

The Development of the Ho Chi Minh City Party Committee's Leadership Thinking on Journalism (1982 - 1988) (Through Directive No. 17/CT-TU (1982) and Resolution No. 04-NQ/TU (1988))

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ABSTRACT

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The period from 1982 to 1988 marked a critical stage in the development of the Ho Chi Minh City Party Committee's leadership thinking on journalism, as reflected in two key documents: Directive No. 17/CT-TU (1982) and Resolution No. 04-NQ/TU (1988). This study employs a historical-discursive analysis to elucidate the evolution in the City Party Committee's perceptions and methods of leadership in the field of journalism—specifically, the shift from an administrative, centrally subsidized model to one based on political orientation, dialogue, and feedback, consistent with the 6th National Party Congress's principle that “Renovation must begin with the renovation of thinking”. The findings indicate that this development is manifested in three major dimensions: renewal in political-ideological orientation and media content; reform of leadership and management mechanisms; and innovations in journalistic personnel work and leadership culture. These transformations contributed to shaping a more democratic and flexible leadership approach, thereby enhancing effectiveness and ensuring the alignment between the Party's ideological orientation and the promotion of journalistic initiative, creativity, and social responsibility. Drawing from the practical experience of the Ho Chi Minh City Party Committee, the study highlights three notable values: the creative application of Marxism-Leninism and Ho Chi Minh's thought on revolutionary journalism; the political-practical foundation for the city's journalistic development during the *Đổi Mới* period; and the important contributions to the refinement of the Party's methods of journalism leadership in subsequent years.

Keywords: leadership thinking, press leadership model, Ho Chi Minh City Party Committee, Directive No. 17/CT-TU (1982), Resolution No. 04-NQ/TU (1988)

INTRODUCTION

After national reunification in 1975, Ho Chi Minh City emerged as the country's largest economic, political, and socio-cultural center, playing a leading role in stabilizing livelihood conditions and building socialism in the South. However, entering the 1980s, the City faced a series of challenges: a prolonged bureaucratic and centrally subsidized management mechanism, stagnant production, widespread shortages in daily life, and increasing complexities in ideological and cultural struggle. In this context, the Ho Chi Minh City Party Committee identified ideological-cultural work, including journalism, as a critical task aimed at consolidating public trust and safeguarding the Party's ideological-political front.

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From this dynamic reality, the Ho Chi Minh City Party Committee issued two documents of particular significance in the field of journalism: Directive No. 17/CT-TU (1982) on the City's journalistic work [1], and Resolution No. 04-NQ/TU (1988) on promoting the Party Committee's role and responsibility in making more effective use of the City's press [2]. Issued at two pivotal moments—before and after the 6th National Party Congress (1986)—these documents clearly reflect the transformation in the Party Committee's leadership thinking on journalism: from a mindset focused on consolidation and ideological stabilization under the centralized planning mechanism, to one grounded in renovation, democratization, and feedback in journalistic leadership.

Over the past three decades, numerous studies have examined the development of Vietnamese journalism or the history of journalism in Ho Chi Minh City. For example, Nguyễn Sơn's chapter "Press and Publishing – Twenty Years of Development," published in *Ho Chi Minh City: Twenty Years (1975-1995)* (pp. 217-227) [3], discusses the growth of the City's press in size and representation from 1975 to 1995. Dương Kiể'u Linh's *Journalism in Ho Chi Minh City during the First Twenty Years of Renovation (1986-2006)* [4] also analyzes the socio-economic context influencing policy orientations for journalistic development under the City Party Committee, as well as the role of the press in this period. Nguyễn Công Khanh's *History of Journalism in Saigon – Ho Chi Minh City (1865-1995)* [5] traces the evolution of the City's journalism before and after the Đổi Mới reforms under the Party and State's guidelines. Similarly, *An Overview of the History of Revolutionary Vietnamese Journalism (1925-2010)* [6] by Đào Duy Quát, Đỗ Quang Hưng, and Vũ Duy Thông highlights the role of several Ho Chi Minh City newspapers under the Party's leadership, especially during the early stages of Đổi Mới. Trần Hữu Quang's *Sociology of Journalism* [7] describes the expansion and changing landscape of Ho Chi Minh City's press in the early Đổi Mới years. The work *100 Questions and Answers about Journalism in Saigon – Ho Chi Minh City* [8] by Trương Ngọc Tươi and Nguyễn Ngọc Phan also mentions the establishment of many City newspapers after liberation.

However, these studies primarily focus on the general landscape and socio-political role of Ho Chi Minh City journalism. None has specifically analyzed the development of the City Party Committee's leadership thinking on journalism through Directive No. 17/CT-TU and Resolution No. 04-NQ/TU from the perspectives of Party history and leadership discourse. Therefore, this article seeks to explore the evolution and development of the Ho Chi Minh City Party Committee's leadership thinking on journalism through these two key documents, as well as the value of this transformation for improving the Party's theoretical framework on journalistic leadership and for the practical development of the City's press during the Đổi Mới period.

The study addresses the central research question: How did the leadership thinking of the Ho Chi Minh City Party Committee on journalism develop through these two documents, and what values did this development generate?

To answer this question, the article applies a historical-discursive analysis, combining the study of content, discourse, and the socio-political context of the two documents. This approach helps elucidate the development of the Party Committee's leadership thinking on journalism—from an administrative, centrally subsidized model to an orientation-based, dialogical, and feedback leadership model—in accordance with the 6th National Party Congress's principle that "Renovation must begin with the renovation of thinking".

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Historical Context

After the liberation of the South and national reunification on April 30, 1975, Saigon–Gia Định was renamed Ho Chi Minh City, entering a new period as the country's leading economic, political, and socio-cultural center [9, p.576]. The City played an especially important role in stabilizing the lives of Southern residents, restoring production, and building socialism. However, the severe consequences of the war left deep scars: physical infrastructure had been devastated, the economy was weakened, the administrative system lacked cohesion, and living conditions—both material and spiritual—were extremely difficult for the population [10, p.4].

In this context, ideological-cultural work was identified as a critical task to consolidate the revolutionary government and maintain political stability. Journalism was regarded as one of the Party Committee's principal instruments for propaganda, ideological orientation, and mobilizing solidarity, labor, and learning among the people. Yet, entering the early 1980s, the bureaucratic, centrally planned and subsidized economic mechanism increasingly revealed its

limitations: production stagnation, rising inflation, scarcity of goods, and a serious decline in living standards [11]. With its tradition of dynamism and creativity, the City searched for and experimented with various solutions to address these difficulties—from improving economic management and adopting product-based contracting mechanisms to renewing approaches in ideological work and journalism. Newspapers such as Sài Gòn Giã'i Phóng, Tuổi Trẻ, and Công Nhân Giã'i Phóng (renamed Người Lao Động in 1990) began to reflect more vividly the realities of social life, not only disseminating the Party's guidelines but also voicing criticism, recommendations, and the aspirations of the populace.

These practical developments created an objective need to renew the Party's approach to journalistic leadership. The administrative-subsidized model, characterized by tight control of content, increasingly showed its constraints and no longer met the evolving demands of journalistic activities and the growing diversity of information needs. These dynamics compelled the City Party Committee to seek a new leadership method—one that maintained the Party's ideological orientation while fostering the initiative and creativity of journalistic agencies.

In this context, on December 18, 1982, the Standing Committee of the Ho Chi Minh City Party Committee issued Directive No. 17/CT-TU on journalistic work. Developed on the basis of thoroughly implementing the Politburo's Resolution No. 01 on the City's tasks, this document emphasized strengthening the Party's leadership over journalism, viewing the press as a principal instrument for ideological struggle, consolidating political trust, and building the socialist new person. This represented journalistic leadership thinking shaped by the conditions of the centrally planned, subsidized mechanism, emphasizing political tasks and one-way ideological orientation.

From the mid-1980s onward, amid major national transformations—especially after the 6th National Party Congress (1986)—the Party's leadership thinking underwent fundamental change, both nationally and within Ho Chi Minh City. The Congress asserted the principle that “Renovation must begin with the renovation of thinking” [12, p.459], and journalism was identified as one of the pioneering fields embodying this new mindset. The Congress's Political Report required that journalism must “ensure accuracy, improve quality, enhance its mass character and ideological combativeness, and overcome simplicity, monotony, superficiality, emptiness, and one-sidedness” [12, pp.463–464]. These directives constituted a new orientation encouraging the press to reflect reality more broadly and strengthen critique and dialogue within the Party's principled framework.

Responding to these requirements, on May 20, 1988, the Standing Committee of the Ho Chi Minh City Party Committee issued Resolution No. 04-NQ/TU on promoting the Party Committee's role and responsibility in making more effective use of the City's press. This document marked an important development in the Party Committee's leadership thinking on journalism: moving from viewing the press primarily as a propaganda tool to recognizing it as both “the Party's sharp ideological weapon” and “the voice of the masses,” a bridge between the Party and the people. This was a milestone representing the shift from administrative-subsidized leadership thinking to an orientation-based, dialogical, and feedback-driven leadership model—reflecting a harmonious combination of Party orientation, public character, and professional standards in journalistic activity.

2. The Development of the Ho Chi Minh City Party Committee's Leadership Thinking on Journalism

2.1. Innovations in Political-Ideological Orientation and Journalistic Content

The development of the Ho Chi Minh City Party Committee's leadership thinking on journalism during 1982-1988 was first manifested in the renewal of journalistic leadership content—particularly in political-ideological orientation, functions, tasks, and the scope of journalism's influence in social life.

Directive No. 17/CT-TU, issued by the Standing Committee of the Ho Chi Minh City Party Committee, emerged at a time when the entire Party was focused on consolidating the political system after the war and implementing the 5th National Party Congress (1982). The document clearly reflected a leadership approach that emphasized strengthening ideological combativeness, regarding the press as a direct instrument of the Party to serve, above all, the tasks of political, ideological, and social stabilization. The Directive stressed: “The propagandistic content of the City's press must best serve the fundamental tasks of ideological work as set out in the Party's 5th National Congress and in Politburo Resolution No. 01 on the tasks of Ho Chi Minh City... The City's press must help its audiences

understand clearly and deeply the most essential issues of the socialist revolution, the transitional period, its objectives and targets, and the distinction between friends and foes in this revolutionary stage, as well as grasp the Party's viewpoints on the key questions arising in the first phase of the transitional period..." [1, p.2].

On this basis, the press was required to "persistently struggle against and eliminate remnants of reactionary ideologies, cultures, and lifestyles... promptly and vividly promote exemplary individuals and good deeds with persuasive and educational power, guiding the masses toward correct thinking and actions, and fostering interpersonal relations in the spirit of 'each for all and all for each'" [1, p.3]. These directions demonstrate leadership thinking that remained administrative and directive in nature, viewing journalism primarily as a channel for propaganda, ideological education, and behavioral orientation for the masses—focusing on affirming what was correct and criticizing ideological and moral deviations. While appropriate to the immediate postwar context, this also reveals the limitations of journalistic leadership within the subsidized and administrative management system.

By the mid-1980s, the reality of social life in the City had changed significantly. Along with the demand for economic renovation, the City's press increasingly reflected the pulse of daily life, the concerns of the populace, and the shortcomings of the management mechanism. These practical changes necessitated an adjustment in the Party Committee's thinking—broadening the concept of "journalistic leadership" from primarily "directive-propagandistic" to "orientation–feedback." This shift was clearly expressed in Resolution No. 04-NQ/TU of the Standing Committee of the Ho Chi Minh City Party Committee on promoting the Party Committee's role and responsibility in journalistic leadership. The Resolution stated: "The City's press must be a sharp ideological weapon and an effective instrument of the City Party Committee for disseminating and communicating the Party's directives, resolutions, and viewpoints, and the State's policies to all social strata of the City. The press is the voice of the Party and at the same time the voice of the masses, a bridge between the Party and the people" [2, p.6].

Compared with Directive 17, Resolution 04 marked a new stage in journalistic leadership thinking. While Directive 17 viewed journalism as a one-way communicative tool, Resolution 04 recognized the two-way nature of journalistic activity, affirming that the press not only disseminates the Party's line but also reflects the thoughts, aspirations, and recommendations of the people. This represented a major shift in leadership content—from propaganda and ideological education toward orientation, dialogue, and social feedback.

Moreover, Resolution 04 clearly defined the political tasks of journalism in the *Đổi Mới* period: "The City's press must contribute to discovering and disseminating experiences, promoting and strongly encouraging new factors, exemplary production models, and exemplary workers, and motivating and inspiring the will to advance... in implementing the City's three major economic programs and social action programs" [2, p.6]. Accordingly, journalistic orientation shifted from a narrow political-ideological focus to a broader socio-economic focus—emphasizing successful production models, exemplary initiatives, and pressing socio-economic issues of public concern. Particularly noteworthy is the Resolution's encouragement of the press to fulfill its critical social function: "...identify typical issues and cases that are representative and relevant for public criticism in the press" [2, p.6].

These directives indicate that the City's press was no longer confined to the role of a one-directional propagandistic tool, but was granted greater autonomy to reflect and oversee social reality, as long as political orientation was maintained. This marked a fundamental difference between pre- and post-Renovation journalistic leadership thinking, as reflected in the two documents: Directive 17 centered on "control and content orientation," whereas Resolution 04 emphasized "promoting the agency, responsiveness, and creativity of the press" within the Party's leadership framework.

2.2. Renovation in the Mechanism of Journalistic Leadership and Management

Along with the renewal of leadership content, the period 1982-1988 also witnessed a clear transformation in the mechanism of journalistic leadership and management within the Ho Chi Minh City Party Committee. While Directive No. 17/CT-TU still embodied an administrative, centrally subsidized, and command-based leadership model, Resolution No. 04-NQ/TU reflected a more democratic and open approach, marking an important development in the Party's perception and method of leadership over journalistic activities.

In Directive 17, the City Party Committee required that “the Propaganda and Education Commission of the City Party Committee manage the propagandistic content of the press and broadcasting” [1, p.6]. Journalism was placed under the direct management of the propaganda apparatus, and all content to be published had to be guided, reviewed, or submitted for leadership approval. This mechanism ensured ideological unity and political orientation but significantly restricted the autonomy and creativity of newspaper agencies, making journalistic activity somewhat passive and directive in nature. Such an arrangement represented the administrative-subsidized leadership model characteristic of the centrally planned economy.

In practice, during the early 1980s, the City’s journalistic activities increasingly produced situations that went beyond rigid directive frameworks. Several newspapers vigorously reported on economic realities, pointed out shortcomings in the management mechanism, or proposed new initiatives in production and business. These developments were both positive signs of an emerging reformist spirit and a challenge for the Party Committee: how to maintain the Party’s leadership role while fostering the dynamism and social responsibility of the press. From this reality, the need to renovate the mechanism of journalistic leadership and management became imperative.

Responding to the demands of the new period, Resolution No. 04 demonstrated a significant development in leadership thinking regarding journalistic mechanisms. The Resolution emphasized the necessity of establishing a leadership mechanism based on orientation, dialogue, and feedback, instead of the previous administrative control model. Journalistic leadership was no longer limited to “directive” commands but also required “coordination and feedback” between Party leaders and journalists in fulfilling the Party’s political tasks and serving the interests of the people. The Resolution clearly stated: “The City Party Committee, the Propaganda and Education Commission, and Party committees at all levels must regularly meet with press agencies to promptly provide information, exchange views, and create favorable conditions for journalists to grasp the situation, the advantages and difficulties, and the policy orientations of localities, sectors, and units, while also receiving information detected and gathered by journalists from public opinion, grassroots realities, and various sources available to them” [2, p.8].

To create conditions for the press to exercise greater autonomy and creativity within the Party’s political orientation and within State laws and policies, the City Party Committee instructed the dissemination of “the State’s regulations on journalism” [2, p.8] and requested that “the City People’s Committee supplement or concretize necessary legal documents on State management of the mass media” [2, p.9].

Compared with Directive 17, these provisions reflected a fundamental shift in leadership and management methods—from a one-way, command-based model to a two-way, feedback-oriented framework. The mechanisms of content approval and administrative inspection were loosened, replaced by periodic meetings, orientation sessions, and exchanges between City Party leaders and journalistic agencies. The press was given space to raise issues, point out limitations and shortcomings in management mechanisms, provided these activities adhered to constructive principles, State policy and law, and the common interest.

Another significant advancement of Resolution 04 was its emphasis on coordination among three actors in journalistic work: Party leadership, State management, and professional initiative from journalistic agencies. This mechanism clarified the roles and responsibilities of each actor while fostering cohesion and coordinated action across levels of the political system. It represented an important theoretical and practical development, laying the groundwork for a more modern leadership model—one that not only exercises control but also encourages creativity, critique, and information exchange within the press community.

2.3. Renovation in Journalistic Personnel Work and the Construction of a Leadership Culture

One of the clearest manifestations of the development of the Ho Chi Minh City Party Committee’s leadership thinking on journalism during 1982-1988 was the renovation of personnel work and the construction of a leadership culture in the journalistic field. Alongside adjustments in leadership content and mechanisms, the City Party Committee recognized that the journalistic workforce was the decisive factor shaping the quality and effectiveness of ideological work. Therefore, the training, deployment, and professional development of journalistic personnel needed to be conducted comprehensively, aligned with the requirements of renovated thinking and leadership methods of the Party.

In Directive No. 17/CT-TU, journalistic personnel work was framed within the centrally planned, subsidized management mechanism, with a primary emphasis on “ensuring Party orientation and ideological combativeness among journalists,” and “maintaining ideological steadfastness and strictly adhering to the leadership of the Party committees.” The Directive emphasized the need to “strengthen political-ideological education, enhance Marxist–Leninist theoretical knowledge, and cultivate revolutionary ethics” [1, p.6] for reporters, editors, and leaders of press agencies. The objective of personnel work at this time was to build a team of journalists with firm political resolve, absolute loyalty to the Party, and consistent contributions to the consolidation of the ideological front.

By 1988, when the Standing Committee of the City Party Committee issued Resolution No. 04-NQ/TU, the perception of the role of journalistic personnel had undergone a fundamental transformation. The Resolution affirmed: “The City’s journalistic workforce has boldly confronted the truth and dared to speak the truth... this is a crucial factor that has generated momentum and vitality for the new developmental stage of the City’s press” [2, p.4]. Therefore, to further improve the quality of journalistic information and propaganda in the new period, the City Party Committee emphasized the need to “develop a contingent of journalists, reporters, and editors with firm political qualities, professional competence, and ethical integrity; harmoniously combining political capability with professional skills” [2, pp.4–6].

Particularly, journalistic personnel were required to resolve harmoniously four key relationships: between democracy and discipline; between struggle and construction, and construction and struggle; between the two targets (the enemies and the people); and between political responsibility and professional practice [2, p.7].

These viewpoints and directions clearly express the shift in journalistic leadership thinking within the City Party Committee—from prioritizing purely political qualities to valuing both political integrity and professional competence; from emphasizing political loyalty to recognizing the importance of truthfulness in reflecting social life and expressing the voices and concerns of the people. This marked an important advance, reflecting a new understanding of journalists in the *Đổi i Mới* period: they were not only ideological fighters but also cultural creators who reflected social reality with professional responsibility and civic conscience.

Alongside personnel development, the City Party Committee also focused on cultivating a leadership culture grounded in democracy, discipline, and cooperation. Resolution 04-NQ/TU required leaders at all levels to “respect and listen to the press, avoid imposing subjective views, and refrain from punishing journalists for constructive criticism” [2, p.9]. This was a progressive step, demonstrating a profound shift in the relationship between leadership bodies and the journalistic workforce. The relationship was no longer merely “directive-compliant” but had evolved into one of “dialogue-companionship.” A journalistic leader was not only a commander issuing orders but also a guide who oriented, encouraged, and supported the press in fulfilling its responsibilities.

Thus, the renovation of personnel work and the construction of a journalistic leadership culture not only reflected the development of the Ho Chi Minh City Party Committee’s leadership thinking but also embodied the maturation of the City’s entire political system in the field of ideological-cultural work. From a leadership mindset based on discipline and command, the Party Committee shifted toward one based on persuasion, engagement, and the encouragement of creativity. This shift laid a solid foundation for the City’s press to develop more vigorously in the following period—ensuring the Party’s political orientation while better meeting the people’s needs for information, feedback, and social oversight.

Table 1. The Shift in the Ho Chi Minh City Party Committee’s Journalistic Leadership Thinking (1982-1988)

Comparison Criteria	Directive 17/CT-TU (1982) (Administrative-subsidized model)	Resolution 04-NQ/TU (1988) (Orientation-dialogue-feedback model)
Essential nature / Function	Direct propaganda tool serving political stabilization and one-way ideological orientation.	Two-way voice: both “the Party’s sharp ideological weapon” and “the voice of the masses” (a bridge between the Party and the people).

Political-ideological orientation and journalistic content	Focused on consolidating political-ideological stability, “eliminating remnants of reactionary ideology,” and promoting role models through directive propaganda.	Expanded to socio-economic issues; encouraged the identification and promotion of new factors and constructive public criticism.
Leadership mechanism	Administrative directive leadership, tightly controlling content.	Leadership based on orientation, dialogue, and feedback; coordination mechanism among the Party, the State, and the press; management through legal regulations and codes.
Requirements for journalistic personnel	Ensuring Party orientation, ideological steadfastness, and strict adherence to leadership. (Emphasis on political qualities alone.)	Harmonizing political qualities and professional competence; encouraging journalists to “confront and speak the truth.”
Leadership culture	A unilateral “directive-compliant” relationship based on discipline.	A “dialogue-companionship” relationship, requiring leaders to “respect and listen to the press, without imposing subjective views.”

(Source: Compiled from Directive 17/CT-TU (1982) and Resolution 04-NQ/TU (1988) of the Ho Chi Minh City Party Committee)

3. The Values of the Renovation in the Ho Chi Minh City Party Committee’s Leadership Thinking on Journalism

3.1. Creative Application and Development of Marxism-Leninism and Ho Chi Minh’s Thought on Revolutionary Journalism

The renovation of the Ho Chi Minh City Party Committee’s leadership thinking on journalism during 1982-1988 was, first and foremost, reflected in its creative application and development of the principles of Marxism-Leninism and Ho Chi Minh’s thought on revolutionary journalism, in a manner suited to the City’s distinctive context in the early *Đổi mới* period. According to V. I. Lenin, the revolutionary press “is not only a collective propagandist and collective agitator, but also a collective organizer” [13, p.12] of the Party. Likewise, President Ho Chi Minh affirmed that journalism is a battlefield, in which “journalistic workers are also revolutionary fighters. Their pen and paper are their sharp weapons” [14, p.466]. The consistent and innovative application of these ideas reflects the Party Committee’s maturation in political awareness, theoretical thinking, and leadership capacity in the field of ideological and cultural work during this challenging period of transition.

With the view that “the City’s press must be the voice of the Party and at the same time the voice of the masses, a bridge between the Party and the people” [2, p.6], and with the requirement to harmonize the relationships between democracy and discipline, between struggle and construction—where “struggle aims at the purpose of construction” [2, p.7]—the Party Committee demonstrated an important advancement in theoretical understanding. Here, journalism was defined as a “two-way voice,” performing not only propagandistic functions but also assuming the role of reflecting and overseeing social issues—an idea that Ho Chi Minh had long encouraged when he stated that journalists “should not write only the good and conceal the bad” [15, p.206], but must reveal shortcomings and negative phenomena to help the people and the Party make corrections.

While Directive No. 17 emphasized tasks of propaganda, education, and the protection of ideological foundations, Resolution No. 04 broadened the meaning of “the Party’s sharp ideological weapon” in a new spirit: journalism was no longer merely an instrument for disseminating the Party’s line, but also a medium for reflection, persuasion, and social connection. This shift indicates that the Ho Chi Minh City Party Committee creatively adopted Ho Chi Minh’s ideas on democracy in journalistic leadership, embodying the principle of “the people know, the people discuss, the people supervise” within the realm of ideological and communication work.

From a leadership model characterized by “administrative control,” the Party Committee gradually moved toward a model of “orientation, dialogue, and feedback,” treating journalism as a partner accompanying the Party in the process of building and refining political guidelines, rather than merely a one-dimensional propaganda tool.

3.2. A Political Foundation for the Development and Contributions of Ho Chi Minh City Journalism in the Đổi Mới Period

The development of journalistic leadership thinking within the Ho Chi Minh City Party Committee, as reflected in Resolution No. 04-NQ/TU, had profound practical significance, forming the political foundation for the strong growth of the City’s press during the *Đổi Mới* period. This was a time when journalism began to shift from a framework focused primarily on propaganda and education to one that reflected lived realities and engaged with pressing issues of social life. In general, before *Đổi Mới*, the press functioned mainly as a tool of the Party for disseminating its guidelines, orientations, and policies [6, p.386], with limited attention to multidimensional representation of social reality or social critique. As noted: “Most newspapers... fell into a bureaucratic mode of journalism, leaning more toward politics than economics and society, focusing more on propaganda than information, with content often characterized by voluntarism and one-directional imposition from the top down” [7, p.102]. *Sài Gòn Giải Phóng* (issue dated 31 August 1986) candidly acknowledged that: “for many years, due to being immersed in a bureaucratic administrative style of journalism—and for various other reasons—public criticism in the press has been neglected” [16].

It was in this context that the seeds of innovative thinking began to emerge, initially through articles that more frankly reflected socio-economic life and championed individuals who “dared to think and dared to act,” such as: “Struggling to abolish subsidies for the ideals and interests of youth” [17]; “Practical realities point to solutions to the Price–Wage–Money problem” [18]; “The decline of the old supply system through reduced food subsidies” [19]... Translating the orientations of the 6th National Party Congress (1986) into practice in the press sector, Resolution 04-NQ/TU of the Ho Chi Minh City Party Committee clearly defined the content, functions, and scope of journalistic activity under new conditions, helping to overcome the one-way, command-based, feedback-deficient model of the past.

By affirming that journalism “is the voice of the Party and at the same time the voice of the masses,” Resolution 04 expanded the operating space of the press, enabling journalistic agencies to exercise their role in truthfully reflecting realities, highlighting exemplary initiatives, and openly criticizing negative phenomena or weaknesses in social life. In doing so, journalism became not only a tool for communicating guidelines and policies but also an important channel enabling the Party and government to grasp the thoughts, aspirations, and reactions of the people.

The practical development of Ho Chi Minh City journalism in the late 1980s strongly affirmed this value. Newspapers such as *Tuổi Trẻ*, *Công Nhân Giải Phóng*, *Phụ Nữ TP.HCM*, and *Sài Gòn Giải Phóng* became vibrant social forums, serving as bridges between the Party, government, and various social strata. Meanwhile, the number of the City’s journalistic agencies expanded significantly—from 12 press organizations in 1982 [1, p.1] to 38 in 1995 [8, p.312]—alongside the emergence of numerous economic newspapers and magazines such as *Economic Development Review* (1990), *Saigon Times* (1991), and *Saigon Marketing* (1995).

This remarkable proliferation of the City’s press was a direct outcome of the Party Committee’s renovated leadership thinking.

3.3. Contributions to Refining the Party’s Theoretical Framework on the Content and Methods of Press Leadership in the Đổi Mới Period

The development of press-leadership thinking within the Ho Chi Minh City Party Committee during 1982-1988—crystallized in Resolution No. 04-NQ/TU—not only reflected the creative application of Marxism-Leninism, Hồ Chí Minh’s thought, and the Party’s *Đổi Mới* policy in the field of ideology and culture, but also offered valuable practical lessons for improving the Party’s methods of press leadership during the *Đổi Mới* period. A notable contribution of the Resolution lies in its expanded conceptualization of “press leadership,” which no longer focused solely on political-ideological orientation, cadre work, and press system planning. Instead, it also emphasized the role of the Ho Chi Minh City Journalists’ Association, recognizing it as a political-professional organization responsible for

professional training, knowledge enhancement, combating negative phenomena within the press community, and proposing policies and benefits for journalists. This recognition marked a significant shift in leadership thinking, as the Party Committee sought to promote the press sector's autonomy and social responsibility rather than governing it solely through administrative commands.

Furthermore, Resolution 04 underscored the importance of inspection, supervision, and self-regulation within journalistic activities. It instructed press agencies to “rebuild working regulations regarding public criticism and the fight against negative phenomena in the press,” while emphasizing that authors of critical articles “must investigate and verify carefully; select cases that have educational value and contribute to constructive struggle; and consider the consequences, consulting inspection, audit, prosecutorial agencies or relevant authorities before publication” [2, p.6]. These requirements demonstrate a more refined and balanced leadership mindset—one that harmonizes freedom with discipline, and combines critical vigilance with constructive engagement.

From a theoretical standpoint, the experience of the Ho Chi Minh City Party Committee can be viewed as an important practical foundation that informed the Central Committee's more comprehensive understanding of press-leadership methods in the *Đổi mới* era. Although it was not until 25 July 1990 that the Secretariat issued Directive No. 63-CT/TW on strengthening the Party's leadership over journalism and publishing—the first Party document explicitly delineating the content and methods of press leadership [20, p.24]—it is undeniable that Resolution 04-NQ/TU served as a vivid example of adaptive, self-correcting, and innovative leadership thinking at the local level.

In this sense, Resolution 04-NQ/TU and the City's effective journalistic practices during the early *Đổi mới* years may be considered an important contribution—one that provides profound insights into the ongoing process of refining the Party's leadership methods and the State's management of journalism in the *Đổi mới* period.

CONCLUSION

The development of press-leadership thinking within the Ho Chi Minh City Party Committee during 1982-1988 was the outcome of a continuous process of reflection and adaptation to the profound transformations occurring in the country as it moved toward the *Đổi mới* reform era. From Directive No. 17/CT-TU (1982) to Resolution No. 04-NQ/TU (1988), the Party Committee gradually shifted from an administrative-subsidy model of press leadership to one based on orientation, dialogue, and feedback—demonstrating a maturation in both theoretical understanding and leadership methodology in the field of ideology and culture.

While Directive 17/CT-TU focused primarily on strengthening the ideological front, Resolution 04-NQ/TU marked a transition to a more dynamic leadership model that emphasized guidance and social feedback, recognizing the press as both the voice of the Party and the voice of the people. Taken together, these two documents illuminate the gradual formation and refinement of a press-leadership model in Ho Chi Minh City: leadership through political direction; coordination among Party organizations, state management bodies, and press agencies; and a combination of inspection and supervision with dialogue and responsiveness. Notably, the Party Committee's emphasis on the role of the City Journalists' Association and its attention to mechanisms of self-regulation within press activities helped establish a more flexible and effective leadership model—one that not only safeguarded ideological orientation but also encouraged initiative, creativity, and social responsibility among journalists.

These innovations were significant not only for Ho Chi Minh City but also provided important reference points for the Party's press-leadership practices nationwide. The City's practical experiences enriched the theoretical framework on press leadership during the *Đổi mới* period and were later reflected in subsequent Central Committee documents.

In retrospect, the development of the Ho Chi Minh City Party Committee's press-leadership thinking—embodied in Directive 17/CT-TU (1982) and Resolution 04-NQ/TU (1988)—reflects not only the dynamism of one of the country's most important Party organizations but also the broader capacity of the Communist Party of Vietnam to self-adjust and innovate in new conditions. This evolution stands as a vivid testament to the Party's spirit of renewing its thinking.

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