



# VIETNAM COMMENTARY

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## *Perestroika and The Communist Party of Vietnam (1986 - 1990)*

### *The Debate Inside Part I*

#### *The Conservative's Position: "Maintaining the Purity of Marxism - Leninism"*

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## Introduction

Since Mikhail Gorbachev proclaimed *perestroika* in November 1985, many spectacular, astounding, and momentous events have taken place. The most spectacular and astounding of those events took place first in Eastern Europe, then in the Soviet Union itself. Foremost among them were the fall of East Germany's ruler Erich Honecker in October and the pulling down of the Berlin Wall in November 1989, followed in quick succession by the collapse of the communist regimes in the Eastern European countries while the Soviet Union simply looked on.

Bigger changes occurred in the Soviet Union itself. Gorbachev decided to put an end to confrontation, and to adopt a policy not only of conciliation, but even of close cooperation with the West. In early December, at his historic meeting with U.S. President Bush, he proclaimed the end of the cold war and the Soviet Union's willingness to join the United States and other nations in building a democratic and humanistic world.

Gorbachev's deeds were as good as his words. In quick succession, he forced the Soviet Communist Party (CPSU) to accept the abolition of article 6 of the Soviet Constitution, thereby abandoning its monopoly of power and admitting political pluralism; then he had real power transferred from the Party to the Supreme Soviet by the creation of the powerful position of President of the Soviet Union, to which he had himself elected. Armed with his new powers, he set about to turn the Soviet economy into a free market economy and progressively into a capitalist economy. He introduced a number of measures which moved the Soviet Union farther and farther away from socialism: ownership of land by farmers, the progressive reintroduction of private property, a free or freer press, freedom of religion, freedom to question the validity of Leninism and not to celebrate Lenin's birthday, and drastic reduction, or termination, of aid to the "brother" socialist countries. More non-socialist measures are expected. Meantime, Gorbachev felt no embarrassment in admitting frankly the dismal failure of socialism and in seeking aid from the capitalist states, including the United States, to help his country out of its economic predicament.

Moving the Soviet Union away from socialism naturally led to division of the CPSU, between those who, either for sentimental or selfish reasons, wished to cling to the status quo, and those who, more enlightened and or concerned about the fate of Russia and of the Russian people than that of the Party, favoured reforms, drastic ones if necessary: the classical division between conservatives and reformists, or at the extremes, between reactionaries and revolutionaries. This division naturally had its repercussions on "brother" states or parties.

Since the Soviet Union was the acknowledged leader

and model for other communist states, when it changed course, these states were expected to follow suit. This was the case of all East European communist states, which had no alternative because of their too great proximity to the Soviet Union and their too great dependence on it. Those which were far removed from the Soviet Union and apparently had an alternative source of support enjoyed some freedom of choice. This was the case of Vietnam.

However, for the Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV), which had always taken great pride in declaring its unconditional fidelity to "pure Marxism-Leninism" - with full acceptance of Leninism, proletarian internationalism and Moscow's undisputed leadership of the international communist movement - the choice was difficult. Indeed, it was agonising because the various objectives listed above were mutually contradictory.

A division within the Party - between conservatives and reformists - was therefore inevitable. Indeed, the reformists have been challenging the conservatives more and more forcefully, boldly and openly. So far, the latter have been able to hold on to power, but how long will they be able to do so? And what arguments have they put forward to justify their continued right to rule and what arguments have their adversaries invoked to demand that they change course drastically or step down? In any event, the paradox is that the rule of "collective leadership" within the Politburo - which is under the control of the conservatives - has forced some reputed reformists to publicly adopt the majority stand of Marxist-Leninist orthodoxy.

The debate which has been going on inside the CPV is very interesting, for its own sake, as well as for clarifying the issues besetting Vietnam currently, and for anticipating future developments there. It is therefore necessary for those interested in Vietnam to have access to this debate.

Vietnam Commentary will offer the reader such an opportunity by reproducing some of the key texts containing the views of the two sides. In the present issue it will give large extracts of some of the major statements of the leaders of the conservative faction of the CPV. In the next issue, it will present the views of the reformist faction.

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## I. THE CPSU'S XXVII CONGRESS AND VIETNAMESE RENOVATION

*In the past four years, the Vietnamese communist leaders and commentators have constantly referred to the resolutions of the VI National Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV) as representing the correct line which was binding on all Party members as well as the whole population. This line is to remain in force until the next CPV National Congress in 1991. A close examination of the circumstances leading to the adoption of these resolutions is therefore appropriate.*

*Not unexpectedly, such an examination would lead us straight to the XXVII Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) in February-March 1986. The VI Congress of the CPV was held later in the year, in December 1986, after the CPSU Congress, and the line adopted by it echoed the line of the CPSU. Indeed, the Political Report of the CPV Politburo to the Congress, read by Truong Chinh, who as acting secretary general after the death of Le Duan in July had led a CPV delegation to Moscow in November and had held discussion with Gorbachev and other Soviet leaders, made this connection very clear.*

\* (Author's Comments are in italics)

### Sixth National Congress of the CPV Political Report of the Central Committee (December 1986)

*(Extracts from Tap Chi Cong San (Communist Review), special issue, 1-1987, pp. 30 and ff, pp. 63 and ff, and p.118)*

In the coming years our revolution will continue to develop in an international context marked by many changes.

The various revolutionary forces are on the rise and continue to progress vigorously; they clearly hold the initiative and the offensive. From all points of view, the socialist system, with the Soviet Union as its pillar, is being increasingly strengthened. The XXVII Congress of the CPSU has opened up a new era, which is a turning point, the era of active development of every sphere of social life in the Soviet Union. With the strategy of accelerating socio-economic development, the Soviet economy is vigorously moving in the direction of development in depth to achieve big objectives in the remaining years of the XX century.

The socialist system is moving into the era of new development with new quality. The achievements of the socialist community in every aspect, their combined strength in the political, economic, scientific,

technological, cultural and defense fields is the factor which will ensure the victory of socialism in the struggle between two socio-political opposing systems in the world.....

One striking characteristic of our epoch is the unfolding of a very strong scientific-technological revolution. This revolution has led to a big leap of the productive forces and the acceleration of the process of internationalisation of these forces. This revolution has rendered more acute the contradictions of our epoch. The world is witnessing the emergence of a market in which two opposing economic systems are fighting each other ferociously; on the other hand, economic cooperation is a necessity for both economic systems.

The economic struggle is assuming an increasingly important political significance for the outcome of the struggle between the two systems. The socialist countries are developing the pre-eminence of the new system, are using with greater effectiveness the achievements of science and technology, are modifying their economic and their managerial structures through a vast reform having a profound revolutionary character. There is no doubt that they will generate huge changes in a not too distant future.....

Reinforcing solidarity and total cooperation with the Soviet Union is the foundation stone of the foreign policy of our State and our Party. The Soviet Union - the fatherland of the great Lenin, the home of the October Revolution - of which we shall celebrate the 70th anniversary this year, is the shining symbol of the might and the pre-eminence of socialism. Once more, our Party expresses its full support for the domestic and foreign policies adopted by the XXVII Congress of the CPSU; we fully support the new platform (new version) of the CPSU, which we consider as a model of the creative application of Marxism-Leninism. On the basis of the Vietnamese-Soviet Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation, we shall fight with all our strength, raising the quality and the effectiveness of our cooperation for the mutual benefit of the two countries. At the same time, we shall intensify our coordination with the Soviet Union and with the other brother socialist countries in the struggle for peace and for the world revolution, above all, in the Asia-Pacific area. The high level meetings between the comrade leaders of the Parties and the States of Vietnam and of the Soviet Union, and recently between Comrade secretary general Truong Chinh and Comrade secretary general M.X. Gorbachev, have concretised the very strong unity of minds between the two Parties and the two States. They marked the constant strengthening of the

brotherly solidarity and the full cooperation between our country and the Soviet Union.

*How much the Gorbachev line had influenced the CPV line? This was revealed by Nguyen Van Linh in a speech on 27 November 1987 to the V National Congress of the Ho Chi Minh Youth. It is thus not surprising that Nguyen Van Linh who, for a time, seemed to be strongly in favor of reform " la Gorbachev", was called "the Vietnamese Gorbachev".*

### **Nguyen Van Linh's Eulogy of Soviet Perestroika**

*(Extract, from Nguyen Van Linh: Doi Moi De Tien Len (Renovating in Order to Move Forward), Hanoi, Nha Xuat Ban Su That, 1987, pp.205 ff)*

The October Revolution is the best possible model of renovation of thinking and of creativeness.....

The XXVII Congress of the CPSU has continued and has raised high the spirit of renovation and creativeness of Lenin and of the October Revolution. On the basis of the present objective domestic and international situations, it has put forward new viewpoints, creatively developed Marxism-Leninism in all the most important fields, shedding light on the road upwards of our epoch and of socialism. This has helped obtain a deeper understanding of our epoch, of the present and future road of socialism and of its objective laws.

The XXVII Congress and the Central Committee meetings of the CPSU of January and June 1987 have raised to a new high the renovation of theory. The CPSU has seriously criticised scholasticism, the disease in the earlier theoretical study, a disease responsible for theory lagging behind real life. The CPSU considers the lagging behind of theory as the deep cause of the difficulties, delays and other phenomena alien to socialism in the Soviet economy and the Soviet society in the past.

The reforms started by the XXVII Congress of the CPSU are not only the decisive factor for the qualitative development which has begun in the Soviet society, but it has also a deep contemporary significance. The reform under way in the Soviet Union is a total and thorough revolution. Considering its thick mass and its manifoldness, the experience which could be drawn from the reality of renovation in the Soviet Union, in various degrees, has surely a theoretical and practical value for world socialism. The reforms occurring in the Soviet Union, in view of their nature and their scale, are in fact a completely new undertaking which has a big influence and a deep impact on the process of the world revolution.

The truly revolutionary nature of the program aiming at enabling the Soviet society to reach a new state materially will have an impact on the world situation and on the solution of the basic contradictions of our epoch. This will exert an influence one way or another on the situation of every country.

The extremely deep renovation of thinking of the CPSU is manifest in the enrichment of Lenin's views on our epoch and its problems, on the cause and effect, the mutual and dependent character of the factors constituting the content of our epoch. This is the starting point for moving according to the laws of the various forces. The CPSU has analysed in a completely new way from the class viewpoint and on a scientific basis the various contradictions of the world, as well as the directions in which to resolve these contradictions; in the same way it has analysed the historical role of socialism, its achievements and its pre-eminence, its potentialities and its prospects; international relations and the realist capacity for averting the danger of nuclear war which is threatening mankind.

The explanation is that the world today has entered a new stage. The physical leap of the hurricane-like progress of science and technology and of the productive forces has generated colossal possibilities for man in building or in destroying society. The CPSU was the first to have uncovered this harsh truth. Moreover, politically, the world today is complex, many-faced, in a state of flux, full of opposing tendencies and contradictions. This is a world of very complicated choices.

The above mentioned characteristics of the international situation require that man also looks at them in a new way. In this also, for the first time in history, it was the party of Lenin that had put forward a way of approaching the problem of war and peace. This foreign policy approach had realist and theoretical foundations based on the aspirations of billions of people. For this reason, this platform has received the widest support, and has been the most heartily accepted. The prestiges of the Soviet Union and of socialism are rising ceaselessly with the raised banner of Peace.

With the great encouragement of the XXVII Congress and of the CPSU, the VI National Congress of the CPV raises high the spirit of renovation, applies the spirit of criticism of Marxism-Leninism to look straight at the truth, correctly assess the truth, speak the plain truth, to analyse in depth the multiple-faced situation of the country, to draw experience from the successes and failures contained in the big lessons, to define clearly the tasks of the transition period as well as the tasks and the objectives of the remaining



years of the transition period.....The experience of the Soviet Union shows that, in order to renovate thinking and society, we must first renovate our thinking process in matters of theory.

One very important point deserves noting. There were obvious divergences between the positions of Gorbachev and of the CPV following the momentous developments in Eastern Europe in the Autumn and Winter of 1989-1990. For these divergences, two explanations are possible: either Gorbachev did not see the full effects which glasnost and perestroika would unleash when he talked to the CPV leaders in Moscow in November 1986 (when he met with Truong Chinh), and in May 1987 (when he met with Nguyen Van Linh), or the CPV leaders had completely misread him.

Concerning the first explanation, it is not possible to state with certainty at present whether, as early as November 1985, Gorbachev had already foreseen and planned the momentous changes in Eastern Europe in late 1989 and early this year. The evidence seems to point in the opposite direction. In his famous perestroika speech in November 1985, for example, Gorbachev clearly stressed that his policy was in line with Leninism. He even invoked the defunct Third International (which had been disbanded by Stalin in 1943). So, one should not be surprised that the CPV took him seriously and adopted an orthodox leninist position.

Thus, although the Political Report read by Truong Chinh stated that the line of the VI Congress was one of "looking straight at the truth, correctly assessing the truth, and speaking the plain truth" and characterised the Congress as one of "renovation", it clearly considered renovation as a tactical move, in pure leninist traditions, the search for a new and more effective form of action to save the party and carry out successfully the socialist transformation of Vietnam, and not a deviation from socialism. The Political Report made this clear when it stressed:

The VI Congress must mark a significant turning point in the increase of the strength of the Party, raising the prestige of the Party in the eyes of the masses, and ensuring that the Party will vigorously move forward and fulfill new tasks. Our Party must become a strong and solid party in the socialist revolution." .....

The Congress affirmed: the whole Party and the whole people are united in the determination to do everything morally and materially in order to achieve the two strategic objectives of successfully building socialism and protecting the Vietnamese Socialist Fatherland, and at the same time, to take an active part in the struggle of the peoples of the world for peace, national independence and socialism.....

With regard to the building of socialism, the

Congress decided: the overall task, the general objective in the remaining years of the first stage is the stabilisation at all costs of every aspect of the socio-economic situation, the building of the preconditions for the vigorous socialist industrialisation in the next stage.

Clarifications of the general line of the VI Congress were given by the CPV leaders and especially in the resolutions of the Central Committee in the various plenums following the Congress.

## II. THE SIXTH NATIONAL CONGRESS AND ITS SEQUELS

### Nguyen Van Linh on the VI Congress: Priority to the Building of Socialism

(Extract from article "Dai hoi lan thu VI Dang Cong San Viet nam - Buoc doi moi quan trong" (The VI Congress of the CPV - An important step in renovation), for Nhung van de hoa binh va chu nghia xa hoi (The problems of peace and socialism), May 1987, in Nguyen Van Linh: Doi Moi De Tien Len (Renovating For Moving Forward), Hanoi, Nha Xuat Ban Su That, 1988, pp.15-16 and 23-25)

To assess the situation in the past five years and the present real situation, the VI Congress of the CPV has pointed out clearly the necessity to "look straight at the truth, correctly assess the truth, speak the plain truth"... On the basis of the analysis of the domestic and national situations, the VI Congress of the CPV affirmed: The Vietnamese revolution continues to seek to achieve the two strategic objectives of completing successfully the building of socialism and protecting securely the Vietnamese socialist Fatherland. The task of building socialism is given priority. We must struggle hard to achieve the general objectives in the remaining years of the first stage, i.e., the stabilisation of all aspects of the socio-economic situation, continuing to build the preliminary necessary conditions for vigorous socialist industrialisation in the next stage..... The VI Congress of the CPV paid special attention to the building of the Party to raise it to the real level of a party in power having the heavy responsibility of leading the people in the achievement of the two strategic objectives. The Party must renovate in many aspects: renovate its thinking, above all its economic thinking, renovate its style of leadership in its work. The Congress stressed that the Party must have a firm grasp of the revolutionary and scientific nature of Marxism-Leninism, continue the precious revolutionary legacy of President Ho Chi Minh and other leaders of the

Party, draw from the theoretical achievements and the rich new experience of the brother parties, and from the scientific knowledge of our epoch. We must resolutely and vigorously pursue the work of theoretical research, synthesise systematically the work of building socialism and protecting the Fatherland, draw correct conclusions, and overcome erroneous or outdated viewpoints.....

The Congress also stressed that the Party must give careful attention to the preservation of solidarity in the leading organs of the Party and to the strengthening of unity in the whole Party. This solidarity and unity must be achieved by the application of the bolshevik principle of criticism and self-criticism. On this basis, we must preserve the solidarity and unity of mind inside the Party like the pupils of our own eyes.

However, in spite of those exhortations, there were deep divisions inside the Central Committee beginning with the Second Plenum, as reflected in Nguyen Van Linh's speech to the Ho Chi Minh Executive Committee following the Second Plenum.

### The Second Plenum

#### Nguyen Van Linh on Division in the Party

(Extract from Nguyen Van Linh's speech to the meeting of the Executive Committee of the Ho Chi Minh Party Committee on 4 April 1987; in Nguyen Van Linh: *Doi Moi De Tien Len*, op. cit., pp.79-80)

The Central Committee has just held its Second Plenum. At this meeting, there was confrontation between two tendencies: one in favor of reform and complete switching to the mechanism of cost accounting and socialist enterprise, and one advocating a return to the outdated mechanism of bureaucracy and subsidies.

Although the mechanism of bureaucratic management and subsidies is outdated and being condemned, there still is a number of cadres who, in their thoughts and in their daily actions, wish to return to the old mechanism, to cling to this mechanism because it has given them authority and benefits. So, in order to change the mechanism, we must change the personnel, and have new cadres.

To arrive at correct resolutions, we had to go through a process of very heated debates, of confrontation between divergent views, between the old and the new, between the correct and the incorrect. The debates were clearly not simple. But after arriving at the resolutions, the process of their implementation by the leadership was ten times, one hundred times

more difficult. We had to make the whole Party, the whole population understand correctly the contents of the resolutions.

### III. THE CONSERVATIVES PULL THE BRAKES ON REFORMS

#### No Breaking Away from Pure Marxism-Leninism

Until the Sixth Plenum, which was held on March 20-29, 1989, Nguyen Van Linh, "the Vietnamese Gorbachev", together with Vo Van Kiet, who was Deputy Prime Minister in charge of economic planning, seemed to ride the tide of reformism. The two men had made their mark as reformists in the South. They had taken a number of practical and unorthodox steps which loosened the Party's control over the economy, but brought visible improvements to the situation. But these successes did not bring them more influence. On the contrary. They had to count with a powerful conservative faction of the Party.

The occasion for this faction to pull the brake on reforms was the replacement of Pham Hung as Prime Minister in June 1988. Hung died in March, and in June the Central Committee elected Do Muoi instead of Vo Van Kiet as Hung's successor. From then on, the Party visibly hardened its position. This left no doubt concerning domination of the Party by the conservatives. The resolutions of the Sixth, Seventh, and Eight Plenums all contained tough language. Even "the Vietnamese Gorbachev" Nguyen Van Linh switched to talking very tough.

### The Sixth Plenum

#### Nguyen Van Linh says No to Pluralism

(Extract from speech at closing session of the Sixth Plenum, which was held from March 20 to March 29, 1989; in FBIS-EAS-89-061, 31 March 1989, and *Tap Chi Cong San*, 4-1989)

Regarding the renovation of the organisation and operational mode of the political and cadre work:

Comprehensive socio-economic renovation inevitably entails renovation in the organisation and operational mode of the political system along the line of continuing to broaden socialist democracy. This is an area in which we do not have much experience, but we must act with determination, caution, and careful preparation so as to preclude otherwise avoidable adverse consequences. We must enhance the Party's role of leadership, and at the same time, change the methods of leadership and respect the development role of the state. All attempts at weakening and nullifying the Party's leadership

and creating political counterweights to the Party in society must be checked.

A number of ill-intentioned people hold that the impediment to the process of renovation and democratisation in our Party is its leadership. They forget the fact that it is the Party itself which has initiated the policy of renovation and broadened democracy and is now actively promoting this process. We do not allow those who take advantage of democracy and openness to attack the Party and its leadership. It is necessary to clearly distinguish constructive criticisms from mud-slinging and instigating attempts aimed at lowering the prestige of the Party and the state.

To broaden democracy we must consolidate the state machinery organisationally, enhance the role of the National Assembly and of the elective organs at all levels, and fully develop the role of mass organisations. We advocate broadening of democracy and reaching a consensus through debate, but we do not tolerate pluralism; and conversely, Party leadership must be based on democratic methods.

#### **Resolutions of the Sixth Plenum: Renovation is Meant to Strengthen Dictatorship**

*(Extract; in FBIS-EAS-89-061, 31 March 1989)*

In the process of carrying out renovation, we must thoroughly understand the following basic principles:

Advancing to socialism is the inevitable path for our country, and this is a clear-sighted choice made by Uncle Ho and our Party. Building a socialist Vietnam is the goal and the ideal of our Party and people.

Renovation does not mean changing the goal of socialism, but instead, it means ensuring the effective realisation of that goal through the adoption of correct concepts of socialism and suitable forms, steps, and measures. Marxism-Leninism always serves as the ideological foundation of our Party and guides the entire revolutionary undertaking of our people. Renovation in thinking is designed to overcome erroneous concepts and to enrich the correct concepts about our epoch and about socialism for creative application and development, rather than to break away from the principles of Marxism-Leninism.

Renovating the organisation and operational mode of the political system is meant to strengthen the Party's role of leadership and the state's managerial efficacy and to develop the people's right to mastery - that is, to enhance the strength and efficiency of the dictatorship of the proletariat and

make the political organisations of the political system operate in a more dynamic and effective manner.

The Party's leadership is the factor deciding the success of our people's undertaking to build and defend the socialist Fatherland. We must criticise the tendencies which negate or belittle Party leadership, and at the same time we must attentively listen to and accept sincere views critical of the shortcomings in Party leadership and Party building.

Broadening democracy in all fields of social life and developing the people's right to mastery is both the goal and the driving force of building socialism. This is socialist democracy, not bourgeois democracy.

Democracy must go together with centralism, discipline, the sense of responsibility as citizens, and respect for the law. Democracy requires leadership, and leadership must be aimed at developing democracy in the right direction and through correct democratic methods.

Democracy is applied to the people, but strict punishment must be meted out to those who undermine the gains of the revolution, security, and social order.

It is necessary to combine patriotism with proletarian internationalism and socialist internationalism, and to combine the strength of the nation with the strength of our epoch under the new conditions.

*Following the Sixth Plenum Tap Chi Cong San, the Party's ideological review, in a lengthy comment, clarified the meaning of the resolutions adopted by that plenum, which it calls "one of the most important plenums since the VI Congress". It stressed that the aim of renovation was "to reinforce the dictatorship of the proletariat and raise its effectiveness".*

#### **Tap Chi Cong San on the Sixth Plenum: The Six Basic Principles**

*(Extract from "Xa luan: Tren nhung nguyen tac co ban ma doi moi manh me" (Commentary: On the basis of the fundamental principles push renovation vigorously), in Tap Chi Cong San, 4-1989)*

The Sixth Plenum of the Party's Central Committee is one of the most important plenums since the VI National Congress. A special feature which differentiates it from the previous plenums is that, this time, the Plenum has "concretised and further developed the views contained in the Resolutions of the VI Congress in a number of key areas, and what is of particular importance is that it has clearly laid down the basic principles which must govern the work of

renovation in our country. Those principles constitute the basis for unifying thought and action among the whole Party, the whole people, and the assurance that in renovation work there will be no deviation from socialism.

The fundamental principles are:

- 1 - Advancing to socialism is the inevitable road for our country, the enlightened choice by Uncle Ho and the Party. Building a socialist Vietnam is the aim, the ideal of our Party and our people. Renovation does not mean changing the aim of achieving socialism, but ensuring the effective achievement of that aim by the adoption of correct views about socialism, of appropriate forms, steps and measures.
- 2 - Marxism-Leninism is the unchanged foundation of our Party's thought; it governs the entire revolutionary work of our people. Renovation of thinking means overcoming incorrect viewpoints, enriching the correct views about our epoch, about socialism; it means creatively applying Marxist-Leninist principles, and not moving away from them.
- 3 - The aim of the renovation of the organisation and mode of work of the political system is the reinforcement of the leadership role of the Party, the effectiveness of management by the state, the development of the people's right of mastery; it means increasing the strength of the Party and the effectiveness of the dictatorship of the proletariat, extending the activities and effectiveness of the political organisations or systems.
- 4 - The leadership of the Party is the decisive condition ensuring success in our people's undertaking of building socialism and protecting the socialist fatherland. We must criticise the tendencies denying or belittling the leadership of the Party. At the same time, the Party must monitor and accept truthful criticisms directed at shortcomings in the Party's leadership and building of the Party.
- 5 - Broadening democracy in the various areas of social life and bringing into play the right of mastery of the people are both the aim and the motive force of the building of socialism. That is socialist democracy, not capitalist democracy. Democracy must go hand in hand with centralism, with discipline, with consciousness of a citizen's responsibilities and with the respect for the law. Democracy demands leadership. This leadership is indispensable for moving democracy in a correct direction and for

leading by democratic methods. We apply democracy to the people, but we must severely punish those who sabotage the achievements of the revolution, security and order, and social safety.

- 6 - Combine patriotism and proletarian internationalism and international socialism: combine the strength of the people with the strength of our epoch in the new conditions.

It is true that in order to give our renovation work solid theoretical foundations, our Party must present a clear model of socialism in Vietnam, it must state clearly its content and its stages, the forms these stages will take in the period of transition to socialism in our country. This is a very legitimate request, but this request can be satisfied only by a fully worked out political Platform. In execution of the decisions of the VI Congress, the Politburo is proceeding urgently with the construction of that Platform. But this plenum is an ordinary plenum. It cannot meet that request. However, the general ideas have been applied with practical results in the past two years of implementation of the resolutions of the VI Congress, and as a consequence, they have made possible the determining of the six fundamental principles serving as foundations for the next clear steps and tasks of the renovation work and put to rest the anxieties and the worries of many people concerning the progress of the work of building socialism in our country. In practice, that is also the most realist and most positive preparation for the political Platform of the Party.

The six fundamental principles mentioned above, together with the conclusions of the Sixth Plenum will make it easier for us to extend our work regarding correct thinking; they will enable us to put to rest the anxieties of a number of people who fear that renovation will lead to deviation from socialism, to rectify errors like the belief that at present our State is not quite a dictatorship of the proletariat....The determination of the above principles together with the conclusions of the Sixth Plenum will expose the maneuvers of the opportunistic elements who have used renovation as a cover for the pursuit of personal interests; they will disappoint the discontented elements, the opposition and reactionary forces which planned to exploit the existing difficulties, taking advantage of the broadening of democracy to direct their criticisms at the Party and at the leadership of the Party, rejecting socialism, engaging in propaganda for capitalism and other reactionary viewpoints.

In contrast to the revolution of the capitalist class, the proletarians' revolution really begins only after



the capture of power. That is the meaning of Lenin's permanent revolution. The state of the dictatorship of the proletariat is the state of the period of transition to socialism

#### IV. THE IMPACT OF EASTERN EUROPEAN EVENTS

*The firm belief in the superiority of socialism and its capacity for raising the socialist countries, and in particular, Vietnam, to constantly new heights was shattered in the autumn of 1989. Beginning with its defeat by the Polish Solidarity movement, communism was everywhere under pressure in Eastern Europe, and ended with the collapse of all communist regimes in the winter of 1989-1990.*

*The East European events naturally had a big impact on the Vietnamese communists. At first, the CPV leadership tried to present the collapse of communism in Poland as a temporary setback resulting from the American imperialists' manipulations. But when the East German communist government fell, followed by the breakdown of the Berlin Wall, the upheavals in Czechoslovakia, and then in the rest of Eastern Europe, the CPV leadership had to take a very hard look at the whole picture and reassess the strength and weaknesses of socialism and capitalism. The debate, starting in the autumn of 1989, has not yet ended. In fact, the Party is more shaken by divergent views than ever.*

##### **CPV reaction to Polish events: Plot of American imperialists**

*(Extract from Nhan Dan editorial: "Political events in Poland and our attitude", Hanoi Radio on August 26, 1989, as monitored by FBIS-EAS-89-165, 28 August 1989)*

The PZPR Central Committee held its 14th plenum on 19 August 1989. The plenum remarked that the situation in Poland has become tense and dangerous... At the plenum, many voices were raised to condemn the Solidarity trade unions for striving to seize power rather than seeking to salvage the national economy.

Thus, the real nature of the unfolding political events in Poland is that the Solidarity trade union - with the assistance of various imperialist forces, mainly U.S. imperialism - is staging a counterrevolutionary coup d'état in Poland. The struggle of the Polish revolutionaries under the PZPR is a just and decisive one for national sovereignty and socialism in Poland, and for the defense of the revolutionary

gains achieved by many generations of the Polish working class and laboring people. These gains are now facing great dangers.

The Vietnamese Communists, working class, and people of all strata, who have for a long time been attached to the genuine communists and revolutionaries of Poland by binding sentiments, are extremely indignant at, and strongly condemn, the actions of the reactionary forces opposing and sabotaging socialism in Poland. The anti-socialist reactionary forces in Poland, with the assistance of reactionary forces from outside, will certainly be opposed by the Polish working class and laboring people and condemned by the socialist forces and progressive people throughout the world.

We are confident that PZPR and the Polish working class, intellectuals, and manual laboring people - learning from their past lessons of experience - will smash the counter revolutionary coup d'état staged by hostile forces and firmly preserve their revolutionary gains.

*The Nhan Dan article reflected the position of the CPV leadership which had held its Seventh Plenum on August 15-24, 1989. The major concern of the CPV leaders was that people outside and inside the Party might be influenced by events in Poland and begin to dream of pluralism and other such "bourgeois" nonsense. In fact, in his speech at the closing session of the plenum, Nguyen Van Linh spoke of deviant ideological viewpoints among "a handful of cadres and Party members" The communique of the Plenum in fact revealed that the CPV leaders had considered "urgent ideological issues in face of the domestic and international situation at present". What these issues were was revealed by Nguyen Van Linh in his closing speech. It was a clear return to the "two camps" view of the world and the unrestrained hostility towards the United States which were characteristic of the worst cold war days of the 1950s.*

##### **Nguyen Van Linh and the Seventh Plenum: No Bourgeois Liberalisation, No Pluralism, No Opposition Parties**

*(Extract from speech at the closing session of the Seventh Plenum, 15-24 August 1989; FBIS-EAS-89-166, 29 August 1989, and Tap Chi Cong San, 9-1989)*

The Sixth Party Central Committee held its seventh plenum for the purpose of discussing and issuing resolutions on a number of pressing issues related to ideological work in the face of the current internal and international situations. This is a Central Committee meeting of very important significance

which will have a deep guiding effect on our Party's ideological work at this juncture as well as in the future. With acute political sensitivity, the seventh plenum of the Party Central Committee has promptly analysed the very insidious schemes and tricks of imperialism headed by U.S. imperialism against the world revolutionary movement.

Imperialism is escalating its attack on the struggle movement of the working class and laboring people in the capitalist countries, and against the movement for national liberation and defense of independence and sovereignty of the Third World countries. Especially, now more than ever before, the imperialists are concentrating the spearhead of their offensive against the socialist countries with frenzied acts and insidious tricks. They are rejoicing at what U.S. President Bush has been waiting for day and night: We are now living in the final period of an idea, at the final chapter of the communist experiment - Bush's statement on May 24, 1989. That is a daydream of the representatives of notorious anti-communism, our sworn enemy.

The Plenum noted that the abovesaid international situation, with different degrees of seriousness, is affecting Vietnam. Faced with the schemes of imperialism, in view of the negative influences of the wrong ideological tendencies in a number of socialist countries, and in view of our Party's renovation policy, the majority of our cadres and party members have still clearly shown a correct and firm ideological stance. This reflects the steadfast revolutionary tradition of our Party, a genuine Marxist-Leninist party built, educated and trained by Uncle Ho.

On the other hand, we also noted that, as a result of the aforementioned situation, there have appeared some deviant ideological viewpoints among a handful of cadres and party members. We cannot disregard these manifestations because they can spread. Moreover, there still exists in our society a breeding ground for these venoms. There has also been the impact of wrong ideological currents coming from outside. It is precisely for this reason that the seventh plenum of the Party Central Committee, with a serious and frank attitude, has discussed these problems and has arrived at important conclusions.

These conclusions are the basis for carrying out ideological work and organising political activities at all levels and in all sectors to create unanimity of views within the Party and among the people and to step up production and work so as to achieve the objective of stabilising the socio-economic situation.

Here I would like to raise some additional issues. These are not all the issues that the Plenum resolution has dealt with and that the Plenum has discussed.

But, in my opinion, these are the most fundamental and important issues.

1. For a long time in the past, when analysing the world situation, we unanimously noted that in the world there are two camps - the socialist camp and the capitalist camp - and four fundamental contradictions. These are: the contradiction between the socialist camp and the capitalist camp, the contradiction between the working class and laboring people and the bourgeoisie in capitalist countries, the contradiction between colonies and the national liberation movement and imperialism, and the contradiction among imperialist countries themselves.

However, for a long time after that, we have not talked about it any more. Is it true that these have become old-fashioned? No, absolutely not. In my opinion, this is our serious shortcoming, especially in ideological work. This, more or less, has led certain persons to mistakenly believe that the nature of imperialism has changed.

In fact, as long as imperialism exists and as long as the socialist revolution has not yet achieved victory on a world scale, the value of these Leninist theses remain intact...

The abovesaid contradictions clearly manifest the conditions of imperialism at the present stage - the dying stage - or more precisely, the stage to an unavoidable end. We should not assume that imperialism will end up in a simple, superficial death, but it is the death of a social and economic structure that could go on for centuries and would happen partially, step by step, while countries have already witnessed the victory of the Great October Socialist Revolution, the first socialist revolution in the world.

It is for this reason that the class struggle between socialism and capitalism to resolve the issue who will triumph over whom continues all over the world. It is for this reason that we need to further promote proletarian internationalism and socialist internationalism and join hands with other socialist forces, revolutionary forces, and progressive and peace-loving peoples worldwide in creating a combined strength to oppose the imperialist and reactionary forces...

2. It is our Party's and people's constant objective to successfully build socialism... There is but one choice for our people to make: advance toward socialism. This is the objective law of the era. As pointed out by the two international conferences of the communist and workers parties in 1957 and 1960, this period of transition from capitalism to socialism and then to communism on a global scale started with the October Revolution...

The capitalist path is definitely not our people's choice.... Under all circumstances, the communists and laboring people in our country must persist in their objectives to build socialism and definitely refuse to accept the path of capitalism.

3. To achieve the objectives of successfully building socialism, the Vietnamese revolution must be placed under the leadership of the Communist Party of Vietnam. This is the party that represents the will and interests of the working class and laboring people, which is armed with creative Marxism-Leninism and was founded and trained by Uncle Ho. It is not by coincidence that our Party monopolises the role of the leader of the revolution recognised by the absolute majority of our people. This is the task entrusted by history.

4. I would like to stress a few more points about the democracy issue, a subject which many comrades have shown concern for and talked about during the Plenum. We affirm that to successfully carry out renovation, we cannot fail to develop democracy in the fields of economy, culture, arts and letters, and so forth... But we must firmly grasp the fact that ours is a socialist democracy, that is democracy with leadership, and that leadership must rely on the full development of democracy.... Socialist democracy, by nature, as Lenin put it, is a million times better than bourgeois democracy because it is genuine democracy, democracy for laboring people, workers, peasants, intellectual laborers, and people of all strata.

On the other hand, we must apply dictatorship to the enemies of the people. We do not permit any acts of abusing democracy to serve the ill intentions of individuals or a group opposed to the socialist regime.

This plenum of the Party Central Committee has clearly shown a very high level of unanimity in not accepting bourgeois liberalisation, pluralism, political plurality, and multi-opposition parties aimed at denying Marxism-Leninism, socialism, and the Party's leadership. We cannot fail to see that this is a reactionary political scheme of the enemies of the class and the nation. We resolutely refuse to allow ourselves to be duped by the cunning scheme of the imperialists and reactionaries of all stripes.

#### **Communique of the Seventh Plenum (28 August 1989):**

#### **Believing more than ever in the inevitable triumph of socialism**

*(Extract; from Hanoi, VNA, 28 August 1989, as monitored by FBIS-EAS-89-166, 29 August 1989)*

The Communist Party of Vietnam Central Committee (Sixth Congress) held its seventh plenary session in Ho Chi Minh from August 15-24 to discuss and adopt a resolution on a number of urgent ideological issues in face of the domestic and international situation at present.....

The process of restructuration, reform and renovation are taking place in many countries, some of which are confronted with serious difficulties. In Vietnam, the process of renovation has brought about initial results, but the socio-economic situation is still very difficult. The complicated development in the world situation at present, the schemes and frenzied moves of imperialism against socialism, the restructuration and reform in some socialist countries, together with the socio-economic difficulties arising in the process of renovation at home, have ideologically affected party cadres and members and the people in general in our country.

The majority of our Party cadres and members and people have upheld the fine revolutionary traditions, shown a correct ideological stand and persisted in carrying out the policy of renovation charted by the Sixth Congress and the resolutions of the Central Committee and the Political Bureau. But in face of new complicated developments of the situation, a number of Party cadres and members have shown some deviations which, if not corrected in time, may lead to no small harm.....

While affirming the historic necessity of socialism and the great achievements obtained by the world socialist system, now more than ever we believe in the inevitable triumph of socialism. We have the responsibility to make active contributions to defending and developing socialist gains and consolidating solidarity among socialist countries and safeguarding the purity of Marxism-Leninism.

We must clearly realise the nature of capitalism, heighten our revolutionary vigilance and struggle against imperialism and international reaction. Imperialism is attacking the socialist countries through frenzied acts and wicked schemes. Continuing to uphold the banner of proletarian internationalism and socialist internationalism, our Party unites with the socialist, revolutionary, progressive and peace forces in the world in the struggle against imperialism, for peace, national independence, democracy and socialism.....

*The tough statements made at the Seventh Plenum of the CPV were followed by still tougher ones concerning the refusal of the Party leadership to depart from "the purity of Marxism-Leninism". The celebration of Independence Day was the occasion for Nguyen Van Linh to reaffirm the CPV leadership's belief that "the Vietnamese*

*revolution is now stronger than ever", and to stress the "irreversibility" of the world revolution and the revolutionary changes "on our planet", and the solidarity of the international socialist world - All these cocky statements were made only a few weeks before the collapse of the whole edifice ushered in by the events of Eastern Europe -. At the same time, Linh repeated the violent denunciations of American imperialism, barely three months before Gorbachev decided to bury the hatchet in Soviet-American relations at his historic meeting with U.S. President George Bush at Malta in early December.*

**Nguyen Van Linh on the Meaning of  
Democracy and Renovation:  
democracy means socialist, not bourgeois  
democracy; no liberalisation; no hastening of  
political renovation**

*(Extract from speech on occasion of National Day, 1 September 1989; Hanoi, VNA, 2 September 1989, as monitored by FBIS-EAS-89-173, 8 September 1989)*

We can affirm that the Vietnamese revolution is now stronger than ever before. The ideal of national independence and socialism is blazing our path and becoming the motive force strongly impelling our people's revolutionary cause forward.

Looking back at the glorious revolutionary path which our Party and people have trodden, we have all the practical grounds to reaffirm the following truths already enunciated by our great Ho Chi Minh.

First, in our time, national independence must be closely associated with socialism. Only socialism can firmly consolidate and bring into full play the gains of national independence, take the country step by step to prosperity and bring about a plentiful and happy life to the people.

Second, the success of the Vietnamese revolution today has resulted from the correct combination of the strength of the nation forged by thousands of years of indomitable struggle with the strength of the era.

Third, the leadership of the Communist Party of Vietnam is the decisive factor to ensure the success of our revolution. That truth has been vindicated by the history of the past nearly 60 years of the Vietnamese revolution. We have been able to accomplish that glorious mission because our Party is armed with Marxism-Leninism...

Moreover, socialism, like any other new social system, cannot progress along a straight line without a hitch and even errors in one place or another which result in big losses. For different reasons, a number of

socialist countries are meeting with great difficulties and even crises...

Restructuration, reform and renovation in the right direction will create a new driving force and rouse up all material and spiritual potentials for a vigorous advance of the socialist society. We firmly believe in the cause of restructuring and reform which has begun in a number of fraternal countries though many trials still lie ahead that need to be surmounted.

The trouble is that in the process there have appeared opposition forces of all colors which are misusing liberalisation and openness to "fish in troubled waters". Particularly, the imperialists, first of all the U.S. imperialists, availing themselves of the shortcomings and crises in a number of socialist countries, have launched frenzied attacks against socialism. They are on the one hand trying to advertise "the Free World", the "eternity" of capitalism and predict the collapse of socialism. On the other hand they have in the name of democracy, political pluralism and human rights, incited the opposition forces and intervened deeply in the internal affairs of a number of these countries in an attempt to make these countries deviate from the socialist path.....

We strongly reject the allegations by a few people about the absence of renovation in the political system and about limited democratisation. It is a fact that we are effecting renovation in the main areas of social life, planning each step carefully and always concentrating on central links.

It is not our policy to hasten renovation of the political system while preparations are still inadequate. Neither is it our intention to effect limitless democratisation. That would mean "liberalisation". Any adventurous step in this direction would certainly lead to political instability and would entail unforeseeable consequences on economic renovation and on renovation as a whole.

As far as democracy is concerned, certain voices have been heard in our country which maintain that as the economy is multi-sectoral there should be more than one party and pluralism in ideology. Such people fail to realise that our multi-sector economy in which the state sector plays the dominant role is designed to serve socialist construction. It should be made clear that the different forms of the private sector as they exist in this state of proletarian dictatorship are no longer what they used to be in the old regime. They are being utilised and transformed by the state in the direction of socialism.

Our people have fought a long time. We shall not allow any force to set up an opposition party to work against the people and against socialism.



The real or nominal character of democracy depends not on whether there is one party or many parties. The essential is what segment of the population and what class of society it serves. This is the abc's of Marxism-Leninism. Ours is socialist democracy, democracy to the working people, but dictatorship to all enemies of the people. As such, it is a million times better than bourgeois democracy, to use Lenin's words.

Of course, we do not mean to say that we have fully instituted socialist democracy in our country. Such a democracy does not come in a long time, for one reason or another, objective and subjective.....

There have appeared here and there some tendencies to extreme democracy or attempts to misuse democracy to realise individual ambitions thus damaging the interests of the Party and the whole society. Democracy does not mean that one is free to say what one wants to say, write what one wants to do, no matter what the consequences may be. These are essentially anarchist acts.

Yet, when our Party sets out to correct these deviations, some people claim that this is done to limit democracy, that "the door to democracy has been hurriedly shut down before it is opened wide enough", etc...

We should make it clear that democracy must always be associated with centralisation in accordance with the principle of democratic centralism, associated with discipline, order and socialist legality. These are two aspects of the same problem. Otherwise we shall never have real democracy.

Once again, we declare that we resolutely reject pluralism, a multiparty system or opposition parties.

## V. THE NEED TO TAKE A NEW LOOK AT CAPITALISM

**Capitalism is not in its Death Throes"  
but is going to last several hundred more years;  
Was Lenin mistranslated?**

Before the "broad political study movement" decided by the Seventh Plenum really got under way, a hurricane swept Vietnam with devastating ideological impact. It was clear as daylight that the system in serious trouble was socialism and not capitalism. By all counts, capitalism was thriving, and the Eastern European countries all resolutely discarded socialism and turned to capitalism. Even the Soviet Union, the birth place of the October Revolution and the citadel of socialism, was going the same way. Worst of all, it was turning to the capitalist states for help

to extricate itself from what it admitted were the disastrous results of 70 years of pursuit of socialism.

Following the fall of Erich Honecker in October 1989, barely one day after the return of Nguyen Van Linh to Hanoi from a visit to East Germany, which was considered by the CPV to be a model and solid communist regime, the whole Eastern European communist edifice crumbled like a house of cards. This produced obvious panic in the CPV, as evidenced by the appeal for calm by the CPV leaders, and in particular by the holding of a secret meeting lasting from November 25 to December 7 - which coincided with the historic Gorbachev-Bush summit at Malta.

The secret meeting was called in haste to assess the European events, and, in particular the causes of the weaknesses of socialism and of the strength of capitalism. That this was so was evident from the numerous speeches made by CPV leaders between November and the eighth plenum in the following March. Although these speeches were supposed to extol the virtues of socialism and maintain faith in the socialist system, they were in fact aimed at explaining why capitalism was not "in its death throes" as predicted by Lenin. Very evident from these speeches was the total ideological disorientation not only of the rank and file, but also of the high echelons of the Party. The debate which started then has intensified, and there is clear evidence that the Party is ideologically in total disarray and more divided than ever.

**Frank talk to the troops about Socialism and Capitalism: the Soviet Union and many socialist countries are in serious difficulties; capitalism has adapted itself to the new situation.**

*(Extract from editorial "Socialism: Historic inevitability and great achievements; Restructuration and renovation for more progress", in Tap Chi Quoc Phong Toan Dan (All People Defense Review), November 1989, in FBIS-EAS- 89-239, 14 December 1989)*

The 72nd Anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution is being commemorated against the background of a changing world. The Soviet Union and many other socialist countries are carrying out the process of restructuring, renovation, and reform. Despite their substantial successes in this process, a number of these countries are facing serious difficulties....

Socialism is facing a fierce challenge not only to its development but also to its survival in a certain region! There have been indications of deviation, vagueness, and vacillation in the path of socialism. This is due to the strong effect of bourgeois propaganda allegations on the process of seeking

"renovation" of socialism...

The proletariat, those nations formerly under oppression and exploitation, and the progressive people of the world over can take legitimate pride in the great achievements of the October Revolution, of the Soviet Union, and of socialism which have been achieved over the past nearly a century in the military, political, economic, cultural and social fields. Those nations which are struggling for independence, freedom, peace and democracy have had an increasing confidence in the superiority of socialism, in the inevitably victorious strength of the world's socialist system with its reliable bastion being the USSR.

Yet, the above fact is being questioned.

Is it because socialist countries are inferior to a number of developed capitalist countries in certain important fields: labor productivity, product quality, living standard, and the level of scientific and technical development?

Or is it because the process of carrying out renovation and reform, reviewing past activities, and correcting mistakes have developed errors, negating everything attained and smearing history?

Is it because one has moved from making one-sided applause for socialism and criticism against capitalism to a completely different position?....

We must frankly admit that the results achieved by contemporary capitalism show that it is trying to adapt itself to the new situation in the field of economic development, create an ever-higher monopoly in profit-making, exercise exploitation even more intensively while being able to improve the people's living standard, thanks to the appropriate readjustment and prompt application of the new discoveries of the current scientific- technological revolution. We must also frankly admit our weaknesses, mistakes, and subjective shortcomings.....

### **More talk to the troops on Capitalism and Socialism: it is wrong to say that capitalism is about to disintegrate**

*(Extract from "Renovation of the concept of socialism" by Senior Lieutenant General Dang Vu Hiep, Deputy-director of the General Political Department, at a scientific seminar for military schools and Army units in charge of teaching social science; Hanoi Radio, 14 November 1989, in FBIS-EAS-89-223, 21 November 1989)*

In the past, when talking about capitalism, we only saw that it was in the third stage of an endless general crisis. In foreign countries, some people even

contended that it had reached the fourth stage of the crisis, that is, it was about to disintegrate.

It is true that capitalism can in no way overcome its chronic crisis, but it is wrong to say that it is about to disintegrate, because if it were so, the revolutionary situation in the capitalist countries must have already emerged. Realities in recent decades still have not testified to this.

It is necessary to realise that capitalism now has many elements that are different from those during the beginning or even the middle of the XX century.... The first crisis of capitalism was closely linked to World War I and the Russian October Revolution.... The second crisis of capitalism was closely linked to World War II and the defeat of fascism.....

The third crisis of capitalism was closely linked to events in the 1960s - when the gross industrial product of the socialist community increased from 20 per cent to 40 per cent of the world's total, when the United States became bogged down in Vietnam, and when a series of newly independent countries decided to develop along the path of socialism - and the world oil crisis in 1974-75. This situation made people feel that a new wave of the world revolutionary movement was about to arise. Realities, however, proved that they were wrong.

Capitalism still faced crisis in the 1980-1982 cycle and financial crisis in 1987. However, it was able to overcome these crises and continued to develop. For instance, after its crisis in the 1974-75 period, capitalism again introduced a series of new techniques, new raw and other materials, computers, and so forth....

In the past, we only saw the negative impact that crises exerted on capitalism and failed to realise that due to its critical situation, capitalism had to seek ways to adapt itself to new circumstances through the application of new technologies and new management methods, or through the improvement of its capitalist production relations....

Why is it that capitalism has recovered its strength, or, to put it another way, why is it that capitalism has found a way out after repeated crises? Though we have come up with some rules, we still do not have a very clear idea about this situation.....

In the face of the development of modern capitalism, are Lenin's conclusions on the characteristics of imperialism still correct? The answer is Yes.....

Nonetheless, since the capitalist system is still capable of adapting itself to change in order to develop its productive forces, capitalism may still last longer than we might have expected.

It has long been said that imperialism is capitalism "in its death throes". "Death throes" is not the term Lenin used, but is a loose translation. Lenin used a Russian word meaning "dying" or "slowly dying". It is translated into French as "agonising". The agony of a man may last for a year or two, but the agony of the entire system of world capitalism may last even longer.

In fact, it is wrong to say that the entire system of world capitalism is now in its death throes. Therefore using the term "death throes" is inappropriate and very misleading. We assert the obvious inevitability of the historical extinction of capitalism, but an appropriate attitude at this time is that we should not make any firm predictions about the day of its death....

**Vo Chi Cong on coping with the world's general crisis since the 1970's: the socialist countries are facing acute difficulties; the capitalist countries have come out of the crisis.**

*(Extract from a speech to National Assembly head delegates by Vo Chi Cong, member of the Politburo and chairman of the Council of State, on 15 December 1989; Hanoi Radio, 19 December 1989, in FBIS-EAS-89-245, 22 December 1989)*

The socialist countries, whether they are carrying out reforms or not, are meeting with acute difficulties at different levels. Some are facing serious crises on all the economic, social and political planes. Swift and complicated developments are taking place in a number of countries where the communist parties' leading role has become the target of attack and is being neutralised by anti-social forces.

It should be realised that the crises in the socialist countries lie in the context of the general crisis of the world since the 1970s....

The imperialist and developed capitalist countries had no other alternative than vigorously promoting the scientific and technological revolution and restructuring their economic mechanism. Thanks to this, since 1982 they have gradually come out of the crisis.

Meanwhile, the socialist countries were slow to adapt to the situation and to correct their mistakes. Not until the late 1970's and mid-1980's did a few countries embark on restructuring. Many East European countries, however, did not conduct reforms, restructuring, or renovation. As a result, some are coping passively with crises that have flared up beyond their expectations.

We should continue to study the situation in the

socialist countries in order to make a correct evaluation in accordance with the renovation viewpoint....

The communist parties committed errors because of subjectivism and voluntarism...

Noteworthy is that the majority of the socialist countries have clearly seen their old mistake: namely, that socialist construction cannot follow a common and old-fashioned model. The important thing is for the communist parties in all countries to master the basic principles of Marxism-Leninism and to apply them to the concrete realities of their own in building socialism.

At present no new model has taken shape; so all the countries are still groping and experimenting on their own. Therefore, they may be right or wrong.

In fact, nobody can say that he has the truth in hand. Here lies the crisis in theory and ideology...

The crisis in some socialist countries is badly affecting the whole socialist system, including our own country, and the whole international communist and workers movement and the national liberation movement.

## **VI. HISTORY HAS DECIDED THAT THE PARTY MUST CONTINUE TO LEAD**

As the bad news from Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union accumulated, the CPV leadership could not keep silent, especially as the Vietnamese, including cadres and members of the Party and the Armed Forces, could listen freely to the BBC and the VOA on their individual transistor radios. And it was clear that the news from Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union had a devastating influence on the people and the Party. Ideological guidance was therefore needed. Thus the government propaganda organs had to provide the Party's version of "complicated" developments in East Germany (Hanoi radio, 16 December 1989), of "the challenges to socialism" including the Soviet Union, and give a satisfactory answer to the anguished question: "Does socialism still exist?" (Tap Chi Cong San of January 1990, in FBIS of 6 March 1990). The Hanoi propagandists stressed that the changes in Eastern Europe resulted "not only because of internal causes but also from non-violent, imperialist efforts" that the "checking and eliminating of socialism and the world revolutionary movement is the unchanged strategy and objective of U.S.-led imperialism". But, significantly, they also urged the cadres and population not to "vacillate" and not to "lose confidence", and to continue to believe in "the inevitable victory of socialism"; they admitted that "changes in socialist East European countries have much affected the feelings and thoughts of our cadres, party members, and people" (Quan Doi Nhan Dan - People's Armed Forces -

April 1990, quoted by Hanoi radio, 10 April 1990, in FBIS-EAS-90-074, 17 April 1990).

The response of the CPV leadership was to divert the attention of the cadres and the people to the traditional emotional anti-imperialism on the one hand, and to use the need to fight imperialism to justify the maintenance of its monopoly of power and the rejection of all suggestions for political pluralism and acceptance of opposition political parties. Parallely, it believed that the real cause of the crisis of socialism was not the defects in the system but the lack of firm grasp of Marxism-Leninism, and the solution lay in holding firm to the line defined by the Seventh Plenum, i.e., intensification of ideological indoctrination, as is clear from the resolution of the Eighth Plenum.

**Nguyen Van Linh on the role of the Party:  
a mission entrusted by history only to the CPV;  
the only appropriate policy at present is that of the  
CPV; no objective need for opposition political parties**

(Extract from a speech on the anniversary of the foundation of the Party, 2 February 1990, in *Nhan Dan*, 3 February 1990)

The reality of the Vietnamese revolution of the past 60 years has proved the following truth: the leadership of the Party over the society is an objective necessity. It is not by accident that history has entrusted the Communist Party of Vietnam with that mission....in contrast to the situation prevailing in the world, one of the striking characteristics of the Vietnamese revolution is that, since its inception, the Communist Party of Vietnam has been the unique leader of the revolution. That was not and could not be the subjective imposition of the will of the Party in regard to history. On the contrary, that is the mission entrusted by history through a strict selection. Our people, through a bloody experience, has had the opportunity to compare the platforms of the various parties and movements, and to make their final choice of "to whom to entrust their gold": they have recognised our party as their rightful and unique vanguard.

That is because, as President Ho Chi Minh has said: "Besides the interests of the working class and the laboring people, our Party has no other interest." That Party is the party of the people, from the people, leaning on the people, and for the people. As a result, the Party has been able to develop the great force of the people and achieve great feats.

Only our Party, the most organised vanguard of the working class and the laboring people, armed with Marxism-Leninism, the scientific and revolu-

tionary theory of our epoch, was capable of leading the people and completing the national democratic revolution to advance all the way, step by step, to socialism. In Vietnam, apart from the Communist Party, no other party of any class or section of society was capable of playing that role. Historically that was so, that is so, and that will always be so.

In the present situation of Vietnam today, as in the future, there is no objective need for creating opposition political parties. The Party always strives to renovate itself and to renovate its leadership in order to be certain to fulfill its role of political vanguard of society.

At present, apart from the policy advocated by the Party, is there any other policy that is in conformity with the tide of development and with the wishes of the population?

**Eighth Plenum Communiqué: firmly grasp Marxism-Leninism; maintain political stability**

(Extract, Eighth Plenum (March 12-27) Communiqué, 28 March, 1990; in FBIS-EAS-90-060, 28 March 1990)

With respect to the current international situation, the plenum realised that many socialist countries face a comprehensive and very serious crisis. This crisis is having a negative effect on the world revolutionary movement.

The imperialist and reactionary forces are thoroughly exploiting the difficulties of socialist countries in order to intensify their intervention and sabotage and to carry out peaceful developments with the aim of wiping out socialist countries.

In general, socialism is in a difficult stage of crucial ordeals. A fierce struggle to protect and develop socialism is taking place.

However, we are convinced that socialism will be able to gradually overcome its ordeals and difficulties and continue to make progress. Although the world people's struggle for peace, national independence, democracy, and social progress faces many difficulties, socialism will continue to develop, and no force can check its advance. This is the law of history.

With regard to the domestic situation... Good results have been achieved initially. This proves that our renovation guidelines and steps are correct.

However, we still face many difficulties and obstacles. Our country has not extricated itself from the socio-economic crisis. Moreover, in the process of renovation, differences will continue to emerge. This requires that we be highly alert in order to detect them and promptly overcome them. Through the



crisis of socialist countries and the realities of renovation in our country in the recent past, we can draw important points.

To ensure the continued advance of the revolution of our country, the party must positively renovate itself, raise its level of leadership and militancy, and always maintain contact with the people.

The party must lead the renovation with a firm political ability; always firmly grasp the revolutionary and scientific nature of Marxism-Leninism and the country's realities... we must consistently and firmly maintain stability in the political, economic, and social domains, especially political stability...

In continuing to carry out the political tasks set forth by the party and state resolutions, we must first of all integrate our efforts on satisfactorily implementing various pressing tasks - namely increase political and ideological indoctrination in order to make the cadres, the party members, the people, and the armed forces combatants understand the current situation and help them firmly grasp the positions and policies of the party and state; renovate and strengthen the party leadership; enhance the party's political capacity and its vanguard role; firmly maintain unity within the party.....

The sixth Party Central Committee eighth plenum decided to remove Comrade Tran Xuan Bach from his positions as Political Bureau member, Party Central Committee secretary, and Party Central Committee member, for having seriously violated the Party's organisational principles and discipline, leading to many bad consequences.

## VII. DEADLOCK OVER A NEW PLATFORM

*For over 60 years the basic document guiding the CPV was the platform adopted at the First Party Congress in Canton in 1960. This platform was drawn up by Tran Phu, the first Secretary General, with Ho Chi Minh (then Nguyen Ai Quoc) in the background. Since then, times have changed. In particular the momentous changes occurring in Eastern Europe and in the Soviet Union, as well as the apparently insoluble problems affecting Vietnam since the communist victory in 1975 call for a thorough reappraisal of the situation and the adoption of a new platform.*

*The question was raised at the VI National Congress in December 1986. It became more pressing at the Sixth Plenum in March 1989. And it became a serious issue at the ninth plenum in August this year.*

*From the communique on this plenum it is quite clear that there has been very deep division inside the Party. As*

*the communique reveals, EIGHT drafts presented to the third, fourth, fifth and sixth plenums were all rejected, and two other revised drafts were also rejected thereafter. Although the communique did not mention the dates, it can be assumed easily that these revised drafts were presented at the seventh and the eighth plenums. Thus, TEN drafts have been rejected in the last three years.*

*The communique also revealed that the debates were "heated". This indicates that there were serious divergences within the Party, and further, that, apparently, the reformist had gained ground, and the conservatives were unable to impose their views so easily as at the sixth plenum in March 1989. In fact, it is clear that a deadlock had developed inside the Party.*

*In addition to the Platform, the plenum failed also to produce a draft of the strategy of development for the period from now until the year 2000, as well as a draft of the next Five Year Plan covering the period 1991-1995. Everything was sent back to the drafting committee of the Politburo and the drafting committee. And last, but not least, no date and no manner was set for the publication of these drafts for discussion before the meeting of the Seventh National Congress, which is due in the spring of this year.*

*The communique of the ninth plenum is so important for an understanding of what is going to happen at the seventh national congress of the CPV, and in between, that we deem it appropriate to reproduce it in full.*

### **Ninth Plenum of the Central Committee Communique (16-28 August 1990) (From Tap Chi Cong San, 9-1990)**

The ninth plenum of the Central Committee of the Party (VI Congress) met from 16 to 28 August 1990 in Hanoi.

Comrade General Secretary Nguyen Van Linh addressed the opening and the closing of the meeting. The meeting discussed the following problems: The draft of the Platform on the construction of socialism in the transition stage, the draft of the strategy of socio-economic development until the year 2000 and the fundamental orientations of the 1991-1995 Five Year Plan, and a number of urgent socio-economic problems.

1 - Comrade Nguyen Van Linh, chairman of the Platform Drafting Committee reported to the Central Committee on the draft of the Platform and spoke on a number of fundamental problems related to the content of the Platform.

Since the beginning of 1987 to the middle of 1990, the Committee had drafted the Platform eight times. During that period, the Politbureau held discussions

several times and contributed ideas to the drafts. Many workshops had been organised for the exchange of ideas concerning a number of subjects raised in the drafts.

The eighth draft was sent to the comrade members of the Central Committee of the III, IV, V, VI plenums, to the party committees of the central organs and of the provinces, cities, special areas; to the theoretical research organs and to many scientists for discussion and suggestions. Thereafter, the Committee had revised the draft twice and presented the tenth draft to the plenum.

2 - Comrade Do Muoi, chairman of the Socio-Economic Strategy Committee reported to the Central Committee the draft of the Strategy of socio-economic development until the year 2000 and the essential orientations of the 1991- 1995 Five Year Plan.

In the past several months, the Committee organised many national workshops in different areas to consult the comrade leaders of the committees, branches of the central and provincial and city organisations, the veteran revolutionary cadres, the economic managers, and many representative scientists throughout the country on the contents of the "Strategy of Socio-Economic Development of our country until the year 2000".

The Central Committee held discussions, heated debates, put forward many important ideas of high quality both practically and theoretically for modifying and supplementing the two above mentioned drafts.

The Central Committee gave mandate to the Politbureau and the Platform Drafting Committee, and to the Socio-Economic Strategy Drafting Committee, to use the views of the Central Committee as basis for revising the two drafts and to decide on the moment and the manner of publication of those documents to collect the views of the Party and the people, and on the basis of these views, to revise those drafts further before presenting them to the VII National Congress of the Party.

3 - Concerning a number of pressing socio-economic problems, the ninth plenum of the Central Committee unanimously agreed on the following appraisal: Since the beginning of 1990 there have been many complicated developments in the international situation which have exerted an influence on our country in many respects. In this situation, our entire Party, our entire people, have made great efforts to maintain political stability and bring into play the progress achieved in 1989, have continued to gather positive results in a number of economic and social respects.

However, in recent months the socio-economic situation has experienced complicated developments

and new difficulties have arisen.

The Central Committee pointed out that the above socio-economic situation had objective and subjective causes.

The objective causes are: The economy is in serious disequilibrium; the country had not yet escaped from inflation and crisis. In the process of moving to the market mechanism novel problems of management of state and private enterprises have arisen for which we have yet no experience, and with which we do not quite know how to cope. The developments in the international situation are unfavorable to us.

The subjective causes are: There are many shortcomings in management at the various levels, in the various sectors (supply of fertilisers and food, export of rice, finances, tax collection, import and export, banking, credit, national reserves, enforcement of the laws etc...). The study and treatment of problems relating to capital and credit in many respects do not meet the needs of the enterprises engaged in production. The managerial organisation and the institutions are still cumbersome, bureaucratic, inefficient; the capability of the managerial cadres still does not meet the requirements. There is serious lack of respect for discipline, for order, for the laws, especially in the fields of planning, finances, money, credit, prices, import and export, the market etc... There is heavy localism, individualism: because of personal interests, unit interests, branch interests, regional interests, people do not execute correctly the guidelines, the policies, the resolutions of the Party and the State. There is foot-dragging in the elimination of corruption and waste, and lack of severity in their punishment.

The Central Committee stressed that there must be urgent and effective measures to resolve the above mentioned socio-economic problems so as to continue to change the socio-economic situation for the better, maintain political stability, and create the favorable conditions for the implementation of the 1991-1995 Five Year Plan and prepare for the coming VII National Congress.

The guidelines for the resolution of the pressing socio-economic problems are:

- 1 - Firmly carry out renovation of the management mechanism advocated by the VI National Congress, leading all economic activities to business cost accounting in the direction of socialism, striving to raise efficiency, responding to the conditions of a regulated market economy and to the requirements of international economic relations.
- 2 - The entire Party and the entire people raise

high the spirit of independence and self reliance, together with the extension of international relations, build the will to make the people rich and the country strong, bring into play intelligence and creativity, make the maximum use of existing and potential capabilities, take the initiative in having in store different schemes to respond to new situations, strive to create many jobs for the laborers, see to it that every laborer will have high productivity, and good performance.

- 3 - Officials of all levels, all branches, all organs, all units, and all citizens must raise high the sense of thrift in order to build the country, of opposition to luxurious and wastful spending. To practice thrift is a policy having strategic significance in the construction of socialism that should be guaranteed by appropriate laws and regulations.
- 4 - Unify the will and the action of the entire Party, the entire people, raise high the sense of discipline, maintain order, respect the law in every socio-economic activity, severely deal with individuals and units violating the law.

The current socio-economic situation contains a number of new favorable factors, but many very great difficulties remain; if we do not overcome these difficulties in time, they will not only have adverse

effects in 1991, but also an adverse influence on the implementation of the 1991-1995 Five Year Plan, and on the long range Socio-Economic Development Strategy.

Among the urgent measures the most decisive, the most burning, and the most pressing ones that need to be performed immediately and well are the fight against the widespread import of smuggled goods, together with the boosting of the production and the protection of domestic goods, the rational use of foreign exchange, the straightening up of financial and monetary management, the fight against corruption.

The Political Bureau of the Party stressed the sense of responsibility and the important role of all the comrades Central Committee members of all levels, all branches, and of the Council of Ministers in the work of guiding and administering in conformity with the present conclusion of the Central Committee.

*In November 1990, the CPV leadership convened the Tenth Plenum, which reaffirmed the orthodox position of "Maintaining the purity of Marxism-Leninism", even though it has become very clear that such a stand is contradicting the Hanoi leaders's claim to pursue the renovation drive and the open-door policy.*

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