating when they could be victorious today (and they certainly will be victorious today), while they risk losing much tomorrow, in fact, they risk losing everything."¹

With a good understanding of the important strategic significance of the historical situation and the opportunities it provided us with, our Party—despite the fact that at that time preparations were still incomplete—nevertheless decided to rouse the people in May 1975 in a bid to win power. This historically important decision was based on the premise that the basic

¹ V. I. Lenin, "Letter to Central Committee Members", *Collected Works*, Vol. 26, p. 235.

conditions ensuring the success of an uprising in our country had at that time already matured. These conditions corresponded to Lenin's tenets on this question: "1) growth of the revolution on a country-wide scale; 2) the complete moral and political bankruptcy of the old government, for example, the 'coalition' government; 3) extreme vacillation in the camp of all middle groups, i.e., those who do *not* fully support the government, although they did fully support it yesterday."¹ The strategic decision of our Party to start an uprising was also based on a correct revolutionary and scientifically-grounded assessment of the revolutionary forces, on a correct estimate of the enemy's and our own positions and forces, of all the forces in the liberated districts and the forces of the popular masses in districts under enemy control; of the potential for mobilisation in that period and after the uprising had begun; of the effect of partial victories on the victory of the whole movement, and so on. However, the most important factor in taking this strategic decision was alignment of the enemy's and our own forces. At that time, the enemy army was considerably superior to our armed forces, both in its size and military equipment; moreover, the enemy, who had retained considerable power, still had a large police force and a machinery of coercion both in the capital and provinces. It was therefore essential to reject a simplified approach and avoid being taken in by solely quantitative estimates

¹ V. I. Lenin, "Can the Bolsheviks Retain State Power?", *Collected Works*, Vol. 26, p. 134.

leading to a failure to give full consideration to the dialectical relationship between material and moral factors, between the strategic situation and the revolutionary forces on the eve of this unique historical moment. At the same time, we had to fight right-wing tendencies and wavering opinions, and also all kinds of views deviating from strict adherence to the policy leading to an uprising. All this was aimed at ensuring the Party's internal unity with regard to its political line and practical action.

Our Party carefully worked out a plan to bring about the general uprising and adopted a decision to that effect. It proceeded from Marx's tenet, cited by Lenin, that an armed "*insurrection is an art quite as much as war*", and one should never play with insurrection.¹ The Party drew up a comprehensive analysis of the specific situation in the country and on the international scene, in the enemy camp and in our own, to determine the ways and means to be used to launch a national uprising and general offensive.

Basically, the popular uprising was to begin simultaneously all over the country and, naturally, in the capital and other main political and economic centres, so as to instantly destroy the enemy government bodies. This was confirmed by the experience of the August 1945 uprising.

By the May 1975 uprising, the enemy army and police, though weaker in morale, was organisationally the same; the intermediary forces, though they on the whole supported the revolu-

¹ V. I. Lenin, "Advice of an Onlooker", *Collected Works*, Vol. 26, pp. 179, 180.

tion, were to no small extent deceived by reactionary propaganda and were still not fully aware of the perfidious schemes of the enemy, who counted on avoiding the blow of the revolution. At the same time, our preparatory work was not yet complete, the number of regular Party workers who could lead the movement was limited, and a considerable part of our armed forces remained in the liberated districts. Hence, to centralise the leadership and concentrate the political and armed forces so as to achieve success from the very start and, by marching from one success to the next and taking advantage of the chaos and confusion in the enemy camp, to thus crush him by consecutive blows and win complete victory, our Party adopted a decision on unleashing the national uprising and winning power in accordance with a plan that determined ways and methods of action at every stage, involving a number of specific steps and measures.

To begin with, we were to develop a powerful political movement of the popular masses in the towns, insisting on ridding the country of the US imperialists and on removing the most reactionary Sananikone and Na Champassak cliques from power. At this time this matched the unanimous and insistent desire of all sections of society, both basic and intermediary, and was to serve as a signal for a general uprising; at the same time we were to achieve a *strategic transfer of troops* to the enemy-controlled areas, to consolidate our forces and occupy key positions in towns, to cow the enemy and put their units directly under our control where they were be-

ing deployed, and also to resort to pressure via the coalition government in order to paralyse the enemy army and police.

After that, we were to rouse the masses to a general uprising in various regions of the country, primarily in the towns, where the enemy's major forces were concentrated. To that end, we were to use the forces of the popular masses locally, and also the forces transferred from other areas, which were to be supported by the revolutionary armed forces, mutinying enemy army units, and also by legal activity in the various coalition bodies. All this was to crush the enemy, destroy the reactionary ruling machinery in the centre and provinces within the shortest possible time, and to lead to the establishment of bodies of popular revolutionary power.

Having taken power in the provinces and towns, including both the neutralised towns, we were to immediately convene the National Congress of People's Representatives, disband the central coalition bodies, abolish the monarchy, and proclaim the People's Democratic Republic of Laos.

The subsequent course of events fully confirmed that the decision to win power using an uprising, combining three strategic blows with a legal struggle under the above-mentioned plan, was the correct one and corresponded to the requirements of the moment.

The upsurge of the mass movement in May 1975 was manifested in numerous demonstrations involving tens of thousands of people. It compelled the US imperialists and the servile local reactionary leaders, ensconced in the state

apparatus and the puppet army, to flee the country. The lightning transfer of our troops to the towns to capture key enemy positions, and also the order to enemy troops to remain in their barracks, not to shoot at the people and to hand over their arms to arsenals, the instructions on collective participation in seminars and other coalition government orders which the enemy had to obey, actually bound him hand and foot, deprived him of all possibilities of resistance and, as a matter of fact, disarmed him. In the provinces, uprisings that blew over the country like a hurricane swept away, one after the other, all the bodies of military and state power in the outlying districts, and also the enemy's coercive apparatus. By August 1975, all the old bodies of power and the machinery of coercion had been fully liquidated in the provinces and in both the neutralised towns. This was followed by a major political campaign to prepare and hold elections to the people's councils and to establish bodies of popular power at all levels. Thus the power in the country passed into the hands of the people.

On the historic day of December 2, 1975, the National Congress of People's Representatives, expressing the will and the interests of the people of the whole country, accepted the king's abdication and the self-dissolution of the coalition government, and proclaimed the abolition of the monarchy and the formation of the People's Democratic Republic of Laos. This marked the victorious culmination of the final stage in the hard and long-drawn-out struggle

of our people for national independence and democracy.

The upsurge of the popular movement, which started in May 1975 and ended in the victory of the revolution, was essentially *an armed political uprising of the popular forces, struggling to win power all over the country*. This uprising was characterised not only by the broad forces involved, but also by numerous manifestations of the creative spirit of the popular masses, under the perspicacious leadership of the Party.

The *time* of the uprising corresponded to the most favourable situation, a revolutionary situation, which, in effect, represents the final phase of a lengthy process of revolutionary struggle, a process consisting of several consecutive *stages*, each time differing from one another by a correspondingly higher level. The *place* of the uprising was the whole country, but it first of all began in only several districts; the main forces were concentrated for capturing those key positions where the enemy had real power. The *mode* of the uprising involved the use of all the revolutionary forces, i.e. action in the three strategic zones combined with legal struggle; a continuous offensive against the enemy aimed at destroying his organisations, crushing his will to resist, and splitting and then routing his forces, without making a new civil war necessary. The *aim* of the uprising was to break down the entire reactionary state machinery from top to bottom, to do away with its instruments of suppression and violence, to abolish the monarchy and establish popular power in the country. Such were the principal tasks of the national

armed political uprising, and such was the path chosen by the Party in its search for a final solution to the power issue at the final stage of the national democratic revolution in our country.

Yet taking power does not mean taking the existing state machinery and making it serve our objectives. Under the former system, the state machinery in our country was that of the neo-colonialist power planted by US imperialism. Specifically, it was not only a huge military-bureaucratic machine with numerous instruments for suppressing and coercing the people by brutal force, but also involved a ramified and carefully developed system of economic, cultural and social institutions for disorganising society, poisoning people's minds, corrupting the nation, and turning our society into a parasitic society vastly dependent on US imperialism. Hence, *the winning of power had to be accompanied by the complete liquidation of the state machinery, the instruments of coercion, the means of propaganda, the system of oppression, and all the other enemy institutions in various spheres of activity from top to bottom.*

We had to destroy not only the well-known official institutes and forces but also covert organisations; we had to resolutely crush those enemies who continued to offer resistance, and to launch an immediate campaign for the mass re-education of former state officials, servicemen and policemen, in the spirit of the Party policy.

On top of this, it was necessary to rid the country of the reactionary decadent culture, and also to do away with the economic foundations of the compradore bourgeoisie, thus destroying

everything that served to support the US imperialists and their protégés.

In addition to breaking down the old state machinery, it was necessary to start immediately on setting up the machinery of the new state, which was to be nothing else than the dictatorship of the proletariat, the supreme embodiment of popular power under the Party's leadership. The new state machinery was assigned the task of fighting internal and external enemies, restructuring the old society and building the new one. Hence, after the victory of the uprising, at the same time as setting up provisional administrative bodies for deciding urgent questions, the Party instantly started work to give the people full power to establish the new state machinery from top to bottom by way of democratic elections. This ensured the popular character of the state and the leading role of the Party in the various bodies of popular democratic power.

As regards the breaking down of the old state machinery, the situation in our country was unlike that in other countries, since we had a coalition government set up through legal struggle and successful talks. Although the coalition government in our country did have a programme of peace, neutrality and national concord, and did include representatives of the revolutionary forces and members of our Party, it nevertheless remained essentially an instrument of power in the hands of the military-bureaucratic cliques closely connected with US imperialism. Our Party took part in the coalition government out of tactical necessity, always regarding this as one of the numerous forms of revolution-

ary activity aimed at demoralising and isolating the enemy, and at winning over the intermediary forces. It used this legal form of political struggle together with all other forms.

It is particularly important that the Party never regarded the coalition government as a government of "class harmony", let alone as a "transitional" government. In no event was the coalition a "link" in the transition from a neocolonialist to a revolutionary state, even though in some cases and to a certain extent it was an instrument that served the people. Consequently, in the course of the uprising, it was absolutely necessary to break down the entire so-called "coalition" state machinery, without any sympathy or remorse, and to rebuff attempts by the old regime to organise an innocent "ceremony of transfer" of the old state machinery into the hands of the new authorities with the aim of misleading the popular masses. As for the people in the service of the old regime, the revolutionary power was prepared to use them in different capacities, depending on their personal abilities and desires.

In the final stage of the national democratic revolution, having applied the Party plan for an armed political uprising—a plan that combined three strategic blows with legal struggle—we managed to take power in record time. This magnificent victory confirmed that in the particular historical conditions characterising the contemporary revolutionary process and in the specific situation existing in Indochina and in our country, the Party, in using correct forms and methods to implement its political line, not only

possessed all the opportunities for winning power by revolutionary violence, but was also capable of retaining power, without allowing counter-revolutionary forces to unleash a civil war or foreign reactionaries to start an armed intervention.

The Party's consistent revolutionary line, manifested at all stages of the struggle, was based on the principle of revolutionary violence as well as on that of an offensive strategy. Both during the war and the short-term respites, both in hard and favourable moments, the Party never retreated from this policy. Lenin emphasised: "Marx did not commit himself, or the future leaders of the socialist revolution, to matters of form, to ways and means of bringing about the revolution."¹ Having taken the situation in the country, in Indochina and the whole world into consideration, the Party developed tactics for advancing from one success to the next, tactics to *paralyse the enemy so as to achieve ultimate victory*. Such was our Party's consistently revolutionary method, which it had effectively used during the entire revolution. At all stages of the war, even when it had to resort to decisive military action, our Party continued to use the method of paralysing the enemy, i. e. it only used the number of forces that was essential and only waged the struggle to a certain point, stopping in time to combine it with negotiations, etc. In this way we were able to march from one victory to the next without giv-

¹ V. I. Lenin, "'Left-Wing' Childishness and the Petty-Bourgeois Mentality", *Collected Works*, Vol. 27, p. 343.

ing the enemy an opportunity to expand the war beyond definite limits. It was precisely for this reason that at the final stage, when the positions and forces of the revolution were superior to those of the enemy, and when the latter was making desperate efforts to find a way out, we were able to paralyse his activities and start taking power without bloodshed.

At an initial stage of the political campaign, it was demanded that the US imperialists be ousted and the most reactionary Sananikone and Na Champassak cliques be removed from power; however the question of breaking down the old state machinery was still not on the agenda. Thus we succeeded in ousting the Americans, who still remained in the country, as well as the most dangerous reactionary leaders, resulting in the enemy finding itself actually beheaded. This was followed up by a speedy transfer of our troops to the main enemy strongpoints. Thanks to these operations, combined with our legal struggle, the enemy army found itself bound hand and foot; it had no time and did not even dare open fire; it was completely paralysed and deprived of all combat efficiency. Meanwhile, local bodies of state power were falling one after the other under the onslaught of the national uprising, though the coalition government still remained intact in the capital. After provincial bodies of revolutionary power had been established, the time came to reorganise the government in the centre. Unexpectedly for the enemy and in accordance with the will and demands of the popular masses, the National Congress of People's Representatives was convened: the

former rulers had no choice but to abdicate.

Such were the means and methods used by our Party to take power at the final stage of the revolution. They made it possible to exert constant powerful pressure on the enemy, without giving him a chance to foresee our intentions and undertake retaliatory measures. Despite the fact that the enemy had considerable strength, he nevertheless could not counter us with anything, and was finally forced to capitulate and surrender his arms.

The Party's correct strategy and wise leadership demonstrated its ability to choose the right moment, to make a quick and well-timed decision to start an uprising, increase all the revolutionary forces and use adequate means and methods, and were some of the major factors in predetermining the brilliant success of the now historic May 1975 uprising. This success should be regarded as the culmination of the thirty-year selfless and bloody struggle of our people. The struggle methods of any revolution should essentially depend on the revolutionary forces actually available.

While the forces of the revolution are weak, the ruling classes usually respond to the struggle of the popular masses by placing "the bayonet on the agenda"¹. Hence, in the course of a lengthy, hard and intense struggle, we had to simultaneously set up and consolidate the forces of the revolution and gradually take over power

¹ V. I. Lenin, "A Contribution to the History of the Question of the Dictatorship", *Collected Works*, Vol. 31, p. 346.

first at the lowest stages, at strongpoints, and then start to establish our power in the vast liberated districts. Thus, the positions and forces of the revolution grew steadily stronger, and the positions and forces of the enemy noticeably weaker. Only when the positions and forces of the revolution had grown so strong as to be able to compel the enemy on to the defensive, when the forces of the popular masses had turned into a powerful revolutionary stream and the enemy found himself in a hopeless situation, did he no longer dare resort to armed violence against the revolution, fearing complete annihilation, even though he did continue to resist by other methods and means. Lenin predicted that "in individual cases, by way of exception ... peaceful surrender of power by the bourgeoisie is *possible*, if it is convinced that resistance is hopeless and if it prefers to save its skin".¹ The final stage of the revolution in our country was characterised precisely by such conditions. Only when the positions and forces of the revolution had become so strong as to be able to smash the enemy to smithereens, only when the enemy found himself paralysed and cornered, did the revolution decide to employ measures appropriate for taking power all over the country, without resorting to a new war.

Although we took power by means of revolutionary violence, at the same time preserving peace in the country, this in no way signifies that we shall not resort to force in the

¹ V. I. Lenin, "A Caricature of Marxism and Imperialist Economics", *Collected Works*, Vol. 23, p. 69.

future to defend peace.

The reactionary classes suffered a serious defeat, but this does not mean that they simply agreed to retreat and forever abandoned their intentions to fight the revolution, arms in hand. This has been vividly confirmed by the experience of the four years of our republic, during which we have waged the struggle to preserve peace.

Therefore, now that we have won power, our duty is to consolidate the dictatorship of the proletariat with all the available forces, to perfect the instruments of revolutionary violence, to improve vigilance, and to always be prepared to rebuff enemy attempts to sow trouble and start a counter-offensive. Only in this way can we ensure the further peaceful development of the revolution.

The thirty years of our revolution have witnessed a continuous struggle involving the revolutionary violence of the masses, a struggle waged in various forms. And although in the course of the revolution we had to change our tactics depending on the respective stages of the struggle, to utilise its different forms and methods, and to show flexibility, the fundamental principle of our Party was always that of *violent revolution* and an *offensive strategy*. In this lies the "secret" of the past and future victories of our revolutionary struggle.

7. COMBINING ARDENT PATRIOTISM WITH GENUINE PROLETARIAN INTERNATIONALISM

We live at a time in history characterised by the transition from capitalism to socialism, a

transition that began with the Great October Socialist Revolution. Three revolutionary movements—the socialist system, the national liberation movement and the international labour movement in capitalist countries—have today united into one mighty revolutionary force that has drawn millions of people towards socialism and inspires others in many countries of the world to fight for the cause of national independence, democracy and socialism.

International imperialism, led by American imperialism, and other reactionary forces are making futile attempts to hold back the revolutionary tide in other countries and to organise a counter-offensive, increasing the oppression and exploitation of their own workers at home. At the same time, the revolutionary movement in each country, being an organic part of the international revolutionary process, is directly affected by present-day revolutionary movements and itself reinforces them. The working class and working people in all countries are united by common interests and common ideals, bearing the responsibility not only for their own nation but for the revolutionary movement in other countries as well.

On the other hand, as a result of geographical location and historical development, there are certain regions in the world where countries have been closely linked down the centuries. Imperialism and the ruling circles in these countries are pursuing a regional strategy, setting up regional political blocs of various kinds. The revolutionary movements in these countries are closely linked together and affect

each other, giving the revolutionary process in that region a distinctive character.

Lenin pointed out: "Capital is an international force. To vanquish it, an international workers' alliance, an international workers' brotherhood, is needed.

We are opposed to national enmity and discord, to national exclusiveness. We are internationalists."¹ Today, therefore, a Marxist-Leninist party leading the revolution in its own country must not only adopt the correct position and follow the correct line with regard to internal questions in order to lead and organise the people in their revolutionary struggle, but must also adopt the correct international position and see the revolution in its own country within the historical context of the revolutionary movement in that region and throughout the world. In so doing it can take advantage of the three revolutionary forces of the modern world to strengthen itself and achieve victory, while also making an active contribution to the international revolutionary movement, a contribution that is all the more important given the complex situation prevailing in the world today. At the same time, any signs of great-power chauvinism must be resolutely opposed as alien to Marxism-Leninism and proletarian internationalism.

The revolution in Laos is an integral part of the revolutionary movement in Indochina and throughout the world. The revolution in Laos

¹ V. I. Lenin, "Letter to the Workers and Peasants of the Ukraine Apropos of the Victories over Denikin", *Collected Works*, Vol. 30, p. 293.

and the revolutions in Vietnam and Kampuchea are related by historical and geographic factors as well as by deep feelings of revolutionary brotherhood. Living in the same geographical region and united by a similar history of subjugation to a colonial power, our three peoples have always given each other support in the fight to free our homeland from a common enemy, from French colonial power and local reactionary feudal leaders.

From the moment that comrade Ho Chi Minh, an outstanding leader of the international revolutionary movement, began to spread the doctrine of Marxism-Leninism allied with genuine patriotism in Indochina and founded the Communist Party of Indochina, the movement for national independence and democracy in these three countries, hitherto lacking cohesion, acquired new strength under the leadership of the party of the working class. Further on, as the revolutionary movement in each country grew in size and strength, each formed its own independent party of the working class, but the peoples of the three countries continued to help and support each other, thus making it possible for each to win its decisive victory almost at the same moment.

The imperialists have always regarded Indochina as their sphere of influence, as a single strategic whole, both politically and militarily. During almost a hundred years of French colonial rule, our three countries were artificially divided into five provinces which together made up French Indochina ruled by a Governor-General. When the Japanese invaders replaced the

French colonialists, they preserved the previous administrative division of the area, and when the French returned at the end of the Second World War, they continued to see Indochina as a single military sphere of operations.

The Americans then intervened in the area, replacing colonialism with neocolonialism and setting up their own puppet governments under the guise of "national independence". However, American imperialism continued to regard Indochina as a strategic whole, a unit within its overall strategy for Southeast Asia. Every move made by the Americans in Laos, Vietnam or Kampuchea was determined by the situation within Indochina as a whole and served a single strategic purpose with regard to that area, although the mode and scale of operation varied in each country. The first bombing raid carried out by the American Air Force over the liberated areas of Laos was closely linked with the war of annihilation the USA unleashed against North Vietnam. Their aim was to intimidate the revolutionary forces in Laos and test the reaction of Vietnam and the other socialist countries. The overthrow of the neutral government in Kampuchea and the arrival there of American and Saigon troops to extend the military operations into that country, was intended both to destroy the revolutionary movement in Kampuchea and hold up the revolution in South Vietnam, while simultaneously threatening our strongholds in Southern Laos. Operation "Lam Son 719" along Highway 9 in Southern Laos aimed at cutting the line of communication linking the three countries, and thus threa-

tening our Southern stronghold.

All this serves to illustrate the close links that have united the revolutionary movements in our three countries from their inception and through all the ordeals of war. The struggle for a common cause has welded them into one.

This alliance in struggle has always been a source of unfailing support for our three peoples, guaranteeing the success of the revolutionary movement in each country. Such is the objective truth of the situation.

Therefore the *internationalist policy of our Party was directed first and foremost at strengthening the solidarity and unity in struggle of the three countries of Indochina* by linking the interests of the revolution in our own country with those in the other countries of the region and by combining ardent patriotism with proletarian internationalism. Our Party has always taught the people the spirit of self-sacrifice in the struggle for revolutionary ideals in our country, while also urging upon them the need to contribute all in our power and make any sacrifice necessary to the revolutionary struggle of our brothers in Vietnam and Kampuchea.

Our Party has always vigorously opposed the imperialist strategy of "divide and rule". It has rejected all attempts by internal or external enemies to distort the relationship between our peoples, spread discord, and weaken our alliance born of a common history and blood shed for a common cause. As a member of the United Popular Resistance Front of Indochina during the struggle against the French colonialists and then as a member of the alliance against the American

neocolonialists, the Party always considered the solidarity and militant alliance of the revolutionary movements as a historical necessity for all three nations, as a strategy essential to the revolution in Laos and as part of the international duty of our people and Party, not only during the long and bitter struggle for national liberation but also during the peaceful development of Laos both now and in the future.

The militant cooperation of the revolutionary movements and peoples of Laos and Vietnam plays a vital role in the alliance of the peoples of Indochina. It is cooperation formed not only on the basis of the special relationship that binds the two countries but also in the name of national survival, development and prosperity. The long-standing tradition of friendship, solidarity and mutual support that has marked the historical development of our two peoples gave rise, after the formation of the Communist Party of Indochina, to this militant cooperation based on the combination of ardent patriotism and genuine proletarian internationalism. The successful uprising of August 1945 and the subsequent joint struggle against the colonial power marked a new stage in the consolidation of this cooperation that embraced both the political and military spheres. The struggle against American imperialism served to strengthen it still further at every level. The perfect unity of the two parties in their political outlook made it possible for the revolutionary movements in both countries to rely on each other, support and assist each other, share each other's difficulties and coordinate their activities militarily, po-

litically, economically, diplomatically and otherwise. In defending and consolidating the revolutionary gains in both countries, our peoples and our armies fought side by side, they shared a common destiny and foiled the aggressive plans of American imperialism, winning total victory in both countries. This comprehensive, close and sincere cooperation between the peoples of Laos and Vietnam is a striking example of proletarian internationalism. It was of enormous importance for the revolutionary struggle in both countries.

In Laos, the development of this militant alliance has gone hand in hand with the entire revolutionary struggle and the growth of our revolutionary forces. It caused a radical shift in the balance of power between the opposing forces in our country, creating the conditions necessary for the success of our revolution and its final victory. Our party has always considered this militant alliance to be of particular value and importance. "Events have shown that all our revolutionary victories have been the result of the united effort of our Party and people, supported by the socialist countries and the international movement for peace and democracy. The militant alliance between our Party and the Working People's Party of Vietnam, our revolution and the revolution in Vietnam, and our people and the people of Vietnam was the basis of these victories" (Survey of the Political Programme, Report to the 2nd National Congress of the Lao People's Revolutionary Party, 1972). The decisive victory of the revolution in our countries has given us the opportunity to further streng-

then and develop the now unshakeable ties of friendship and militant unity between our peoples. Our Party, together with the fraternal Communist Party of Vietnam, is determined to consolidate and improve the militant solidarity uniting our two countries, to comprehensively develop cooperation in the new situation; to help each other in peaceful endeavour and in defending the national independence of the two countries, to ensure their own prosperity and stability in Indochina and Southeast Asia.

While developing the ties of solidarity and militant cooperation with the peoples of Vietnam and Kampuchea, *our Party has also given its firm support to international solidarity and has sought aid and assistance given voluntarily in the spirit of international friendship, particularly the aid and assistance from the USSR and other socialist countries, in order to combine its own forces with those of the three revolutionary movements of our day and weld them into a force for victory.* This is yet another essential element in the foreign policy of our Party, which it has consistently pursued and will continue to pursue in the future.

In the long and victorious struggle waged by our people against an enemy many times more powerful, in particular American imperialism which possesses enormous material resources and is pursuing a global strategy, the aid and assistance given by fraternal socialist countries, by friendly newly independent nations, by the national liberation movement and by the movement for peace, democracy and social progress,

were always a factor essential to the final victory of our people.

Our struggle, itself an integral part of the world revolutionary process and taking place at an important time in the history of Southeast Asia, the scene of violent revolutionary upheavals and conflict between the forces of revolution and the forces of reaction, is a struggle being waged not only on behalf of the people of Laos, but also on behalf of the revolutionary movement in the region and throughout the world. Each victory won by our revolution encouraged the popular struggle both in Indochina and throughout the world, contributing to the further consolidation of the socialist system. Thus, despite the differences—sometimes serious—in outlook and political approach among the various socialist countries, our Party consistently strove to strengthen the ties of solidarity with socialist countries and with revolutionary and progressive forces throughout the world at every stage of the revolution, including the period of armed resistance against American imperialism. At the same time, our Party continually sought international aid. All revolutionary parties were united with us in our struggle for national liberation against American imperialism. The Soviet Union and other fraternal socialist countries, together with friendly nations, gave us considerable material assistance and moral support, helping us to pursue our struggle through to its victorious conclusion.

While pursuing its policy of international solidarity, our Party also based itself on the principle of self-reliance of the nation in the maxi-

mum development of its internal resources. The Party has placed its faith in the people and their strength, and has been aware of its own historic mission. It has always believed that the revolution is the work of the people, that the revolution in Laos is a task for the people of Laos to be achieved under the leadership of the Lao People's Revolutionary Party. As a result of the experience gained during the long years of revolutionary struggle, our Party has realised that the more we develop the inner strength of the people the more we are in a position of obtain international aid and support, and that this aid and support can only be put to effective use if the forces of the nation are fully mobilised. During the years of revolutionary struggle, the policy of self-reliance pursued by our Party was based on the principle of independence and the creative application of both Marxism-Leninism and the experience of other fraternal parties within the context of the revolutionary conditions prevailing in our country; on the rapid mobilisation and organisation of the people to strengthen the revolutionary forces of the nation; on combining revolutionary struggle with the task of construction, education and training in order to constantly increase our own ability to fulfil any task relating to any sphere of revolutionary activity. Thanks to this policy our forces steadily grew and developed and this, together with the militant alliance of the three peoples of Indochina and international aid, particularly from the socialist countries, enabled us to defeat our enemies.

The combination of national interests with

those of the international revolutionary movement, of the forces of the nation with those of the three revolutionary movements of our day on the basis of Marxism-Leninism and proletarian internationalism—such is the principle that guides the internationalist policy of our Party, a principle based on the experience of its victorious struggle against internal and external enemies.

8. STRENGTHENING THE LEADING ROLE OF THE PARTY IN ALL SPHERES OF REVOLUTIONARY ACTIVITY

After a long, selfless and heroic struggle by the people of Laos, organised and inspired at every stage by the Marxist-Leninist party, the national democratic revolution was crowned with total success.

During the period when our country was ruled by the French colonialists and local feudal leaders, our people rose up more than once to fight for freedom, led by members first of one then another social group. But these uprisings always ended in defeat. The uprisings that occurred at the beginning of the century were led by tribal chiefs who, because of their own class origins and the unfavourable historical circumstances, were unable to formulate the right policy and tactics and thus, despite the heroism displayed by the peasants of these various ethnic groups, the revolts were always crushed.

The Free Lao Front (Lao Itsala) and other

movements that arose among the urban petty-bourgeois intelligentsia during the 1940s were, despite certain influence they exerted, also incapable of achieving liberation, as the leaders, members of the bourgeoisie, could not grasp the laws of social development and proposed a capitalist way which did not meet the aspirations of the age. Therefore they were not able to rally the people to the cause.

Only our Party (the Communist Party of Indochina and then the Lao People's Revolutionary Party) has been the true representative of the interests of the working class and all the people of our country, the only party in the country which, knowing and using the objective laws governing the evolution of society, correctly decided upon questions of tactics and strategy at every stage of the revolution. Under the leadership of the Party, the courageous struggle of the Lao people entered a new phase, winning victory after victory until liberation was finally achieved and the People's Democratic Republic of Laos established on the path to socialism.

Born of a fusion of the patriotic movement of the Lao people and the doctrine of Marxism-Leninism brought to Indochina by Comrade Ho Chi Minh, our Party is heir to the noble cause of the Communist Party of Indochina and accepted the sacred task of undivided leadership in the revolution at the most difficult period in our national history. Basing its activity on scientific principles, our Party worthily accomplished its mission throughout the years of revolution, winning the affection and trust of the people. Not

only did it display an unfailing militancy of spirit, inflexible will and selfless devotion to the interests of its class and the entire people, but also studied and creatively applied Marxism-Leninism and used the experience of fraternal parties in solving revolutionary problems within the context of the specific circumstances prevailing in our country. It led the revolutionary movement surely, steadily and decisively to final victory.

The long years of revolutionary struggle in Laos clearly reveal that *the Party is the fundamental and decisive factor in the victory of our revolution*. Without the Party, without its leadership, the revolution could never have achieved such total success. The experience of our Party further underlines the great truth of our era of the worldwide transition from capitalism to socialism. That truth is that the working class is the driving force in the progress of mankind, and the party of the working class, armed with the doctrine of Marxism-Leninism, is the guarantor of victory.

“The Lao People’s Revolutionary Party,” the 1972 Political Programme of the Party declares, “is the genuine Marxist-Leninist party of the working class, the highly-organised vanguard and the highest form of the organisation of the working class of Laos. The Party unites and leads all national and ethnic groups, the entire people, to the victory of the people’s national democratic revolution, along the path of socialist revolution to build a socialist and communist Laos. The Party dedicates all its energy to the service of the people, the homeland. It has no

interests other than those of the working class and the entire people. Therefore the Lao People's Revolutionary Party is the party of the working class, the party of the workers of all ethnic groups, the party of the entire nation."

Given its nature and its aims, our Party is built on the Leninist organisational principles of a working-class party of the new type. The ideological base and guiding principle is Marxism-Leninism combined with genuine patriotism and proletarian internationalism. The Party is organised on the basis of democratic centralism, united politically, ideologically, organisationally and tactically. It rejects any schismatic or factional tendencies. It conducts its activity in close association with the people; criticism and self-criticism are a law of its internal development. These are the organisational principles that our Party upholds and applies in order to maintain its class character and its leading role as a genuinely Marxist-Leninist party.

Our Party arose in a country whose social development was still at a very low level, whose working class was still in its beginnings and whose population was, and is, divided into numerous ethnic groups. Thus, from the start, our Party faced a difficult and particular problem, that of bringing communist ideology to the people and founding a Marxist-Leninist party in a country where the majority of the people are "not workers who have passed through the school of capitalist factories, but typical representatives of the working and exploited peasant masses

who are victims of medieval oppression".¹ It was Comrade Ho Chi Minh who successfully solved this problem and led the people of Indochina from patriotism to Marxism-Leninism. Our Party, in its turn, has led the peoples of the various ethnic groups in our country along the path charted by Comrade Ho Chi Minh, correctly and creatively using the principle of combining patriotism and Marxism-Leninism within the conditions prevailing in our country.

Laos is not only a country in which the overwhelming majority of the people are peasants who laboured under colonial, feudal and pre-feudal exploitation, but also a country inhabited by many different ethnic groups whose relationships with each other are extremely complex. Therefore, in order to bring Marxism-Leninism to the people, our Party had first of all to arouse feelings of attachment to their home and their village community and the desire for freedom and independence. This was achieved by encouraging them to fight in defence of their village, tribe and their people against the colonialist and imperialist powers, their implacable enemies. In the course of this struggle the Party then taught the peasants the need to unite their forces, the forces of all ethnic groups and tribes, first within the same region and then throughout the country, in order to achieve that unity necessary to defeat a powerful common enemy. Out of this emerged and developed the spirit of

¹ V. I. Lenin, "Address to the Second All-Russia Congress of Communist Organisations of the Peoples of the East", *Collected Works*, Vol. 30, p. 161.

national unity, the spirit of patriotism.

The national liberation struggle in Laos was closely bound up with the struggle of the other peoples of Indochina fighting the same enemy and enjoyed international support, and therefore the Party strove to inculcate, together with patriotism, a sense of international solidarity. Patriotism and genuine proletarian internationalism are thus woven together into a unified whole which forms the moral principle guiding all our people.

As the revolution progressed, the people came to realise that the achievement of total independence required not only the defeat and expulsion of the colonial power but also the overthrow of the ruling élite in the pay of foreign powers in order to carry through a programme of democratic reform, liquidate feudal and pre-feudal forms of exploitation and build a new society in which the people are the masters of their own destiny, their own country and their own existence. Class consciousness and national consciousness thus fused together and acquired a qualitatively new significance in the minds of revolutionaries and patriots. *From love of native home, tribe and people to love of country and proletarian internationalism; from awareness of national interests to awareness of class interests*—this is the path our Party has followed in spreading Marxism-Leninism among the people and mobilising them to create a powerful national democratic movement throughout the country. This is the base on which our Party formed and developed and from which it drew its strength to become a powerful organising force

capable of fulfilling its role as the vanguard leading the revolution to victory, and to become the ruling party in our country.

Another feature characterising the revolutionary struggle in Laos is that it has been an armed struggle from the very beginning, and therefore it was the duty of every patriot who joined the movement to take up arms against the enemy, either as a soldier of the revolutionary army or as a member of an armed detachment or the local armed militia, or to participate in the work of organisations assisting the armed forces and to share in the armed struggle in whatever form it took. Moreover, the revolutionary struggle in our country followed very complicated ways, the battle round the negotiating table being no less bitter than that on the battle-field. The national liberation struggle in our country was, at every stage, a testing ground of discipline and will, which permitted not the slightest weakness or hesitation. It allowed of no failure of will or vacillation, demanding of each member high morale and constant readiness for combat, the willingness to make any sacrifice, including that of life itself, in order to defeat the enemy. The ability to meet such demands revealed the highest level of class consciousness and the correct application of the principles of Marxism-Leninism within the context of the revolutionary struggle in Laos, and thus it was possible to select as Party members those who had distinguished themselves in the long and bitter armed and political struggle in the course of the national democratic revolution. Therefore, although most of the Party members came from the peasant background

typical of a backward country, they learned to identify with the working class and firmly upheld the doctrine of Marxism-Leninism.

The correct and creative application of Marxism-Leninism led to the successful formation of a working-class party of the new type within the conditions existing in our country. Nonetheless, our Party has been deeply conscious of the colonial and semi-feudal heritage of the past, of ethnic and tribal divisions and of the fact that class differentiation is still poorly developed, all factors which affect the party itself. *Ideological education and training of Party cadres with the aim of raising the level of class consciousness among Party members and strengthening the role of the Party as the revolutionary vanguard has been therefore a fundamental task that must be constantly pursued.* Starting with the basic concepts of patriotism, internationalism, the national liberation and class struggle, our Party also strove to expand its members' knowledge of the principles of Marxism-Leninism, of the aims and ideals of the Party and of its class approach. It inculcated clear moral values and opposed any signs of a non-proletarian ideology or opportunism. Experience has taught us that particular attention must be paid to developing in Party cadres and members a firm class-conscious and revolutionary approach in order to counter all vacillation and illusion among some of its members, or uncertainty when distinguishing friend from foe, a tendency that revealed itself when the Party had to pin down the enemy. It also has to oppose unclear and confused ideas, the desire to slacken the struggle and enjoy a respite,

which has sometimes appeared in the course of the long and arduous battle for victory. In addition, the Party also has had to fight against signs of narrow-minded nationalism, parochialism, sectarianism and indiscipline that hindered the formation of democratic centralism within the Party. At the same time, much attention was given to developing democracy and collective leadership and to opposing all forms of paternalist, bureaucratic or dictatorial rule.

The task of strengthening the class character and leading role of the Party goes hand in hand with *the task of strengthening the internal unity of the Party, a task the Party considers to be of vital importance*. Given that "unity is strength" and the Party the leading core and command centre of the working class, it must be totally united and possessed of a single will. Only then is the Party capable of leading the working class and the entire people to final victory over the enemy and achieving its final aim. However, it must also be remembered that our Party formed and developed in a country whose economy is agricultural and based on scattered, small-scale holdings and where relations between the various regions and ethnic groups are particularly complex. All this has left its mark on the mentality of our Party cadres and members. The Party had to wage a long, complex and arduous struggle against a powerful enemy who resorted to every tactic to divide our forces and undermine the unity of the Party, and therefore maintaining and consolidating internal unity was its abiding concern.

Although the struggle waged by our people

has taken place against a generally favourable international background, there are, nonetheless, difficulties in this respect too. Our Party must, therefore, continue to strengthen its internal unity in order to maintain its independence and pursue its correct course. The internal unity of the Party is both a matter of principle and also a practical necessity of such importance that the entire Party, from the Central Committee to local branches and individual members, must preserve and defend it as they would life itself. The Party has never permitted any signs of schism, factionalism, parochialism, or sectarianism, considering them as inimical to the Party, the revolution and the nation.

The unity of the Party consists, first and foremost, in *absolute political and ideological unity*. This means that the Party must be one both in ideological matters and in questions of practical activity, both based on Marxism-Leninism and given concise expression in the programme and statutes of the Party, formulated jointly by the entire Party, and in the political line and tactics pursued by the Party at every stage and defined in the decisions of the Central Committee. This unity is one to which all members give their conscious consent, accepting in unanimity the ideals, aims and objectives of the Party. It is based on the revolutionary theory and scientific principles of Marxism-Leninism, which must be known and applied by all members. This unity is revealed not just in theoretical knowledge and acceptance of the principles of the Party but, more importantly, in the daily practical activity of each member, regardless of his position

and his duties.

Political and ideological unity must be reinforced by *organisational unity*. Without it, political and ideological unity loses any practical meaning and cannot survive. Our Party is a fighting organisation and not a debating club; each member is guaranteed the right, via the Party organisation, to express his opinion on any subject in the interests of the revolution and also to take part in any discussions or decisions relating to Party activity. But any discussion must lead to a final conclusion or decision that will serve as a basis for united action.

In a military unit preparing for the attack, every soldier may join in discussing the various situations that might arise in the course of the battle but, once the attack has started, he must fight according to the single tactic, according to one plan and under one commander. So also *the Party must be formed on the principle of democratic centralism*, according to which the individual is subordinate to the organisation, the minority to the majority, the lower organs to the higher organs, and the entire Party is led by the Central Committee. This principle is the organisational base of the Party and ensures its organisational unity, which in turn guarantees its political and ideological unity.

Criticism and self-criticism is the principle governing the development of the Party and *the chief means whereby unity and cohesion are assured*. The direction of the revolutionary process requires constant study of the laws underlying revolutionary development in order to reveal the contradictions within it and thus arrive at so-

lutions that promote its further development. In the course of the long, bitter and determined battle against the enemy, the situation is often extremely complex, particularly at moments when revolution is at a turning point.

The inner truth of such situations is often not immediately apparent and certain aspects of the event seem to contradict its true nature. In such circumstances, judgements may vary due to the different levels of understanding among Party members; some are quick to grasp the essence of the situation, others are slower to do so, while yet others fail entirely to perceive the nature of the problem. As a result, different methods of approach are advocated. In addition, Party cadres and members are affected by various non-proletarian influences arising from such factors as social status, ethnic peculiarities and also the conditions in which the revolutionary struggle in our country is being waged. Therefore the conflict between the progressive and the conservative, the old and the new, the correct and the erroneous is a necessary and continuing process within the Party itself. The comparison and analysis of various ideas and opinions raises the level of consciousness of Party members. All that is correct and positive must be encouraged to develop and all that is erroneous and negative must be subjected to criticism so that differences and contradictions within the Party can be resolved and removed and conscious unity achieved. By this means, the unity of the Party is further consolidated and the consciousness of its members raised to a higher level.

Our Party does not fear this internal ideolo-

gical conflict, does not fear criticism and self-criticism. It has experienced many ideological debates, much positive criticism and ideological discussions on topics of immediate concern, particularly at crucial moments in the history of the revolutionary struggle in Laos. The Party has emerged yet more united from each conflict of opinions by which a collective formulation of one correct interpretation has been achieved, although disciplinary measures have occasionally had to be employed. More than once, as a result of machinations by the enemy or sudden changes in the internal or international situation, the position became extremely urgent and complex. In such circumstances, any indecision or lack of unity on the part of the leaders could have had serious consequences for the revolution. However, thanks to strict adherence to the rules and methods of internal debate, the Party was always able to arrive at a unanimous view and lead the revolution resolutely through all the twists and turns of history to ultimate victory.

The internal unity of the Party must be founded on one united policy and, first and foremost, in accordance with the principle of democratic centralism. It is important, too, that *relations marked by good-will and friendliness should be established between cadres and members of the Party*. Comradely relations based on the common ideals and aims of the difficult struggle we all share are our most sacred possession as Communists. There have sometimes been instances of disagreement within the Party but in most cases this was due not to differences of

opinion over the political line to be followed but rather to lack of good-will and respect between Party members, or to a narrow-minded and prejudiced approach to solving the contradiction. Personal relations must be based on warmth, sincerity, modesty, respect, sympathy and mutual support so that problems can be resolved amicably. On the other hand, there can be no tolerance of parochialism, egoism, suspicion, self-seeking, self-justification, vanity, etc., all remnants of the old society, contradictory to communist morality. Such attitudes undermine comradely relations between Party members and give rise to factions and splinter groups.

If a comrade does not agree with the Party line on a given question, either because he does not understand the issue or because of personal error or weakness, this must be clearly pointed out, we must openly and uncompromisingly fight on matters of principle, but the comrade in question should be brought to understand that comradeship is the basis of this criticism, so that it will help him make a step forward in his development and cope with the tasks he is entrusted. If necessary, for example if opinion is divided on certain issues whose complexity makes it difficult to arrive immediately at a common decision, then all must work together so that each can arrive at a better understanding of the situation, examine the various points of view from every angle and thus arrive at a unanimous decision. If disciplinary measures have to be taken, they should be always justified and applied in such a way that the comrade being disciplined

feels the concern the Party has for him, and can thus correct his mistakes without harbouring bitterness towards the Party or feeling discouraged. Such measures should never be arbitrary, harsh or humiliating, as this will only breed feelings of discontent and alienation which may lead him to commit further, more serious, errors.

Unity within the Party is *a necessary prerequisite of national and international unity*. The Party is the vanguard, the highest organisational form of the working class and the entire people. If the Party lacks unity there can be no unity among the various nationalities and ethnic groups, and even less among all the working people. Our Party succeeded in uniting all the ethnic and social groups within the country into one single national front not only because it followed the correct revolutionary policy and the correct approach to the united front but also, and this is very important, because from the first to the last day of the revolution its cadres and members, drawn from various ethnic and social groups, acted with one will, even though their class affiliation was not always sufficiently distinguishable. Thanks to this unity our Party, although small in number, was able to ensure the unity of the nation and thwart the divisive tactics of the enemy.

The same is true of international relations. They can only develop fruitfully if the Party is solidly united within, as true international relations are based on the principle of independence for each party and each country. Only the Party united internally and one with its people can de-

fend its independence and win respect for its domestic and foreign policy, and be able to display genuine international solidarity on this basis. Genuine unity within the Party requires correctly regulated relations between Party members. This problem becomes particularly acute in times of disagreement. Only if relations within the Party can be properly resolved is it possible to solve questions relating to its international contacts, and if there is no genuine internal unity there cannot be correctly structured international relations. This is the dialectic link between national and international issues, the truth of which has been revealed by the history of the international communist movement.

Thanks to a correct policy and creative methods of solving organisational problems, we were able to form a genuine Marxist-Leninist party that corresponds to the social conditions in our country. However, if the role of the Party, essential to all our victories, is to be consolidated, then *the leading position of the Party must be maintained and strengthened* in every sphere of the struggle and in all circumstances. The revolutionary struggle involves all spheres of human activity, developing continuously and with specific methods of approach corresponding to its different stages. Thus the Party must consistently maintain and strengthen its leading role in all spheres of the struggle—political, military, economic, cultural, diplomatic, etc., in peace and in war, in difficult and in happy circumstances.

The Party executes its leading role in many

ways, but primarily by pursuing its general policy, its political programme and objectives, from its military, strategic and tactical policy at every stage in the struggle down to individual projects in every sphere of social activity. It also fulfils its role by undertaking large-scale political education among various social groups, encouraging sentiments of patriotism, national pride, loyalty to the new order, solidarity with all fraternal nations and progressive elements, total dedication to the struggle against the enemy and to the development of their native land. The Party exercises its guidance through its members who must serve as examples of high personal morality, active participation on the battle-field, at work and in carrying out the decisions and policy of the Party. On assuming power, the leading role of the Party serves to enhance the position and efficiency of those organs that control the state, the economy and other areas of public life, while also increasing the role of the people in the government of the state and society.

The maintenance and reinforcement of the leading role of the Party therefore requires, first and foremost, *a thorough knowledge of the general policy, the programme and decisions of the Party* on the part of all its cadres and members and also on the part of wide sections of the workers, and all social groups, so that total unity can be achieved and turned into a powerful political force able to carry through the general policy and political programme of the Party in the concrete situation. Work must also be done in analysing the lessons gained from experience so

that the general line and political programmes of the Party can be supplemented and developed in every sphere, including such new spheres as civil administration and economic management, so that the policy of the Party corresponds to the objective laws of social development and revolutionary progress. *The organisational structure of the Party must be strengthened and improved at every level.* The principle of the comprehensive, centralised and unified leadership of the Party must be implemented in all spheres of activity—political, military, economic, and cultural. The leadership of the Party is essential to success, but it can only be achieved if the Party organisations operate at every level and in every sphere of activity. In short, wherever there is mass activity, the Party organisation must be present to organise and direct it. Only thus can the general line, decisions and policies of the Party be fully and correctly implemented, and only thus is it possible to mobilise and unite all our forces in all spheres and all regions of the country in order to carry through the projects laid down by the Party.

Of major importance in strengthening and promoting the leading role of the Party is the constant improvement of its organisational structure at every level. The members must be instilled with a sense of class consciousness and appreciation of their leading role; they must be firm in their ideological convictions, and able to organise others in carrying out the Party line. The quality of Party organisation in every field must be constantly improved, the principle of collective leadership firmly abided by, and critic-

ism and self-criticism developed in order to promote Party unity. In this way, the role of the Party will be continually strengthened and the quality of its membership constantly improved.

* * *

These are some of the basic lessons that have been drawn from the more than 30 years' heroic struggle by the Lao people under the leadership of the Party. This experience relates to the Marxist-Leninist strategy, tactics and revolutionary methods applied within the conditions prevailing in Laos, a previously colonial, semi-feudal, backward agrarian country with a small population composed of many ethnic groups and lacking both clear class differentiation and a sense of national unity.

In resolving the questions of revolutionary strategy, tactics and approach, our Party has based itself on the fundamental tenets of Marxism-Leninism, while taking into account the conditions obtaining in Laos, in Indochina and throughout the world. It has also given due and critical consideration to the experience of other fraternal parties. This approach has led to remarkable victories in the revolutionary struggle. Having taken up *the banner of national democratic revolution* and correctly determined the path to be followed in line with prevailing social conditions, our Party *welded together the working class and the peasantry* into the main revolutionary force, and on this basis it gathered all the ethnic and social groups into a broad

front of national unity under the leadership of the Party. *Using the concepts of revolutionary violence and offensive strategy, our Party made every effort to create a popular armed and political force.* Our Party correctly used the revolutionary approach, combining armed warfare with political, popular warfare with mass uprising, violence with coalition in order to *move from victory to victory*, division and destruction of the enemy forces till their final collapse and the achievement of total victory. Loyal to the ideals of genuine proletarian internationalism and working together with the people of Vietnam and Kampuchea, our Party strove to obtain international aid, correctly combining national interests with the interests of the world revolutionary movement, national strength with the strength of the three present-day revolutionary movements in order to create a powerful force capable of crushing any and all aggressors.

Guided by the strategy, tactics and approach described above, the Party led the popular national democratic revolution in Laos to total victory, a victory that opened up a new era in the history of our people, an era of peace, independence, democracy and the transition to socialism. The successful revolution and the experience gained during the long struggle have convinced our people that the true leader of the people and organiser of all revolutionary victories in our country is the Lao People's Revolutionary Party. Filled with pride and trust in that Party, our people have united under its banner to fight a determined battle. The nation, resolute and

staunch, victorious over the imperialist aggressors, and led by the true party of Marxism-Leninism, will overcome all difficulties, all backwardness and build a happy and flourishing society.

The national democratic revolution in our country has ended in total victory, but the lessons mentioned above still retain their practical value and importance. Availing itself of that experience in battle which led to national liberation, the Party is convinced that it can solve the revolutionary tasks that now lie before it. We are determined to carry through successfully the glorious mission of defending and developing our country in order to ensure the prosperity of our beloved native land.

**BUILDING A PEACEFUL, INDEPENDENT,
UNITED AND PROSPEROUS
SOCIALIST LAOS**

Only four years have passed since the liberation of our country and the establishment of a popular democratic system of government led by our Party, but many changes have taken place in that short time. We defeated the criminal and malicious plans of the enemy, resolutely defended the independent and correct policy of our Party and preserved the right to national independence and territorial sovereignty. We maintain our position in the front line of socialism in Southeast Asia. Over the years we have become more experienced in the practical side of the socialist revolution and in specifying the objectives of internal and international policy. We have begun the reconstruction of the economy, developed culture and education and devoted all our energies to improving the living conditions of the people.

Despite many problems to be resolved, we continue to progress confidently in developing and defending our beloved country, for the path to socialism is already open before us. A new and fruitful era has begun in the history of our

country—the construction of a peaceful, independent, united, prosperous and socialist Laos.

1. THE TRANSITION TO SOCIALISM IS THE ONLY WAY FORWARD FOR OUR COUNTRY

Guided by Marxist-Leninist principles and basing itself on a thorough analysis of the current conditions and the course of revolutionary development in Laos, the 2nd Congress of our Party (1972) defined its paramount task as follows: "The conditions necessary for a direct transition to socialism bypassing the capitalist stage of development must be established." The Central Committee then gradually elaborated, amended and specified the general policy and the particular tasks of the revolution at the new stage of its development. The general policy adopted by the 2nd Party Congress and the subsequent decisions taken by the plenary sessions of the Central Committee fully meet the objective requirements of revolutionary development in our country and reflect the deep aspirations of our people. Thus they correspond to the realities of the modern age.

The experience of the world revolutionary movement over the last 50-odd years, and particularly since the end of the Second World War, clearly revealed the inevitability of the collapse of imperialism and colonialism. The immediate post-war years saw an increasing number of socialist revolutions throughout the world; socialism ceased to be the path followed by just one

country and grew into a powerful international system. We have witnessed the enormous achievements of the socialist countries in every sphere, in particular the unparalleled development of the Soviet Union and the tremendous advances in Vietnam, the German Democratic Republic and Cuba, the outposts of socialism in Asia, Europe and Latin America. Socialist community has increased and strengthened, becoming a decisive factor in human progress, the bright promise for the future and cherished dream of progressives throughout the world. Despite the frantic efforts of imperialism and the forces of reaction to undermine, divide and destroy the socialist system, it is obvious that no power, however malicious its plans, can reverse the wheel of history and brake the gathering momentum of socialist revolution. On the contrary, the socialist system continues to grow and expand, as is clearly evidenced by the revolutions in Angola, Mozambique, Ethiopia, South Yemen, Afghanistan and other countries.

Particularly striking are the achievements of the people of Kampuchea who, under the United Front for National Salvation, within a short period smashed the forces of the reactionary clique of Pol Pot-Jeng Sary and liberated the whole country, saving the people from extinction and establishing Kampuchea on the path to socialism. This yet further illustrates the objective development of history, which no force is powerful enough to check.

Supported by the socialist system, which continues to develop and expand, the national liberation movements in Asia, Africa and Latin

America are also gaining in strength and scope. Having broken the fetters of colonial slavery, they are continuing their bitter struggle to destroy every vestige of colonialism, neocolonialism and the reactionary forces in the service of imperialism in order to win full national independence and achieve social reform in non-capitalist development.

Inspired by the successes of socialism and faced with the deep and insoluble crisis of capitalism, millions of workers in capitalist countries are waging a vigorous struggle under the slogan, Peace, Democracy and Social Progress, directing the spearhead of their attack at the reactionary rule of monopoly capital and against the oppressive and aggressive policies of their leaders. This mighty force is carrying the battle against imperialism in its very camp and thus creating conditions necessary for the gradual transition to socialism.

There is thus a clear distinction between the socialist viewpoint and the various doctrines propounded by opportunists and reactionaries, who strive to distort Marxism-Leninism and deny the historic role played by socialism and, indeed, its very existence. The three revolutionary movements of our day, mentioned earlier, and the broad movement for peace and progress throughout the world are continuing their assault on imperialism and the forces of reaction, forcing them to yield their ground and retreat, sapping their strength and condemning them to isolation. The balance of power between the forces of revolution and of counter-revolution is shifting daily to our advantage, attracting mil-

lions irresistibly towards socialism and inspiring progressive people everywhere to continue the struggle for a worldwide transition from capitalism to socialism. This is the main feature of the era we are living through today.

As Lenin said, "From the democratic revolution we shall at once, and precisely in accordance with the measure of our strength, the strength of the class-conscious and organised proletariat, begin to pass to the socialist revolution. We stand for uninterrupted revolution. We shall not stop half-way."¹ In the context of modern history, in a country with a low level of socio-economic development but with the working class and peasantry led by a genuine Marxist-Leninist party and conscious of their leading role within the national liberation movement, the victory of the national democratic revolution will be not only a victory of the people over imperialism and feudalism but also the political victory of the working class over the bourgeoisie inside the country, the victory of a new type of government. The revolutionary power of workers and peasants must not content itself with having won independence and democracy. It must follow the law of revolutionary development and fulfil its historic mission, moving on to the socialist revolution and the building of socialism according to its laws, in order to give a decisive answer to the question, "who will win", capitalism or social-

¹ V. I. Lenin, "Social-Democracy's Attitude Towards the Peasant Movement", *Collected Works*, Vol. 9, pp. 236-37.

ism, and establish society and the nation on the objective path of modern historical development.

In this historical context, the revolutionary process in our country also comes under the same propositions. Having taken over leadership of the revolutionary process in Laos, our Party carefully considered the objective course of modern development and the aspirations of the people, defining the strategic policy of the revolution as being "to implement the popular national democratic revolution throughout the country in order to then progress towards the socialist revolution and the building of socialism and communism in Laos" (Political Programme adopted by the 2nd Congress of the LPRP, 1972). By adhering firmly to this revolutionary policy and combining the struggle for independence and democracy with the transition to socialism, genuine patriotism with proletarian internationalism, our Party and people have been able constantly to strengthen and expand their strategic positions until the final victory of the popular national democratic revolution and to move directly to the fulfilment of their next task, that of building a peaceful, independent, united and prosperous socialist Laos.

Our country is now completely united and independent, and the working people are its absolute masters. However, the country has only just emerged from a devastating 30-year war forced upon it by imperialism, and still bears the heavy burden of a colonial and feudal past. Productive forces and relations of production have not undergone any significant change. The capitalist

mode of production still prevails in the low-lying regions and cities liberated towards the end of the revolution, and feudal and prefeudal production has survived in large agricultural areas. Socialist production has already started to form, but is still weak and unable to exert any decisive or controlling influence on the national economy as a whole. The attitudes and habits bred of small-scale production are still widespread, nor has it proved possible as yet to finally remove all traces of feudalism and colonialism. Moreover, it must be added that small-scale production continues to generate capitalist and bourgeois trends at every turn.

Our Party and people are, therefore, faced with extremely urgent and complex problems. The former modes of production must be transformed and new economic relations and division of labour introduced. The material-technical base necessary for economic reconstruction must be laid and the cultural level of the people raised so that our country can advance firmly and rapidly along the road to socialism. This programme corresponds to the laws of modern development and offers the quickest means of removing all vestiges of feudalism and colonialism so that the country can be freed from poverty and underdevelopment, and our society undergo a radical transformation in every sphere of activity, in politics, economy, culture, in national defence and in the living standards of the people. The Party and the people will then be able to fulfil their responsibilities both on the national and international level.

As we are in the front line of socialism in

Southeast Asia, a region where imperialism and the forces of reaction are striving unsuccessfully to maintain their position, we must be constantly on our guard, strengthen our defences and be prepared to fight resolutely for our own independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity, and to contribute to stability in our region of the world. This is why the socialist transformation of society and the building of socialism continue to be the most important and decisive tasks facing the revolution in our country today. It is only by carrying through social reform and building socialism that our political and economic potential can develop rapidly enough to strengthen our national security.

In the battle between the two paths of development—socialist and capitalist—being waged to secure the final triumph of the socialist system, the revolutionary process must inevitably pass through difficult periods and meet with many problems. But we are firmly convinced that our country, under the leadership of the Party and with a popular democratic system of government, will blossom into socialism and our people take their rightful place among the family of socialist nations and on the international scene. We are already accomplishing the historic task of the dictatorship of the proletariat, based on the unshakeable alliance of the workers and peasants and the broad united national front. We also enjoy a considerable support and assistance of the socialist community and the world revolutionary movement, in particular the support of the Vietnamese revolution with which ours is indissolubly linked.

To our generation has fallen the enormous responsibility and the glorious task of leading the struggle that will answer the question, "who will win", socialism or capitalism. In answering that question we will lay the foundations of a new era in the history of our country, an era of independence, unity and socialism. We proudly carry the banner of national independence and socialism. Filled with love for our socialist homeland, we are determined to devote all our energies to accomplishing the tasks that have been laid upon us and thus show ourselves worthy of the honour that has befallen us.

2. THE MAIN CONTENT OF THE GENERAL POLICY AND PROGRAMME OF THE SOCIALIST REVOLUTION IN LAOS

As has already been stated, the transition to socialism is the quickest means of eliminating poverty and backwardness in our country and building a powerful and prosperous society that will fulfil the long-cherished hopes of our people. However, socialism does not build itself, nor arise by accident. It is the fruit of the efforts of millions of people working under the united leadership of the Party and the state, who determine the correct policy and apply the appropriate measures. In order to successfully carry through the socialist revolution and the building of socialism, the 4th Plenum of the Central Committee of the LPRP defined the policy and objectives of the transitional period in our country as follows: "The establishment and consolidation of the dictatorship of the proletariat

and the right of the working people to be the collective master of the country, together with the simultaneous achievement of three revolutions: *revolution in the sphere of production relations, revolution in the sphere of science and technology, and revolution in the sphere of ideology and culture. In this process, the scientific-technological revolution plays the key role, and the cultural-ideological revolution must keep one step ahead of the other two.*"

The dictatorship of the proletariat is the key aspect, the fundamental characteristic of any proletarian revolution. Marx pointed out: "Between capitalist and communist society lies the period of the revolutionary transformation of the one into the other. Corresponding to this is also a political transition period in which the state can be nothing but *the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat.*"¹ Upon seizing power, the working class must immediately establish the dictatorship of the proletariat as its chief weapon in crushing any opposition from the exploiting classes that have just been overthrown, and in defeating any attempt to restore the previous system. It is also necessary for the re-education of millions of small-scale producers who must be drawn into collective socialist production. Most importantly, our aim in forming, organising and directing the new society and the new economic structure is to create what Lenin described as "a higher type of social organisation

¹ Karl Marx, "Critique of the Gotha Programme", in: Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Selected Works* in three volumes, Vol. 3, Moscow, 1976, p. 26.

of labour compared with capitalism".¹ This is why the establishment and consolidation of the dictatorship of the proletariat is an objective necessity in the transition to socialism, and in this lies the fundamental difference between the consistently revolutionary ideology of the proletariat and the reformist ideology of opportunists of every kind.

Now that national independence has been won, the battle against the remaining forces of reaction within the country and the evil designs of imperialism and the forces of international reaction goes on in a rather complex situation. Moreover, our society is still very underdeveloped, lacking nearly all the material means necessary for the building of socialism. The transition to socialism will thus require a long and difficult struggle. We are obliged to counter subversive action from within and without, while at the same time energetically establishing new productive force and new production relations in order to create a new economic structure, a new superstructure and a new individual. Therefore, without the immediate dictatorship of the proletariat, supported by a powerful state apparatus of the new type, based on the worker-peasant alliance led by the working class and including all other working people, now the collective masters of the country, our historic revolutionary mission will not be accomplished.

The establishment and consolidation of the dictatorship of the proletariat, as stated in a re-

¹ V. I. Lenin, "A Great Beginning", *Collected Works*, Vol. 29, p. 419.

solution adopted by the 4th Plenum of the LPRP Central Committee, requires unswerving adherence to the policy drawn up by the Party for carrying through the socialist revolution in all spheres of state and social activity. The dictatorship of the proletariat must be improved and strengthened in every way so that it can become a powerful and effective means of carrying through the objectives set by the Party and government for this new stage, and for the defence of the country and the new system. The three revolutions must be accelerated in order to transform our scattered and small-scale production into a powerful socialist economy and create the material, technical and cultural base of socialism. The foreign policy of our Party must be correctly implemented, and international solidarity with other socialist countries and progressive elements throughout the world further developed.

Historical experience has taught our Party that the consolidation of the dictatorship of the proletariat requires that the policy of the Party with regard to the socialist revolution place major emphasis upon *developing and strengthening the right of the working people to be the collective masters of the country*. Socialism is the work of the people themselves. Lenin said: "Only if the proletariat and the poor peasants display sufficient class consciousness, devotion to principle, self-sacrifice and perseverance, will the victory of the socialist revolution be assured."¹

¹ V. I. Lenin, "The Immediate Tasks of the Soviet Government", *Collected Works*, Vol. 27, p. 241.

During the national democratic revolution our Party, convinced that the revolution is the work of the people themselves, insisted on learning from the people and relying on them in accomplishing any of the tasks of the revolution. It was precisely because the Party was able to unite, organise and lead the people that it was able to achieve its mighty task, overcoming all obstacles and difficulties, liberating the country and winning independence to bring freedom to the nation.

Now the revolution in our country has entered the most radical stage in its development, that of the socialist revolution whose aim is the transformation of the old society into a new society, the small-scale production into a powerful socialist economy, the working people into the true masters of society. Such mighty objectives cannot be finally achieved until the entire people, and particularly the workers and peasants, willingly and knowingly take upon themselves the role of master and display their determination to eliminate all vestiges of the old, exploiter regime, rejecting individualism and the old ideas deriving from small-scale, isolated production, to organise themselves and move towards collective labour, devoting all their energies and abilities to the transformation of society and the building of socialism under the leadership of the Party and the government.

The resolution of the Central Committee 4th Plenum points out that the implementation and consolidation of the right of the working people to be the collective masters of the country depends, first and foremost, on the formation of a

socialist collective system in which the working people are organised around the alliance of workers and peasants under the leadership of the Party. The right of the workers to be the collective masters of the country must be fully implemented in every sphere of activity—political, economic, cultural and social. The people must feel themselves to be the masters throughout the entire country, in every region, in every place of work; masters of society, of nature and of their own existence. This right of the people must become part of the social structure and be given legislative form within the new system. It must be implemented forthwith at every level without exception, together with the process of reform and the establishment of new social relations, the formation of the new socialist individual on the basis of a harmonious combination of social obligations and genuine personal freedom.

The essence and significance of the three simultaneous revolutions. The three revolutions mentioned earlier, the revolution in the sphere of production relations, in the sphere of science and technology, and in the sphere of ideology and culture, are integral to the development of the socialist revolution, and no country that intends to build socialism can do so without passing through this stage. These three revolutions are closely interconnected, each affecting the development of the other. The new society, the new individual, the new production relations and productive forces cannot be the result of just one of these revolutions but only the combined result of all three together. However, in their dialectic unity, each occupies its own spe-

cial position, has its own inherent function and, depending upon the conditions in a given country, each has particular tasks and objectives, the purpose of which is to provide the correct solution to the specific problems related to building socialism.

In our country, the particular task of the revolution is to build socialism starting from small-scale production with elements of natural economy. We have encountered and are still encountering many difficulties of a practical nature. In the first place our economy, weighed down under colonialism and feudalism, is still basically agrarian with scattered individual holdings that, in many places, still use primitive methods of cultivation. Division of labour is limited to the village and even to the family. Exchange and distribution occur only in the lowlands and towns and rely on age-old practices. Most of the people are peasants engaged in subsistence farming, poor, uneducated and a prey to disease. The French colonialists and feudal rulers used the natural wealth and resources of the country to enrich themselves. The 30 years of war unleashed on the country by imperialism, and in particular American imperialism, dealt a devastating blow both to the economy of the country and the living standards of the people. During this period capitalism, commerce among other elements, closely linked with foreign capital, began to develop in some of the cities. The American imperialists flooded the country with dollars and their own unsold produce to support the comprador bourgeoisie, the military bureaucracy and the reactionary feudal lords, with a view to

using them to serve their aggressive plans and neocolonialist policies. As a result, many imbibed their ideology and became accustomed to a parasitic, luxurious and dissolute life-style. After the liberation of our country we refused all such "assistance" offered with the aim of enslaving us, and put an end to all forms of compradore activity, but the consequences of the long rule of imperialists and feudal lords will continue to present us with major economic problems for some time to come.

Building socialism in such circumstances obviously requires a great deal of effort and determination, but we have the strength of the new system and basic conditions favouring the rapid and sure transition to socialism.

We have vast expanses of arable land, large tracts of forest, considerable and as yet unused sources of hydro-electric power and valuable mineral deposits. Only an insignificant amount of all this wealth has been exploited to the benefit of the people. We are only just beginning to organise their utilisation on an ever-increasing scale. Given our small population, manpower is restricted, but our people have always known how to work together, they are industrious and resourceful. We can increase our manpower capacity by rational organisation of labour and by mechanisation and modernisation of production.

Our country is, moreover, a member of the socialist community and we are, therefore, well placed to develop mutual aid and cooperation with socialist countries and other states in order to avail ourselves of the latest achievements of science and technology and use them to lay the

foundations of an independent socialist economy. A decisive factor in the successful development of the socialist revolution in our country is the correct and creative leadership by the Party, combined with the organising and managerial role the state apparatus plays in our economy, and the system of the collective socialist master of the country we are in the process of forming.

Taking into account the general laws of socialist revolutionary development and the specific conditions in our country, the Party drew up a programme for the simultaneous implementation of the three revolutions, seeing the revolution in the sphere of production relations as the guiding factor, the revolution in the sphere of science and technology as the cornerstone, while the revolution in the sphere of ideology and culture must keep one step ahead of the other two. This process will ensure that profound and radical changes are brought about in the course of the revolution, while the elimination of the old and formation of the new will form the main link in the chain. To start with, the most important task is reform with a view to forming the new. The formation of the new in its turn must encourage reform. In the next stage, however, the main aim will be the formation of the new system, laying the foundation for the new economy, the new culture and the new, socialist individual.

As for the revolution in the sphere of production relations, our Party considers the most important issue—and one requiring a radical solution—to be that of dismantling the capitalist economic system and ending the exploitation of

man by man bound up with that system. We must totally eliminate the system of exploitation by the compradore bourgeoisie and feudal lords, and implement a peaceful programme of reform with regard to capitalist industrial and commercial enterprises. Certain members of private enterprise are to join the ranks of the workers, while the capitalist class, the class of exploiters, is to totally disappear.

However, given the present economic conditions in our country, the most important task is to transform small-scale, scattered, individual production into collective socialist production, by means of cooperatives. Every assistance must be given to the peasants in forming agricultural and forestry cooperatives, in leading them to adopt the collective system of production, and in the reorganisation of production and the redistribution of labour in agriculture and forestry. They must be introduced to new farming techniques in order to increase production, gradually improve their living standards and cultural level and strengthen the alliance of workers and peasants.

At the same time it is essential that we help the artisans, small traders and small-scale producers to form cooperatives and adopt the collective socialist system of production, totally eliminating all basic forms of capitalist enterprise. Another and equally important aspect of the problem is that our popular democratic state must increase its control over the economy and develop the role of the state sector, state trade in particular, so that the state sector can play the directing role in the economy.

In the first stage of the transition to socialism, the revolution in the sphere of production relations must bring about a complete change in the system of property ownership, that is, eliminate the capitalist economy based on private enterprise and establish socialist ownership in two forms—state and cooperative, thus assuring that socialist production relations occupy the commanding position in the national economy. It must also assist the growth of production and the implementation of the right of the working people to be collective master. Small-scale, scattered, individual production must be transformed into large-scale socialist production and all sources of capitalist development must be removed.

The revolution in the sphere of production relations is of fundamental and crucial importance, but it cannot of itself lead to the formation of large-scale socialist production and cannot ensure the further development of production relations it brings about. Given the socio-economic conditions in our country, the transformation of production relations presents difficulties, but the most problematic issue is that of developing new productive forces and increasing productivity. This is why our Party considers that the revolution in the sphere of science and technology plays a key role in the simultaneous development of the three revolutions. Decisive measures must be taken to bring about constant technical improvement and the rapid introduction of the latest developments in science and technology into the production process, in agriculture and forestry in the first place. We must

learn to combine traditional skills with the latest techniques at every level in the economy, and gradually progress from the simplest techniques such as irrigation, seed selection, the use of fertilisers, improvement of cultivation, stock-breeding and processing of raw materials, etc., to the latest technological developments. We must also use to the full the existing domestic production and raise it gradually to the level of semi-mechanised and fully mechanised production, while also establishing some enterprises of the new type essential to the economy. Together with this, we must take advantage of the assistance of the socialist countries and international exchange in order to organise production and establish our own means of production, from the simplest to the most advanced equipment for state and cooperative workshops and factories.

These are the measures that must be taken if we are to satisfy the immediate, present-day requirements of economic development, accelerate labour productivity, gradually replace manual labour by mechanisation and continually improve the material and technical base of socialism. This is how we intend to construct large-scale socialist production in our country. It is obvious, therefore, that given this content, the scientific and technological revolution should be one of our main weapons in the offensive upon poverty and backwardness, in order to achieve the total victory of socialism.

Together with the revolution in production, science and technology, we must also bring about a revolution in the sphere of ideology and

culture, an essential component of the socialist revolution. Its aim is the transformation of the moral, spiritual, cultural and social life of the people and the formation of the new individual having a high level of revolutionary morality and culture, and armed with the latest scientific and technological knowledge. He must also possess the ability to organise and direct society. This will produce a generation of industrial workers, cooperative farmers and socialist intelligentsia that will join the ranks of fighters for socialist revolution and be able to satisfy the growing demands of socialist construction.

As a result of the policy of obscurantism pursued by the colonialists and feudal rulers over many years, a considerable proportion of the population were illiterate. The ideology of the small producer, various harmful practices and prejudices and the remains of the decadent culture inherited from the old system still linger on. Few of the younger generation have completed their secondary education, the cultural and professional level of many of our white- and blue-collar workers is still low, thus unable to meet the requirements of revolutionary development.

This serves to emphasise the importance of the ideological and cultural revolution in our country. It explains why it must be one step ahead of the other two revolutions. We must make good lost time, avail ourselves of every opportunity and concentrate all our efforts in order to carry through successfully the ideological and political re-education of the people, develop culture, education and health service

and draw the people into the new way of life. Particular attention must be paid to educating professional workers and army servicemen, and to ensuring the ideological education of the younger generation. The mass media, art and literature must also be developed according to the general line of our Party so that they can meet the growing demands of socialist construction.

Our new culture, socialist in content and national in form, must be imbued with the spirit of the Party, the people and socialist realism, participate actively in the transformation and construction of the economy and serve the interests of national security and defence. It must assist the people in building a new life, that is morally upright and rich in cultural and spiritual values, reflecting and extolling the highest moral characteristics of the new individual, characteristics that find their expression in work and in struggle.

At the same time, we must devote all our energies to eliminating vestiges of the reactionary feudal and colonial ideology and culture, the old psychology and the outworn customs and practices of the old society. The formation of a developed socialist culture and the education of the new, progressive individual is an essential element in the total process of transformation, an effective means of stimulating revolution in the field of production relations, science and technology, all of which will lead the socialist revolution to total victory.

3. SOME QUESTIONS RELATING TO ECONOMIC POLICY AT THE FIRST STAGE OF SOCIALIST CONSTRUCTION IN LAOS

The creation in Laos of highly productive socialist economy, based on socialist production relations and large-scale industry, entails the formation of a large-scale national economy equipped with the latest technology, with a well-developed and rationally organised division of social labour, and with a high level of productivity able to promote the continuing expansion of production. This would enable us to generate an increasing amount of material wealth with which to satisfy the growing demands of the population and those of the economy itself. If small-scale production is to be transformed into large-scale production, a well-developed socialist industry is essential. This is the objective law that operates in any country with a backward and poorly developed economy during the transitional period from capitalism to socialism.

Our country advances to socialism with a national economy still based on small-scale production. Social labour continues to be concentrated mainly in agriculture, in which farming techniques are still primitive. Productivity is extremely low and the commodity exchange between the various regions very limited. However, we also enjoy various advantages. There are vast expanses of arable land and forest, large mineral deposits and considerable supplies of untapped hydro-electric power. Besides, we pursue programmes of economic and technical cooperation and mutual assistance with various countries

throughout the world, particularly with socialist countries.

In order to solve the economic tasks lying before us in the first stage, that is, the accumulation of the resources necessary for industrialisation and improved living standards, our scattered, private agriculture and forestry must be organised on a smoothly-functioning and collective basis. We must concentrate on encouraging local control and assisting local organs and personnel to stimulate the construction and development of the foundations of the national economy. From there we can proceed to the reorganisation of production, redistribution of labour, and then to the formation of a new, rational economic structure in each region and throughout the country. In this way, productivity can be rapidly increased and small-scale production gradually transformed into large-scale socialist production.

The decisions of the Central Committee 4th and 5th plenums, therefore, confirmed the principal objectives of the general line of the Party, and defined the task of constructing and developing the national economy during the transition to socialism as follows: *agriculture and forestry are to serve as the basis for the development of industry; the development of agriculture, forestry and industry are to be balanced rationally at each stage; special attention is to be given to the development of certain essential branches of heavy industry that will promote the further growth of agriculture, forestry and light industry; every effort must be made to stimulate the regional economy in accordance with the unified directives of the state plan in order*

to create the conditions necessary for the formation of a fully integrated national economy in the near future; economic development is to be closely linked with strengthening and improving national security and defence; mobilisation of all internal forces of the country is the priority. Every effort is to be made, at the same time, to obtain and use effectively all forms of foreign economic and technical assistance and cooperation in building our socialist economy, in order to continually improve the material and cultural level of our people and stimulate the accumulation of the material wealth necessary to accelerate socialist industrialisation.

This plan elaborated by the Central Committee defines the general direction and appropriate measures for the construction and development of the economy, and is designed to guide all our activities in the first stage of the transition to socialism. If we are to create a rational economic structure and implement a new division of social labour, we must constantly regulate and revise the balance between agriculture and forestry on the one hand and industry on the other, between regional economy and the national economy, production and distribution, accumulation and consumption.

The Problem of Creating a New Agro-Industrial Structure. Previously, agriculture, forestry and industry functioned independently. The country possessed only a small number of industrial enterprises, geared mainly to war and owned by colonialists and their agents. Our industry depended entirely on foreign capital and raw materials, and most industrial and con-

sumer goods were imported. Our agriculture and forestry have considerable potential, but lacking organisation and industrial support they remained backward, unable to develop. There was no agro-industrial structure and therefore industry also stagnated.

In order to stimulate the growth of industry and increase the productivity of social labour, industry, agriculture and forestry must be combined together into a balanced whole. Agriculture and forestry are the basis of industrial development and, in its turn, industry serves agriculture and forestry, promoting their rapid development.

Agriculture and forestry, previously hardly developed, are the two most promising branches of the economy. In the present economic circumstances, the development of the country must start with them. At the first stage, our agriculture and forestry have to cope with a difficult and important task. They must be developed in every way, so as to meet the material demands of the people, provide raw materials for light industry, fulfil the requirements of national security and defence, and supply export commodities against the machinery and equipment necessary for the scientific and technological revolution. The immediate task is to develop, within the next few years, agriculture and forestry to the point where we are self-sufficient in food and do not have to rely on imports.

We are advantageously placed in this regard, having a tropical climate, large areas of undeveloped arable land and pasture, and forests containing a wide variety of valuable timbers. There

should therefore be a comprehensive development of these two branches of the economy, including the cultivation of cereals and industrial crops, animal husbandry and forest conservation and exploitation, etc. Of these the most important is grain production.

If agriculture and forestry are to become the basis of industrial development, as it is essential they should, then cooperatives must be established as quickly as possible, together with a certain number of state enterprises in both branches. In this endeavour, the condition of the land, the availability of natural resources and the traditional farming methods of the people in each region must be taken into consideration in order to promote the reorganisation of production and the rational use and distribution of manpower and material resources in every district and region according to the overall state plan for the national economy. At the same time, a serious effort must be made to strengthen the material and technical base by providing irrigation systems, rural road networks, transport and communication centres, and machinery repair stations. The agriculture must be supplied with draught animals and machines, the simple and improved equipment, and the more essential branches and important areas of production must be fully or partly mechanised. Particular attention must also be given to training managers and specialists to work in different branches of the economy.

Naturally, alongside the development of agriculture and forestry, the process of industrialisation requires that attention be given to the all-

round development of industry itself. However, at the initial stage this cannot be accomplished immediately, as far as we are unable to solve quickly the problem of equipment, raw materials, specialists and skilled work force. Moreover, we must, for the present, concentrate our investment in agriculture and forestry in order to meet the immediate demands of production and consumption, and to build up our industrial base.

Industry must develop at an increasing rate over the years to come in order to satisfy the requirements of agriculture and forestry and stimulate their continued growth. In achieving this, we must establish a new and balanced economic structure that comprises industry, agriculture and forestry in every province and district. Care must be taken over the organisation, distribution and efficient use of the production capacities at the disposal of central and local government. Small-scale production, including domestic industry, must be encouraged and a certain number of local enterprises established to provide repair services for transport and agricultural machinery, accessories and spare parts, basic tools and equipment such as threshing and winnowing machines, rice scourers, construction and irrigation equipment, facilities for food and timber processing and production of basic consumer goods. At the same time, it is essential to establish a programme of exploration, research and design, preparatory to building certain important state enterprises in mining, chemical, iron-and-steel and hydro-power industries, and strategically important road construction.

The Present Problem of Structuring the Locally and Centrally Managed Economy. Local and centralised economies are the two components of the national economy. The successful building of socialism requires a comprehensive and well-balanced economic structure comprising industry, agriculture, and forestry achieved by combining local and centralised economic development within an overall plan supervised by the Party and the government.

In progressing from small-scale, scattered and underdeveloped production to large-scale socialist production using agriculture and forestry as the basis for industrial development, we must start by concentrating our efforts and resources on regional development in order to construct a firm foundation for the centralised economy. This includes the entire process of reorganisation of production and redivision of social labour, the process of centralisation, specialisation and cooperation, first in the provinces and then throughout the entire country. In the present conditions of our country, this manner of restructuring the economy offers a shortcut, for it corresponds to the objective needs of the transitional period, the need associated with transition from small-scale to large, socialist production. At the same time, this should not be viewed as a mere division of functions in running the economy.

In our country, each province plays a definite and strategic role. Each has particular economic advantages and plays its part in national security and defence. Each has a population of approximately 200-300 thousand over a territory of

10-20 thousand sq km, and has conditions suitable for arable farming and animal husbandry. There are also large supplies of timber, hydroelectric power and valuable minerals in each province. Each has a common border with another country. In such circumstances it is clear that an integrated economy comprising industry, agriculture and forestry can be created in each province, capable of satisfying the material and cultural needs of the population, assuring security and peace, and contributing to the wealth and power of the nation.

Under the previous regime, local economic development stagnated in every sphere. The development of various branches of the economy was uncoordinated, the colonial power and ruling élite concerning themselves only with those branches that profited their own interests and exploiting those mineral and timber resources that were located near towns and convenient transportation routes. As for the vast rural areas of the country, here a subsistence economy prevailed, the scale of production limited, in many areas, to the village or even the family. We had a situation in which resources existed but manpower was scarce. Moreover, manpower was not fully utilised—an example of abundance in the midst of poverty. In many places the worker could find work for only 100 days in the year. As a result of this heritage that came down to us from the previous system, our people lived in grinding poverty and for many years our economy stagnated.

It is therefore absolutely essential that we concentrate all our efforts on establishing and

developing local economic systems that utilise the advantages of each province to the full so that each becomes a fully integrated unit politically, militarily, economically and culturally. This also constitutes the first step in the advance to socialism, the aim of which is to transform the old and establish new economic relations, re-organise production and proceed to the redivision of social labour in agriculture and forestry, eliminating natural economy which is still very much in evidence. A new economic structure must be gradually erected in which agriculture, forestry and industry are closely interconnected in each district and province, so that the potential of each province can be harnessed and utilised to the full in order to stimulate the development of industry and increase labour productivity.

Using this as our foundation, we will reinforce the alliance between the peasantry and the working class, consolidating national unity. Local organs of government, defence and security will also be strengthened and developed. The increasing strength and power of the provinces will create conditions favourable to the successful construction of the centralised economy.

However, this emphasis on local development does not involve neglect of the centralised economy, nor does it imply that the local authorities have complete freedom of action. It does not mean that the state and the bodies responsible for directing the economy are abandoning their duties. On the contrary, they must ensure that the resources of the national economy and also the machinery, raw materials and equip-

ment received as aid from abroad are utilised to the maximum in order to promote and develop the local economies. The central bodies must concentrate their activity on the provinces essential to the national economy and supervise the accumulation of resources and materials essential to the local economies. This is their main task in implementing the state plan, a task that also offers each body the opportunity to improve its organisational structure within its own field of activity and thus carry through the preparatory work necessary for establishing a national economy and achieving large-scale national industrialisation.

In developing and expanding the locally managed economic systems, the immediate aim is to stimulate the growth of agriculture and forestry, together with domestic and light industry. Local road networks and a rational system of commodity distribution and exchange between villages and districts within the province and between provinces are essential to the subsequent formation of a national system of production and marketing. The provinces themselves are directly responsible for carrying through these changes in their area. The ministries must increase their practical control and administration according to the requirements of their sphere of activity, taking into account the degree of administrative authority delegated to the provinces. They are also responsible for coordination in activities of national importance such as civil engineering, transport organisation on major roadways, delivery of goods and equipment, the training of skilled and professional workers, etc.,

in order to stimulate rapid provincial development. In addition to transforming the provinces into strategic units, the districts must also be developed into economic and planning units rather than being intermediary administrative units as was formerly the case. They will then play an important role in the simultaneous implementation of the three revolutions and serve as the next administrative level, after the village and the cooperative, having the conditions and the means necessary to control and promote activity at the base.

The Problem of Organising Proper Commodity Circulation and Distribution. The process of economic development in our country and in the fraternal socialist countries has revealed that the rapid development of production, the improvement of social labour efficiency and the transformation of small-scale production into large-scale socialist production require, in addition to the reorganisation of production, the redistribution of manpower and a rational economic structure, the ability to direct the economy properly, that is, the ability to plan, to utilise commodity relations and such economic levers as credit, prices, wages and profit in order to coordinate production, circulation and distribution, production and consumption, and also accumulation and consumption. Firm control over commodity circulation and distribution is, therefore, an essential factor in the process of reproduction.

Circulation and distribution is the link between intra-sectoral and inter-sectoral production, between production as a whole and consumption, between different branches of the

economy and different economic regions within the country, and finally between the national economy and the economy of other countries. In order, therefore, to stimulate production, the new distribution of social labour and the process of extended reproduction and thus increase social accumulation and satisfy the material needs of the population, commodity exchange and distribution must be properly managed, a proper prices policy must be implemented, the purchase and sale of commodities correctly organised and circulation costs reduced to a minimum in order to stimulate economic exchange and satisfy production requirements.

At present, there is a large discrepancy between our productive capacity and demand. As a result, our Party workers, industrial workers, members of the armed forces and the rest of the population face considerable difficulties in their everyday life. Given the low level of economic development and the devastation produced by a prolonged state of war, the imbalance between production and demand and the difficulties our people face in everyday life constitute a problem that will not be easy to solve. Other factors contributing to this problem are weak economic management that encourages embezzlement and wastage, and inadequate supervision of circulation and distribution.

We must, therefore, adjust the relationship between initial accumulation aimed at stimulating production, and current consumption aimed at improving the living standards of the population, and this requires that we encourage increased production and economising measures within

the consumer section by cutting out all unnecessary expenditure and taking vigorous action against embezzlement and wastage. Only thus can we properly coordinate production and consumption, gradually stabilise our finances, the market, prices and the living standards of the people. We will then be able to economise some of our resources with a view to accumulation and steadily improve living standards.

However, increased production and economy measures cannot of themselves fully resolve the problem of coordinating production and consumption. There is another and vital problem that requires solution—that of commodity circulation and distribution which, because of the conditions prevailing in our country, is closely bound up with the problem of production and consumption. Even if production and consumption are balanced, lack of coordination between circulation and distribution will again lead to a discrepancy between them. On the other hand, if a discrepancy exists between production and consumption, the correctly structured system of circulation and distribution will have a beneficial effect in this regard.

Circulation and distribution can take several forms: distribution of financial resources, wages, prices, credit, etc. In our country, distribution now occurs primarily through trade. Emphasising the importance of trade in the first stage of the transitional period, Lenin said: "At the present moment, in the sphere of activity with which we are dealing, this link is the revival of home *trade* under proper state regulation (direction). Trade is the 'link' in the historical chain of

events ... which we, the proletarian government, we, the ruling Communist Party, 'must grasp with all our might'.¹ Given the importance of trade, Lenin called upon all Bolshevik Party members to learn to trade in a cultured and civilised fashion.

That is why we must focus our attention not only on the comprehensive development of production but also on trade, both within the country and with other countries. There must be a plan for an accelerated reform of private trade so that it serves production and the daily needs of the population. More importantly, we must make every effort to develop state-controlled trade and various forms of purchasing and marketing cooperatives, to organise the urban and rural market and to reorganise and comprehensively develop circulation and distribution under centralised government control.

Moreover, as is stated in the resolution adopted by the 3rd Plenum of the Central Committee of the LPRP (1975), in order to supply production and ensure the proper coordination of circulation and distribution it is necessary that "particular attention be paid to developing communications and transport, with priority given to communications".

We must avail ourselves to the maximum of all state and private facilities in this sphere, combining traditional and modern, domestic and imported means of transport. The transport system

¹ V. I. Lenin, "The Importance of Gold Now and After the Complete Victory of Socialism", *Collected Works*, Vol. 33, p. 113.

must then be organised and used to convey consumer and producer goods, particularly in mountainous areas, and to supply the needs of security and defence.

For the reasons described above, it is now more than ever essential that the Party and the state of the dictatorship of the proletariat take firm control over trade and transport in order to stimulate economic development and thus bring about the reorganisation of production and implement the redivision of social labour. Thereafter we can progress towards the building of a new economic structure that will ensure a new relationship between production and consumption, and thus gradually lead to a stabilisation of financial resources, the market, prices and living standards which will create conditions favourable to the construction and development of the national economy. Every Party worker and member should bear in mind the words of Lenin, who called on us to learn to trade in a "cultured way", so as to raise the level of trade in the centre and in the regions to enable it to play its part in the programme of socialist reform and the building of socialism, in strengthening the alliance between the working class and the peasantry and in consolidating national unity.

4. MOBILISING ALL THE FORCES OF THE NEW ORDER TO ENSURE THE VICTORY OF THE SOCIALIST REVOLUTION

The shortest route to equality, prosperity and happiness for all the peoples of our country is

the direct transition to socialism bypassing capitalism, chosen by our Party. However, success will involve overcoming numerous difficulties and passing through painful trials as we are setting out along a new path in the history of our people, having little practical experience and starting virtually from nought. We have an enormous revolutionary responsibility to discharge. We need more than ever to strengthen the unity of the people, the unity of all the various ethnic groups, and mobilise all the forces of the nation and the Party while, at the same time, actively seeking international aid and broadening the scope of international cooperation on the basis of the correct, free and independent foreign policy of the Party. All this is of vital importance if we are to unite all the forces of the new order to overcome poverty and achieve economic development and equality for all nationalities and ethnic groups, build a strong and prosperous socialist Laos and make a worthy contribution to the general development of the world revolutionary process.

In order to mobilise all the forces of the new order it is essential to further strengthen the unity binding together all the nationalities and ethnic groups, working classes and social strata of the nation and raise it to a qualitatively higher level, so that it can serve as the basis for an all-round development of the revolutionary forces, leading to the successful achievement of all the plans and directives of the Party and the state at the new stage.

Now, as before, the monolithic unity of the peoples of our country is of decisive importance

both for the existence of the nation and the cause of the revolution. However, this unity, both as regards its underlying basis and its content, is not static but constantly develops to reach a qualitatively higher level. In accord with the ongoing revolutionary process, the Party must determine the corresponding political line to be followed at that stage and carry through the correct policies in order to concentrate all our forces, further develop the potential of the nation and thus ensure the success of the revolution at each stage.

During the national liberation struggle, when the main aim was to overthrow the rule of the imperialists and feudal lords and win national independence, equality and freedom for all our peoples, the Party held aloft the banner of independence and democracy and gathered under that banner into one, broad, national united front all the classes and social strata of the nation, including the elders and tribal leaders, regardless of their social origins and political views, on the one condition that they be patriots loyal to the people and determined to fight the imperialists and their minions. The alliance of the workers and the peasants, led by the working class, was the core of this anti-imperialist, anti-feudal front. This correct policy of broad unity created the tremendous national force that led to the victory of the national democratic revolution.

Now the revolution in our country has entered a new stage of its development, and our task is to defend the gains of the revolution and carry through the building of socialism. This

means putting an end to backwardness, ethnic enmity and inequality and establishing a new and just society free of class hostility and ethnic antagonism, free of exploitation. The task of uniting and developing the forces of the nation retains, therefore, all its strategic importance, but it is now more comprehensive in content and deeper and broader in form.

The unity of the nation, of all the peoples during the socialist revolution is expressed in the close alliance and cooperation of all the industrial and office workers, the working intelligentsia and representatives of all the social strata, including members of the previous ruling circles who have consented to re-education in order to become fully-fledged working members of society. The core of this unity is the indissoluble alliance of the working class and the cooperative peasantry. The aim of the revolutionary struggle is to remove all forms of bourgeois exploitation and parasitism, eliminate all sources of the self-generation of capitalism, suppress any opposition or attempts to revive the remnants of the reactionary forces, defend our national independence and build socialism.

The unity of the nation and all its nationalities and ethnic groups during the socialist revolution depends on a socialist mode of production based upon economic and cultural community. This will give rise to a common psychology, common views and aspirations embodying the best of each of the peoples of our nation. Unity is revealed in the total coincidence of the aims and ideals of the struggle, in the harmonious combination of national interest and class

interest and in equal rights and obligations for all the working people, now the collective masters of the country. This economic equality is the basis of political, cultural and social equality.

National unity in the period of the socialist revolution must therefore be reinforced by putting it upon the qualitatively new basis described above, carrying through the process of transformation throughout the country and thus increasing the forces of the nation so that they can fulfil the revolutionary tasks that lie before the nation at this stage.

Strengthening the unity of all the nationalities and ethnic groups is a task of great strategic importance that is decisive for the fate of the revolution in our country. We must, therefore, pay more attention to the national question, regard work with different nationalities and ethnic groups as being of crucial importance and take the national question into account in every sphere of activity. Effective steps must be taken to raise the level of political and ideological work among the various nationalities and ethnic groups and to improve education, cultural facilities, medical services, develop production and raise the living standards for the different national groups. Moreover, particular attention must be given to those national groups who live in remote and backward areas of the country, and to the psychology, aspirations, customs and beliefs of the various nationalities in order to promote their broad unity and draw them into the building of socialism. Care must be taken to include elders, tribal leaders, and clan chiefs in this

work and to train Party workers from the various ethnic groups. We must engage fully in this task in order to avail ourselves of the militant spirit of each group and the economic advantages offered by each region in promoting the development of each group, and ensuring that the mountainous regions progress equally with the lowlands in the advance towards socialism.

The further consolidation of the unity of the revolutionary classes and the various strata of society and the radical revolutionary transformation of the nation are the fundamental and urgent tasks facing the revolution in its present stage. Equally important is the education and mobilisation of the people, together with a continuing improvement in their material and cultural conditions. This will make it possible to gather them into a broad, national, united front and into mass organisations such as trade unions, youth and women's organisations, etc. In the course of the three revolutions and various labour campaigns, we must redouble our educational and organisational work among the working class and ensure its leading role, making it the genuine master of state enterprises, the main weapon in the struggle to transform the private capitalist sector. We must draw all blue- and white-collar workers and all government employees into the trade-union movement and explain to them the Party line and policy, develop their class consciousness and promote their role as the collective masters of the country so that the trade-union movement becomes a school of socialism.

The Party and the working class must be

active in their educational work among the peasants, uniting them and leading them to socialist collectivisation. The peasants must be assisted in raising their cultural level, in introducing modern scientific methods and equipment into agricultural production and laying the material and technical base of agriculture. This will serve to reinforce the political, economic and cultural alliance of the workers and peasants and thus create the basis for total national unity and the implementation of the right of the working people to be the collective masters of the country. At the same time, educational work must be carried out among the other strata of the urban and rural working population in order to draw them into collective labour and enable them to play their rightful role in the system of socialist collective control.

In the socialist revolution, *the intelligentsia play a particularly vital role*. Lenin pointed out the impossibility of building socialism without a revolutionary intelligentsia and without scientific knowledge. The Party must therefore concern itself with the education of the intelligentsia, give them every support, develop their abilities and put their talents and knowledge to appropriate use. Particular care must be taken to prepare members of the intelligentsia from among the working class, the peasants and revolutionaries in order to produce a well-qualified socialist intelligentsia with high moral qualities. We must, at the same time, help the intelligentsia from other strata of society, to train and guide them.

As for the representatives of the various

ethnic groups and religious faiths who are patriotic and progressive in their outlook, and also members of the national bourgeoisie who accept the socialist transformation of society, we are conducting a policy of genuine alliance, and help and support them in every way if they are working for the good of the new order. We are assisting former officers, members of the police force and the previous civil administration who accept re-education and are prepared to devote their energies and talents to their country, and we are creating conditions in which they can fulfil their obligations and enjoy the rights of worthy citizens of their country.

To increase the power of the new order we must, together with educating, mobilising and uniting all the peoples of the country, also improve and strengthen the *state apparatus* from top to bottom, at the centre and locally, turning it into a truly effective means of carrying through the policies of the Party, of organising and administering defence, the transformation and construction of the country and of ensuring the right of the people to be the collective masters under the leadership of the Party.

With regard to strengthening the state apparatus, our aim over the coming years is to reorganise and improve its structure, raise its efficiency in social, economic and cultural administration and increase its role in national security and defence. All the major elements in its structure must be politically united and professionally competent so that Party and government directives are correctly implemented and the right of

the people to be the collective masters rigorously observed.

In order to increase the efficiency of the state apparatus as the instrument of the dictatorship of the proletariat, Party workers, administrative personnel and members of the armed forces must be educated in the spirit of political consciousness, patriotism and loyalty to socialism. They must be aware of their sacred duty and great responsibility to their country and people, and of their role as collective masters of the country. A constant battle must also be waged against voluntarism, arrogance, bureaucratism, the abuse of power, a disparaging attitude towards the people, lack of attention to organisational work, and other negative phenomena all of which can still be met with in our government institutions. Our central administration must be compact but highly efficient. Its functions include primarily planning, control of policy implementation, study of prevailing circumstances, execution of foreign policy, training of personnel, etc. The main task of provincial and district administration, which must also be strengthened, is management of production and distribution, organisation of education and health, implementation of measures pertaining to defence and law and order, etc. Local administrative organs, directly in contact with the people, bear immediate responsibility for the life of the people in every sphere. They must be particularly strong and reliable. It is at their level that clashes occur with the enemy, that all the plans and policies of the Party and government are put to the test and that

Party workers are tried and tested.

We must also work unceasingly to establish a scientifically based system of labour and properly planned, realistic work methods in order to constantly improve the quality of work in all branches of the state apparatus. In the years ahead, we must direct all the forces and capacities of the central and provincial organs towards the work at the grass-roots level in order to assist the local organs in successfully carrying out their principal task, that of transforming society and building socialism, so that the needs of local economic development can be met, our defence capability increased, law and order guaranteed and the subversive actions of the enemy curtailed. Subsequently, on the basis of the experience thus gained, labour organisation and work methods must be improved to meet the tasks facing the state apparatus at every level.

As regards our foreign policy we have, as loyal Marxist-Leninists and supporters of proletarian internationalism, and in accord with the independent and correct policy of our Party, always done everything in our power to contribute to the unity of the socialist community, the national liberation movement and the worldwide movement for peace, democracy and social progress, seeing in this our most important task and a decisive factor in the victory of the revolution in our country. In consequence, our Party has invariably educated the people in the spirit of the noble principles of proletarian internationalism and waged a constant battle against the backward, reactionary views of bourgeois na-

tionalism and the divisive tactics of imperialism and international reaction.

Now that the revolution has entered a new phase, our great historic task is to turn our poor and backward country into a powerful and prosperous socialist state. All our people must increase their efforts to achieve this goal, develop their sense of independence and sovereignty and promote the noble traditions of international solidarity. They must rely first and foremost upon their own forces in order to become masters of their own destiny, while also actively seeking international aid and developing economic, cultural, scientific and technical cooperation with other countries and, most importantly, with fraternal socialist states, in order to increase their capacity to ensure their own independence and sovereignty and successfully carry through the building of socialism.

We are fulfilling our historic mission within an international situation that is generally developing in our favour. However, the forces of imperialism and international reaction continue their stubborn opposition. Uniting their forces in reckless pursuit of their aggressive and expansionist plans and limitless ambitions, they are creating various reactionary alliances and following an interventionist policy that does not shrink from any tactic, however low, discreditable and perfidious, to divide, subvert and defeat the forces of national liberation and socialism, creating thereby further difficulties and tensions in international relations and directly menacing the stability in Southeast Asia and the sovereignty, independence and security of our nation.

We must, therefore, be vigilant as never before, be able to distinguish truth from falsehood, friend from foe. We must be deeply imbued with genuine patriotism and proletarian internationalism, resolutely defend our national independence and the peaceful labour of our people and do all in our power to fulfil to the last our honourable internationalist duty.

Our Party is constantly making every effort to strengthen and consolidate the unity and cohesion of the socialist system and the unity of fraternal parties on the basis of the principles of Marxism-Leninism and proletarian internationalism. The Party believes that the emergence and development of the socialist system following upon the Great October Socialist Revolution is the decisive factor for social progress in the modern age. We totally condemn and resolutely oppose all attempts by opportunists of every kind to divide and subvert the socialist system and to distort and betray the teaching of Marxism-Leninism, the victorious banner of the proletariat and all the oppressed throughout the world. We deeply appreciate and tirelessly promote solidarity with the Soviet Union and other socialist countries, particularly the special relations and splendid militant alliance between Laos and Vietnam, seeing in this an essential factor of victory. For this reason our Party is constantly concerned to develop solidarity, all-round cooperation and mutual aid in every sphere with the Socialist Republic of Vietnam and other socialist countries in order to defend the gains of the revolution in each country and

thwart the subversive plans of imperialism and world reaction.

We have always placed a high value on solidarity and friendship with the people of China.

However, we strongly condemn the Chinese government for unleashing a war of aggression against the Socialist Republic of Vietnam and thus creating an extremely dangerous situation that threatens the independence of the countries of Indochina, and peace and stability in Southeast Asia and throughout the world. Such activity runs directly counter to the legitimate interests of the Chinese people. There can be no doubt that the Chinese leaders will be condemned both by their own people and the peoples of the world, and be thus unable to avoid total defeat. The people of Laos fully supports the just struggle of the people of Vietnam in defence of their independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity. It has demanded that China cease immediately its aggressive war against Vietnam and unconditionally withdraw all Chinese troops from Vietnamese territory.

We are working to develop ties of friendship and cooperation with all the countries of Southeast Asia on the basis of mutual respect for the national independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of each country, peaceful coexistence and the agreement by each not to allow its territory to be used by any foreign state as a base for direct or indirect aggression or intervention in the affairs of any other country in the area. We want contentious issues to be settled by negotiation in a spirit of equality, mutual understanding and respect. We support the develop-

ment of economic cooperation and cultural exchange on the basis of equality and mutual advantage in order to assist the development of each country according to its own specific circumstances, and fully support the resolute battle being waged against the subversive and divisive tactics of imperialism and world reaction, a battle waged in the name of peace, independence, neutrality, stability and prosperity in this part of the world.

We give our firm support to the national liberation struggle being waged by the peoples of Asia, Africa and Latin America against colonialism, neocolonialism and apartheid. We constantly support the young national states in their struggle to defend and strengthen national independence, and we are promoting cooperation with the non-aligned countries who are fighting for a new international economic order that would guarantee independence, sovereignty, equality and mutual advantage in economic and cultural exchange. We are resolutely opposed to any form of pressure or any divisive and aggressive action on the part of imperialism and world reaction. We warmly applaud the firm attitude, timely help and generous support offered by the Soviet Union, the Republic of Cuba and other fraternal socialist countries to certain African states, who were thus able to effectively oppose the interventionist and subversive actions of imperialism and world reaction and defend their national independence and right to free development.

We express our deepest sympathy and solidarity with the struggle of all the working

people in capitaist countries for peace, national independence and social progress.

We are prepared to establish relations with all the countries of the world on the basis of mutual respect for national independence, sovereignty, equality and mutual advantage.

We are deeply grateful to the fraternal socialist countries and friendly states near and far, to the world movement for peace and social progress and also to international organisations for their economic and technical assistance and co-operation in defending our country and building socialism.

We are convinced that, thanks to the wise and firm leadership of our Party which is pursuing an independent and correct political course, to the unity of all our peoples and the advantages offered by the system of the dictatorship of the proletariat, which is being constantly strengthened and developed on a new basis, and thanks also to the generous help and support given us by the fraternal socialist countries and friendly states, and broad cooperation with them, the socialist revolution in our country will, despite all the difficulties, end in victory.

5. COMPREHENSIVELY STRENGTHENING THE PARTY TO FULFIL ITS NEW HISTORIC MISSION

With the proclamation of the People's Democratic Republic of Laos, our revolution entered a new stage in its development. The Party came to power and led the nation and the state of the

dictatorship of the proletariat in the fulfilment of their historic mission, *that of defending the independence and unity of our nation and building socialism.*

In this new stage the leading role of the Party, a party now in power and bearing full and direct responsibility for the destiny of the working classes and the entire people, is becoming more complex than hitherto. Internal and external factors are now, on the whole, in our favour: we have the tradition of the united, consistent and resolute struggle of the people, the all-round experience gained over the thirty years of the national liberation movement and the period of peaceful construction, and the advantage of an international situation developing generally in favour of the revolution. However, it must be remembered that our country and its population are small, its economy based on a backward agriculture and the working class still few in number. In such circumstances, it is obvious that the task of transforming the old economic relations and creating new ones, of reorganising production and redividing labour in order to turn our small-scale, scattered, private production into a large-scale socialist system of production, presents acute and complex problems. Moreover, our country is in the front line of socialism in the important region of Southeast Asia at a time when the international situation is complicated yet further by the collusion of imperialism and world reaction. Our Party must, therefore, not only develop a correct political line and a scientifically-based revolutionary programme in accord with the fundamental

tenets of Marxism-Leninism and the reality of the situation in our country, but also deal with the vital task of building, strengthening and consolidating the Party politically, ideologically and organisationally so as to promote its leading role in the sphere of politics, economics, military affairs, culture, science, technology, etc. Party leadership must be raised to a higher level so that it is capable of fulfilling its historic mission at this new stage of the revolutionary process.

For a number of years, particularly after the Second Congress of the LPRP (1972), much was achieved in the process of building the Party. In the political sphere, the greatest success was the correct and creative solution of the political line to be adopted by our Party in the struggle for national independence and against American imperialism, and the line to be followed in international relations. This solution ensured the victory of the national democratic revolution in our country. However, the fact that Laos is in the front line of socialism in Southeast Asia, and the backwardness of her economy and culture, presented us with numerous problems. In these circumstances, basing itself on the general tenets of Marxism-Leninism applied to the specific conditions in our country, and on the wide experience of other fraternal parties, our Party was able from the start to define the basic content of our political line and the revolutionary tasks to be achieved in the new stage of our development. It was also able to develop the programme to be followed and basic measures to be applied in transforming, building and developing our

economy and culture, strengthening national defence and security and expanding our international relations. It thus outlined the fundamental solutions to the problems arising during the socialist revolution and achieved total political and ideological unity within its own ranks, in the armed forces and among the people, consolidating the forces of the nation and winning the sympathy and support of fraternal socialist countries and friends throughout the world. All this served to ensure the success of the political line and programme of the Party over the last few years and create a firm foundation for the ideological and organisational development of the Party. It is also a decisive factor in the defence and construction of our country today.

However, along with the successes just described, there are also many flaws and defects, of which the most important is the fact that our theoretical work and practical activity in developing the Party are still inadequate as regards the needs, tasks and principles that apply when the Party is governing the state of the dictatorship of the proletariat and striving to implement the socialist revolution. This is revealed in the fact that our ideological work within the Party, the armed forces and among the population has not yet been radically restructured. The struggle to prevent and correct various erroneous ideas and negative phenomena is not yet conducted with sufficient vigour, while the education, retraining and professional improvement of Party workers and members, necessary to equip them for their new tasks, is still lagging behind. Organisational work is still, on the whole, unable to

fully ensure the fulfilment of the political tasks set by the Party at the new stage. It should be particularly stressed that our Party workers are often unable to cope with the task of directing the various spheres of activity and the organisation of fulfilment of their duties and that many primary Party organisations are still weak and the ancillary apparatus of the Party committees not yet fully formed. These flaws and defects lower the militant efficiency of the Party and to some extent limit its leading role.

In order to consolidate the positive aspects of Party organisation and remove its flaws and defects, and thus increase the leading role and militant efficiency of the Party, the organisational task that now faces us is the following: "To improve the Party development and ensure that the Party masters the teaching of Marxism-Leninism and is able to apply it creatively in the conditions prevailing in our country, so as to define correctly the line and policy to be adopted and carry it through successfully. To strengthen our Party politically, ideologically and organisationally so as to reinforce its class nature and promote its leading role as the vanguard of the revolution. It is essential that the Party be the true directing force in the system of dictatorship of the proletariat and that it be able to guide the revolution at the new stage of its development" (from the decisions of the 4th Plenum of the Central Committee of the LPRP, February 1977).

The experience of the last few years with respect to developing the Party indicates that we must carry through the important measures laid

down in the resolution on organisational work adopted by the 4th Plenum of the Central Committee of our Party (February 1977), and the national conference of the LPRP (January 1978).

Firstly, the Party must be strengthened politically, ideologically and organisationally. Ideological work must be closely tied in with organisational work and efforts must be made to strengthen the Party in accord with the political line and tasks laid down by it.

Secondly, building up the Party must be closely linked with the revolutionary movement of the people, who must be mobilised to carry through the major and vital tasks laid down by the Party and the government. The people must be able to criticise and express their opinion about the activity of the Party, which will make it possible to check the work and personal qualities of Party workers and members.

Thirdly, we must master the methods of Party development under the dictatorship of the proletariat. Moreover, the organisational work of the Party and its increased militant efficiency must be linked to the improvement of the organisation and efficiency of the state apparatus and to greater activity on the part of mass organisations in order to consolidate the dictatorship of the proletariat and ensure the successful achievement of all the tasks set before us.

Fourthly, improving personal qualities of Party members must be closely linked to raising the level of primary Party organisations, and the professional quality of Party workers, to the strengthening and improvement of the state ap-

paratus at every level and in every sphere.

Fifthly, in increasing Party membership, the most important factor must always be the quality of the members; the growth of the Party must be accompanied by its consolidation. The Party must promptly and resolutely exclude from its ranks any members who are politically unreliable or morally dissolute.

Our Party has elaborated the correct political line, and on this basis directs its own development. This is our great advantage. Our main task at present, however, is to implement this line and achieve concrete results in increasing the leading role and militant efficiency of the Party. The Party must, therefore, solve a series of problems and implement specific measures (with regard to organisational work) as was noted in the resolution on organisational work adopted by the national Party conference. Particular attention must be paid to the following problems.

The main task of the Party is to further improve *the Marxist-Leninist education of Party workers and members and develop in them a proletarian ideological commitment, class consciousness and understanding of the aims and ideals of the Party*. Our Party is the party of the working class. Marxism-Leninism is its ideological foundation and the guiding principle of all its activity. The revolutionary line of the Party consists in creatively applying the basic tenets of Marxism-Leninism to the conditions existing in our country, in skilfully combining patriotism with proletarian internationalism.

Most of our Party workers and members came to Marxism-Leninism via patriotism. They were

under the influence of non-proletarian ideas and views, which are manifested in ideological waverings and petty-bourgeois political instability, in the patriarchal views typical of the peasantry and the concepts of caste and clan that are a feature of feudal and prefeudal society. This situation naturally facilitates the infiltration and development in the Party of harmful and reactionary ideas of opportunism, narrow nationalism, sectarianism and great-power chauvinism.

Our Party is the ruling party, and without a vigorous programme of education and ideological training, strict control on the part of the collective and criticism and help from the people, some of our Party workers and members, including those occupying leading positions, may, as a result of subjective and objective influences, become infected with bureaucratism, administering and arrogance, abuse their position and undergo a process of degeneration. This could then separate the Party from the people and weaken the dictatorship of the proletariat, which would be a major catastrophe for the Party in power.

Lenin said about the "truly gigantic problems of re-educating, under the proletarian dictatorship, millions of peasants and small proprietors, hundreds of thousands of office employees, officials and bourgeois intellectuals, of subordinating them all to the proletarian state and to proletarian leadership, of eradicating their bourgeois habits and traditions" and about the need to educate "in a protracted struggle waged on the basis of the dictatorship of the proletariat ... the

proletarians themselves, who do not abandon their petty-bourgeois prejudices at one stroke ... but only in the course of a long and difficult mass struggle against mass petty-bourgeois influences".¹

The practical experience gained by the Party over many years in leading the revolution and building up the Party, and particularly the experience it has gained since it came to power and began to lead the socialist revolution, together with the experience of the world communist movement as a whole, clearly demonstrates that if a party neglects or abandons the Marxist-Leninist education of its workers and the development of proletarian consciousness, if it allows petty-bourgeois, peasant and other non-proletarian views to dominate and even replace the proletarian ideology, then that party inevitably commits errors and sooner or later suffers defeat. Not only will it be unable to direct the building of socialism, but will also face the threat of degeneration and a collusion with imperialism, the betrayal of Marxism-Leninism and proletarian internationalism.

For this reason, the work of educating and constantly raising the level of proletarian ideological commitment and the struggle to remove all non-proletarian influences is an indispensable and fundamental necessity in building the Party.

As the revolution develops, its tasks become ever more complex and serious, and it is all the

¹ V. I. Lenin, "Left-Wing' Communism—an Infantile Disorder", *Collected Works*, Vol. 31, pp. 116, 115.

more important that the Party pursue an independent line and exercise leadership in accord with circumstances. The ideological and theoretical training of our Party workers and members must therefore be constantly improved so that they set an example in their work and are able to organise and lead the people in carrying through the socialist revolution.

This is why we must constantly improve the Marxist-Leninist training of our Party workers and members. The study of the theory, line and policies of the Party must go hand in hand with practical activity in every sphere. At the same time, strict, principled and objective criticism and self-criticism must be developed within the Party, state apparatus and mass organisations in order to strengthen unity of the Party and raise the level of proletarian ideological commitment, revolutionary morality and class consciousness among Party workers and members, so that they will be able to accomplish their work correctly and in accord with the Party line.

The Political Programme of the Second Congress of the LPRP called for a resolute struggle to be waged against "petty-bourgeois ideas, patriarchal peasant psychology, and the influences of feudal, bourgeois and imperialist ideology. These tendencies reveal themselves mainly in a lack of resolution and perseverance in revolutionary activity, unreliability and compromise, over-confidence and fear of difficulties and privations, attempts to shift work and responsibility onto others, lack of confidence in one's own abilities and those of the people, parasitism, lack of mental concentration, great-power and nar-

row nationalism, abuse of power, careerism, bureaucracy and administering”.

At the same time, we must be vigilant and give a resolute rebuff to all signs of harmful, reactionary and opportunist views, combat all kinds of illusion, error, wavering and rightist tendencies favourable to imperialism and world reaction. The independent line of the Party, the purity of Marxism-Leninism and proletarian internationalism must be vigorously defended.

The first and most decisive task in carrying through the directives and policies of the Party is to *form, educate and improve a contingent of professionally competent and reliable Party workers.*

Our Party, entering this new stage in the development of the revolution, has a fairly large number of Party workers who have been tried and tested in the national democratic revolution. They are our prize possession. However, as a result of the heavy and urgent requirements of national defence and construction, the Party must have at its disposal a sufficient number of reliable Party workers loyal to the Party's political line in order to be able to raise the level of both the Party and the state apparatus and carry through the immediate and future tasks of the revolution. It must also—and this is crucial—be able to provide worthy successors to the present generation of Party workers at all levels and in every sphere.

Most of our Party workers are products of the popular revolutionary movement; they have been tried and tested during two long and painful wars of resistance and the recent years of

peaceful construction and defence of the new order, and have displayed their loyalty to the revolution and their faith in the leadership of the Party. They are exemplary revolutionaries and many of them have fairly quickly improved their qualifications and abilities in various spheres of activity, successfully carrying through the tasks assigned to them.

However, given the demands of the new situation, our Party workers must not only possess a high level of ideological commitment and developed social consciousness, but also be professionally qualified in such spheres as economics, culture, science and technology, and have the ability to direct the new society and the new economic structure so as to carry through simultaneously the three revolutions in the conditions prevailing in our country and lead it quickly and confidently to socialism. Clearly, we are not yet in a position to meet all these requirements and this explains the errors and miscalculations that have harmed the people and the revolution over recent years. One of the most urgent problems facing us today in building up the Party is therefore to raise the cultural, scientific and technical level of Party workers and improve their administrative and organisational abilities, as well as to give them Marxist-Leninist education, so that, whatever their position or sphere of activity, they have the professional skills necessary to carry through the tasks laid before them.

As for the organisational structure of the Party, in view of the need to develop the economy, raise the cultural level of the people, strengthen security and defence and expand international

relations, our Party and government require sufficient Party workers with a wide range of professional skills for all the spheres of their activity. In particular, there is a need for top-level administrators, research and planning specialists in the fields of economics, culture, science and engineering, skilled workers, etc. At present there are a number of irrationalities in the structural organisation of Party personnel. Many Party and state organs, both central and local, have a large workforce but efficiency is still low. There are too few engaged in research and economic planning, a shortage of specialists in science and technology, and a lack of administrative personnel and those capable of assuming responsibility for various departments and branches of the economy. Moreover, Party workers are frequently moved, with the result that in many regions local organs and institutions lack workers despite the fact that the movement among the people is fairly strong and there are a large number of experienced Party members and hardened fighters. There is yet another major problem that stems from the fact that after the liberation the sphere of Party leadership grew continually and therefore a large number of new members entered the Party and state organisations to work alongside those who had fought in the war, or were active in liberated regions or behind enemy lines. This is understandable and testifies to the further development of the revolution. However, as certain Party and state organs have not yet fully assimilated the Party policy regarding the guidance of Party personnel and are therefore not implementing it

as rigorously as they should, they are not paying sufficient attention to the retraining and promotion of older Party workers and to educating new leading and rank-and-file Party workers. As a result, Party workers' positive qualities are not used to the full and there is not, as yet, a sufficient degree of solidarity, mutual help and unity between old and new Party workers. In employing and promoting Party personnel and enhancing their qualifications, there is a tendency in some places to concentrate on those who have an engaging manner and who are good writers and fluent speakers, without enquiring deeply enough into their revolutionary convictions. Not enough attention is paid to raising the qualifications of older and experienced Party workers whose educational level is insufficient and who come from worker and peasant families or ethnic minorities. In some cases, managers, office and industrial workers are engaged without any enquiry into their previous record or their political and ideological training. This reveals narrow-mindedness, negligence and irresponsibility in implementing the Party policy on Party workers, and has had many negative consequences which weaken the internal unity of the Party and hinder its activity and leading role.

In the present situation, at a time when the revolution is gathering momentum and faces serious and complex tasks that make great demands upon it, while the training of our Party workers leaves much to be desired, it is almost impossible to avoid faults and failings mentioned above. Such faults also arose due to an inadequate level of the political and professional

training and poor guidance of Party workers, neither of which is sufficient to meet the new tasks facing the Party. It is therefore a matter of urgency that our Party and state organisations at every level should have a fuller grasp of the line and policy of the Party on Party workers, be more fully aware of the tasks of the revolution in this new stage of its development and concentrate all the capacities of Party and state on solving the problem of Party personnel.

The immediate task facing the Party is to draw up a plan with a view to classifying and rationally distributing available Party workers between those regions recently liberated and those liberated much earlier, between state administration and the sphere of production and circulation, and also among various spheres of activity—military, political, economic and cultural—and among districts, provinces and the centre. It must also establish a plan for the political, professional, cultural and technical training and re-education of Party workers, for improving organisation and work methods in order to significantly raise the quality and efficiency of Party workers. Only thus will it be possible to meet the requirements of the central task of the Party, and create conditions in which Party workers can gain experience and realise their abilities in the various spheres of work assigned to them.

The Party and the government must also draw up a long-term programme dealing with the problem of Party personnel, adopt vigorous and urgent measures relating to the professional re-training of experienced Party workers and also direct its attention to the education and training

of new Party workers and employees. It must not hesitate to promote to positions of importance those who have the necessary abilities, professional knowledge and moral qualities, and it must also be able to pick out those Party members, Party supporters, and active participants in mass organisations who have given a good account of themselves in the revolutionary struggle and in practical work so as to train them, improve their qualifications and turn them into Party workers. In-service training, using such methods as the sharing of experience and combined study and work, must be used together with short courses, training at school, and study in socialist and other countries. All these measures are aimed at raising the number and quality of our professional workers over a fixed period of time so as to supply all branches and departments with administrative personnel, train up successors to the older generation of Party workers, regulate Party personnel work in accord with the decisions taken by the Party, and strengthen the contingent of Party workers, thus ensuring that the growing requirements of the socialist revolution can be more fully satisfied.

Another important problem currently facing us in building up the Party is that of *widening the network of primary Party organisations and strengthening the apparatus of Party leadership at every level*. Party cells, the primary organisations, are the basic militant units of the Party, implementing its line and policy, linking the Party and the people and also serving to train new Party workers and provide experience for Party members. The stability or weakness of Party

cells and primary organisations and the quality of their work has a direct influence on the material and spiritual life of the people, on the general cause of the revolution and the trust of the people in the Party.

This is why, in building up the Party, we must do everything possible to improve and strengthen their leading role and militant spirit in every respect. We now have primary Party organisations throughout the country, and their activity is closely linked to that of the lower organs of government and economic management. Their main task is to decide upon and implement in their locality the measures necessary to ensure the success of the line and policy of the Party and government and also to carry through the tasks set by higher organs. The activity of the primary Party organisations must be wholly directed at stimulating a mass movement to carry through the three revolutions, strengthening national defence and law and order, ensuring that local organs and the various institutions carry through their work, and thereby also consolidating the Party organisations themselves. The Party cells and primary organisations must always pay great attention to political, ideological and organisational work with a view to mobilising all Party members and the rest of the population to participate in drawing up and implementing the plans and programmes to be pursued by their local organs and respective organisations. They must exercise strict control over the activity of Party workers and members and also give them timely advice on consistently implementing Party policy and state laws.

At present, the key problem in promoting the leading role and militancy of primary Party organisations is that of raising the political, theoretical, cultural and professional level of all Party workers and members and, in particular, members of Party committees and those occupying important positions within the Party. In addition, the activity of the Party cells and primary organisations must be brought in line with the requirements of the new tasks, able to use to the full all the capacities and potential of the administrative and professional organs and the mass organisations in carrying through the concrete tasks stemming from the general line and policy of the Party.

It is necessary to ensure that the provisions on governing the activity of Party cells and primary organisations are consistently applied and that their activity is constantly improved. Their work must be made realistic and precise, so as to set an example and be an effective guide to action. The content of meetings of Party groups and primary organisations must be well prepared and deal with the central issues relating to carrying through the line and policy of the Party and the tasks assigned to local organs and institutions, and also with the organisational programme for their implementation. The tasks and specific duties of each Party worker and member must be clearly defined in the resolutions adopted at the meeting. Party organs, Party meetings and daily Party activity should take place in a spirit of unity, trust, enthusiasm and militancy, thus promoting collective leadership and democracy and a keen sense of responsibility in all

Party workers and members.

In the course of the mass movement, those who show conscientiousness, courage and enthusiasm in their work and who are closely linked to the people should be picked out for political and ideological training and prepared for Party membership, and this applies particularly to the best representatives of the working class and working peasantry, members of the armed forces and prominent members of the intelligentsia, who have been tested in the revolutionary struggle. There must be no sectarianism, prejudice or favouritism. Care must be taken not to admit opportunists, who attempt to penetrate the Party in order to set up factions and occupy positions of importance, and also to remove any reactionary elements and spies who strive to infiltrate the Party in order to conduct divisive and subversive activity directed at undermining the revolution. Those who hold views contrary to the political position of the Party, have degenerated or else retained outmoded ideas, and who, despite every effort made to teach and assist them, have failed to progress, have no authority and are unable to lead the people, must also be excluded from the ranks of the Party. Together with the development of primary Party organisations, special care must be taken to improve the Party apparatus, including Party committees and their organs, particularly in the provinces, cities and districts, so that they can effectively direct the work of economic and cultural construction, of strengthening national defence and law and order and the work of the primary Party organisations in implementing the

tasks assigned to them.

In order to promote the role of the Party committee in its locality or organisation, the immediate problem to be resolved is that of increasing the level of its directing activity and of turning the Party committee into a truly collective organ experienced in political work and building up the Party, in mobilising the people, while also possessing the necessary theoretical knowledge and professional training in the spheres of economics, science, technology and culture—in short an organ equipped with all that is necessary to carry through the tasks that it sets for itself or that are set by higher organs.

The creative ability and collective intelligence of the Party committee and local Party organisation as a whole must be developed to the full, and conditions be such that each member of the Party committee participates fully in the discussion of the tasks and the plans for their implementation. The personal responsibility of those in important positions and of Party committee members for the work assigned to them must be increased and the principle of collective leadership and individual responsibility within the Party committee must be strictly adhered to. Any signs of authoritarianism, abuse of power, cult of the personality, or lack of respect for the collective must be suppressed, while any tendency to shift all responsibility onto the collective, evade responsibility or deny the necessity to take decisions on matters within one's own jurisdiction must be firmly countered.

The Party committees must eliminate insufficiencies and defects in their organisational work,

which is at present one of the weak points in our activity. A major immediate problem is the strengthening and improving of Party committee organs—commissions on research and analysis, organisation, propaganda and education, mass mobilisation, the national front, economics, military affairs, etc.—without allowing this apparatus to become too cumbersome. Particular attention must be paid to the training of Party workers at all levels, to raising their theoretical and cultural level and professional qualifications so that these organs can be effective in assisting the Party committees to direct the various spheres of activity.

The Party committees must also take steps to improve their methods of guidance and adapt their work style to the requirements of the new tasks. It is essential that the relationship between the Party as the leading force, the state as the administrative organ and the people as the master be correctly regulated. The rights and sphere of competence of administrative organs need to be widened and the role of public organisations in carrying through specific tasks increased. Moreover, there is a constant need to remain abreast of events, to be one with the people, to undertake research, study and investigation, establish advanced work teams, check work and analyse experience so as to be able to direct and assist local organisations and institutions in carrying through the tasks assigned to them, in implementing the line and policy of the Party and in preventing errors and infringements of principle.

To sum up, in order to strengthen Party

leadership and development at every level on the basis of total unity on matters pertaining to the political line and practical activity of the Party in the period in which the Party is in power, every effort must be made to raise the quality of Party leadership, to link the promotion of Party leadership with the promotion of the right of the working people to be the collective masters and the improvement of the organisational and administrative capacities of the state apparatus. To achieve this, the Party must be strengthened politically, ideologically and organisationally and a number of problems must be solved relating to political line, concrete policies, improvement of the apparatus, determination of the course to be followed, methods of leadership in the new conditions, etc. However, the most important issues, those to which the Party must give its keenest attention, are raising the level of Marxist-Leninist training and proletarian ideological commitment of its workers and members, educating, improving and expanding of Party personnel, accelerating the establishment of primary Party organisations and improving the Party's governing apparatus at all levels in accord with the new tasks. These are extremely important issues to which the Party must give particular and direct attention in order to raise the level of all Party activity in guiding the revolution and in raising the Party itself to a higher level, so as to ensure the successful achievement of the glorious and historic mission laid upon it by the people and the working class.

On surveying the historic path that we have travelled during the thirty years of the national liberation struggle, we feel a rightful sense of pride in our Party and people and look with growing confidence to the future of our country.

The few years of the socialist revolution have enabled us to survey with joy the profound and wide-ranging changes that have occurred in every sphere. In carrying out the socialist transformation of the country, our working people have received and confirmed their right to be the collective masters of the country, and this has aroused in the people an unparalleled surge of revolutionary enthusiasm. The mass movements for—amongst other things—agricultural cooperatives, dedicated work, improving the level of education and culture, promoting the new way of life and ensuring security, law and order, are enjoying increasing success. The administrative organs and mass organisations are improving and growing in strength and the people are united more firmly than ever. The forces of the revolution are growing on all sides. More powerful than ever before, they are resolutely countering the plots and intrigues of the imperialists and their lackeys, guaranteeing the defence of the nation and resolutely defending the new order and constructive labour of our people. The international prestige of the People's Democratic Republic of Laos is growing, and our country is receiving considerable international assistance, particularly from the Socialist Republic of Viet-

nam, the USSR and the other socialist countries, in order to defend and develop the nation. The road to socialism lies open before our country. The imperialists and international reaction are vainly resorting to the most perfidious means to frustrate the revolutionary work of our people; for, despite all the difficulties and insufficiencies, there is no force that can halt the triumphant progress of our revolution.

In order to fulfil the historic tasks facing it at this new stage, all our people must work and study hard, consistently pursue the transformation of our small-scale production into large-scale socialist production. All our Party workers and members must strive to develop in themselves the high moral and professional qualities of revolutionaries, struggle to successfully carry through all the policies of the Party and resolutely defend our beloved country in order to complete the building of socialism in our country so that it can worthily play its part in the world revolutionary process and promote peace in Southeast Asia and throughout the world.

Long live the People's Democratic Republic of Laos!

Long live the Lao People's Revolutionary Party!

Long live victorious Marxism-Leninism!

The work of the people of Laos in defending their country and building socialism will triumph!

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