

LÊ DUẨN

**ROLE OF THE VIETNAMESE
WORKING CLASS AND TASKS
OF THE TRADE-UNIONS
AT THE PRESENT STAGE**

HANOI — 1969

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

At the enlarged session of the Central Committee of the Viet Nam Federation of Trade-Unions on December 28, 1966, comrade Le Duan, First Secretary of the Viet Nam Workers' Party Central Committee, delivered a speech on questions concerning the role of the Vietnamese working class and the tasks of our trade-unions at the present stage of the revolution.

This is the full translation of comrade Le Duan's speech.

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Dear comrades,

I am going to tell you some of my views on the Vietnamese working class and on trade-union work. This is an important subject related to theoretical knowledge, ideology, revolutionary feelings and various aspects of the work of male and female workers and trade-union cadres. As this is an extensive subject, I will deal only with a number of general matters, basing myself on the queries you have raised during the meeting.

I

ROLE OF THE WORKING CLASS IN THE VIETNAMESE REVOLUTION

At present the Vietnamese working class is shouldering a tremendous task toward the history of its country, toward their nation and the international workers' movement as well. For over ten years, through its own Party, it has been leading the socialist revolution and socialist construction in North Viet Nam. Since the American imperialists started the war of aggression in the South and the war of destruction in the North, it has been conducting our people's resistance against the invaders to defend the North, liberate the South and ultimately reunify the country, thus contributing to the safeguard of peace in Southeast Asia and the world.

This great historic mission requires that every Vietnamese worker thoroughly realize the historic role of his own class toward the revolutionary cause of his people and the development of world revolution. Without such a realization, though a

worker, he lacks revolutionary consciousness, and though a Party member, he is not yet a true communist.

We often speak of socialism and of the working class, but it is not so easy to thoroughly understand what is meant by working class and why the working class has the historic mission of transforming the old world and building a new one.

To have an accurate and scientific conception of these problems, we must possess a historical materialist standpoint and start from the economic basis of society, that is, from the productive forces, the relation of ownership of the means of production, and the mode of distribution of what is produced. Classes appear then disappear and so does class struggle; they all are linked to the existence and transformation of given economic bases.

Engels said: "The materialist conception of history starts from the proposition that the production of the means to support human life and, next to production, the exchange of things produced, is the basis of all social structure; that in every society that has appeared in history, the manner in which wealth is distributed and society divided into classes or orders is dependent upon what is produced, how it is produced, and how the products are exchanged. From this point of view the final causes of all social changes and political revolutions are to be sought, not in man's brains, not in man's better insight into eternal truth and justice, but

in changes of the modes of production and exchange. They are to be sought, not in the *philosophy*, but in the *economics* of each particular epoch." *

It is from an analysis of the capitalist economy that Marx studied the emergence, the growth and the inevitable liquidation of capitalism; it is also from this analysis that he drew the conclusion that the working class would be the grave-digger of capitalism and the organizer of a new society — the civilized communist society.

With the birth of large-scale industry the productive forces develop by leaps and bounds. Under the capitalist system, while these productive forces become more and more socialized the relations of production keep their capitalist, private character.

Inherent in capitalism, this fundamental contradiction — the source of all evils — takes on the form of an antagonistic contradiction between the working class and the bourgeoisie. To eliminate it and build the socialist society based on the collective ownership of the means of production is an urgent need, the satisfaction of which impels society forward.

Born of the capitalist society which is closely linked to the production of large-scale industry, and being itself the product of large-scale industry, the working class represents the new, socialized

* Engels, *Anti-Dühring*, 3rd Ed., F.L.P.H. Moscow, 1962, II, Theoretical, p. 365.

productive forces, and, consequently, forms the most advanced class capable of transforming the world and organizing the new social system, man's future society—the communist society.

As the working class is devoid of means of production, and exploited and impoverished by the bourgeoisie, it constitutes the most thoroughly revolutionary class able to overthrow the capitalist regime, liquidate the system of private ownership of the means of production, make the relations of production accord with the productive forces, and create a new socialist mode of production, thus making it possible for social production to develop unceasingly. Under capitalism, as large-scale industry progresses the working class grows steadily stronger whereas all the other social classes decline. Being intermediate classes the latter have not a thoroughly revolutionary attitude toward the liquidation of private ownership of the means of production. "Of all the classes that stand face to face with the bourgeoisie today, the proletariat alone is a really revolutionary class." *

We must not simplistically view the working class as the class of poor people, of have-nots, or of "proletarians" in the literal meaning of this word. Under the capitalist system, it must sell its labour power to the bourgeoisie which bleeds it white, and live a wretched life, and for this reason regards the latter as its enemy. However, it is not poverty

* Marx and Engels, *Selected Works*, F.L.P.H. Moscow, 1958, Vol. I, p. 43.