

VIETNAM ACADEMY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
INSTITUTE OF PHILOSOPHY

NGUYEN TAI DONG - TRAN TUAN PHONG - VU THI KIEU PHUONG
————— (EDITORS) —————

THE VALUES OF SOCIALISM

(INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS)



SOCIAL SCIENCES PUBLISHING HOUSE

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HO CHI MINH'S APPROACH TO SOCIALISM AS A VALUE SYSTEM AND THE APPLICATION OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF VIETNAM IN RENOVATION PERIOD

*Dr. Hoang Thu Trang**

*Dr. Do Thi Van Ha***

When explaining the history of human society as the development of socio-economic formations from low to high according to the inevitable internal laws of society, Marx, Engels and Lenin pointed out that the destination of humankind can only be socialism/communism because only this society can eradicate all oppression, exploitation, injustice, inequality at the root, and at the same time bring true values to people - freedom, justice, equality, happiness, etc. Therefore, socialism should not only be approached from the perspective of a theoretical system, a social model or a social regime, but also as a value system. This is also one of Ho Chi Minh's approaches to socialism since he came to the proletarian revolution, with the aim of national independence associated with socialism to achieve national liberation and class emancipation in the light of Marxism-Leninism. Ho Chi Minh's

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approach to socialism as a value system continued to be thoroughly grasped and applied by the Communist Party of Vietnam in the period of renovation and transition to building socialism of Vietnam nowadays.

1. Ho Chi Minh's approach to socialism as a value system

In 1958, when the French colonialists fired the first gun to invade Vietnam, with their passionate patriotism, the Vietnamese people held many movements in different ways to fight against the French colonialists to gain independence for the nation, but they were all failed. Facing with the crisis of the way to save the country in the late 19th century and early 20th century, worrying about the nation's fate, on June 5, 1911, from the Nha Rong Wharf, Nguyen Ai Quoc - Ho Chi Minh decided to go abroad to find the right way to save our country. Following the banner of "freedom, equality, and fraternity" raised during the bourgeois revolutions, Nguyen Ai Quoc decided to go to the west, to France to find out "how did the France and other countries do, then come back to help my fellow-countrymen"¹. However, in the 10 years journey to find a way to save the country (1911-1920), passing through dozens of countries from colonial countries in Africa, Latin America to the most developed capitalist countries in the world at that time, Nguyen Ai Quoc realized a fact that: the values of "liberty, equality, and fraternity" were upheld by the bourgeoisie in the bourgeois revolutions, even though they were progressive values which mankind has always aspired, but they are not the real aim of the bourgeois revolutions.

¹ Tran Dan Tien (1975): Stories about revolutionary life of President Ho, Truth Publishing House, Ha Noi, p. 11

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On the contrary, "bourgeoisie uses the words Freedom, Equality, and Fraternity to deceive and incite the people to overthrow feudalism. When the people have overthrown feudalism, they replace feudalism to oppress the people"¹, therefore, the bourgeois revolution is "the revolution by halves, the statement is republic and democracy, but in fact, they exploit internal workers and peasants, in addition, they oppress their colonies"². From this fact, Nguyen Ai Quoc affirmed: in order to liberate the nation and bring a free, prosperous and happy life to all ranks and classes in society, it is impossible to carry out the national liberation revolution follows the path of the bourgeois revolution because this is a revolution by halves, it only brings benefits, freedom and happiness to the minority of the ruling class in society - bourgeoisie and the bonds of oppression, exploitation, injustice and inequality for all working classes. He pointed out: "We have sacrificed for the revolution, we should do it until the end, it means after the revolution, the power should be given to the majority, not in the hands of minority. Only then the people will be happy without sacrificing many times"³.

In the dark night of colonialism and imperialism, in 1920 while staying in France, Nguyen Ai Quoc read the "The First Draft Thesis on National and Colonial questions" written by V.I. Lenin and published on the L'Humanité newspaper (an organ of the French Communist Party). Since then, Nguyen Ai Quoc has found

¹ Ho Chi Minh (2011): Complete Collection, National Political Publishing House, Ha Noi, Vol. 2, p. 296

² Ho Chi Minh (2011): Complete Collection, National Political Publishing House, Ha Noi, Vol. 2, p. 296

³ Ho Chi Minh (2011): Complete Collection, National Political Publishing House, Ha Noi, Vol. 2, p. 292

a juncture between solving the national problem and the class problem, between the national liberation revolution and the class liberation revolution under the guiding light of Marxism-Leninism and the Russian October Revolution. It is to wage a proletarian revolution led by the working class and their political party, the Communist Party, with the aim of national independence associated with socialism. It was a revolution in which purpose was first to repel foreign invaders to gain national independence, and then to build socialism to bring all people, all ranks and classes in society the values of freedom, justice, equality, and true happiness because "Only socialism and communism can liberate oppressed peoples and workers in the world from slavery"¹.

Thus, as soon as coming to the proletarian revolution, with the goal of national independence associated with socialism in the light of Marxism-Leninism, Ho Chi Minh approached socialism not only as a theoretical system, a revolutionary movement but also as a value system: freedom, democracy, justice, equality, happiness for all people. Therefore, he later affirmed that "The national liberation revolution must develop into a socialist revolution in order to achieve complete victory"², because if the national liberation revolution is successful and the nation is independence, but all the people can not have a truly free, prosperous and happy life, that independence will not have meaning.

Approaching socialism as a value system, so with the question "What is socialism?", Ho Chi Minh explained briefly and easily

¹ Ho Chi Minh (2011): Complete Collection, National Political Publishing House, Ha Noi, Vol. 12, p. 653

² Ho Chi Minh (2011): Complete Collection, National Political Publishing House, Ha Noi, Vol. 15, p. 392

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many times that: "Socialism is making the people being rich and the country being strong"¹; "Socialism is taking factories, trains, banks, etc. as a common property. Those who work much can receive much, those who work little receive little, those who don't work don't receive, of course except the elderly, sick and children"²; "What is socialism? Everyone has enough to eat and to wear, happiness, and freedom"³; "*Socialism is the well-being and freedom of the whole people. Those who work much can receive much, those who work little receive little, those who don't work don't receive; no more people exploiting people*"⁴; "Socialism means that everyone can work, eat well, wear warm clothes, study, the elderly and the sick are helped, and the children are taken care of. In short, socialism is happiness and well-being"⁵; "What is the purpose of socialism? To put it simply and easily: Constantly improving the material and spiritual life of the people, first of all, the working people"⁶; "Socialism is to improve the material and cultural life of the people"⁷; "Socialism is to make people have enough to eat and wear, more and more happy, everyone can go to school, those who

¹ Ho Chi Minh (2011): Complete Collection, National Political Publishing House, Ha Noi, Vol. 10, p. 390

² Ho Chi Minh (2011): Complete Collection, National Political Publishing House, Ha Noi, Vol. 10, p. 390

³ Ho Chi Minh (2011): Complete Collection, National Political Publishing House, Ha Noi, Vol. 10, p. 593

⁴ Ho Chi Minh (2011): Complete Collection, National Political Publishing House, Ha Noi, Vol. 12, p. 431

⁵ Ho Chi Minh (2011): Complete Collection, National Political Publishing House, Ha Noi, Vol. 13, p. 5

⁶ Ho Chi Minh (2011): Complete Collection, National Political Publishing House, Ha Noi, Vol. 13, p. 30

⁷ Ho Chi Minh (2011): Complete Collection, National Political Publishing House, Ha Noi, Vol. 13, p. 387

get sick can have medicine, those who are old can retire, all bad customs and habits are eliminated. In short, society is getting more advanced, the material wealth is increasing, the spirit is getting better, that is socialism"¹, etc.

From those affirmations, it can be seen that, according to Ho Chi Minh, socialism is a social system in which the people are the master and in control of their country, all the power belongs to the people; a society that always ensures fairness, equality, and brings a truly free, prosperous and happy life in all aspects (both material and spiritual life) for everyone, every social class; a society in which all oppression, exploitation, injustice, inequality, etc. are completely eradicated, ensuring the free and comprehensive development of each person as a condition for development freedom and inclusivity of all, all power belongs to the people; a society that always ensures fairness, equality, and brings a truly free, prosperous and happy life in all aspects, in all aspects (both material and spiritual) for everyone, everyone social class; a society in which all oppression, exploitation, injustice, inequality... are completely eradicated; a society that ensures the free and integral development of each person is a condition for the free and comprehensive development of all. It was from the perspective of approaching socialism as a value system that Ho Chi Minh made every Vietnamese person understand clearly about the goal and nature of the socialism building in Vietnam in the most direct and simplest way. It is a completely different society from all oppressive and exploitative social regimes that have existed in history (slavery, feudalism, capitalism) because this is the only society that ensures fairness and equality and brings a truly free,

¹ Ho Chi Minh (2011): Complete Collection, National Political Publishing House, Ha Noi, Vol. 13, p. 438

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prosperous and happy life to everyone. This also means that Ho Chi Minh made all the Vietnamese people be well aware that building socialism is the only way to liberate people thoroughly and comprehensively, first of all is to liberate the working people.

With belief in the true values of socialism and at the same time are the core values towards which all humanity is aiming, the Vietnamese people can have highest will and determination to successfully carry out the socialist revolution under the leadership of the Communist Party even though this is the most difficult and profound transformation as pointed out by Ho Chi Minh: “We must build a completely new society that never before in the history of our nation. We must radically change the ways of life, habits, thoughts and prejudices that have deep roots for thousands of years. We must change the old production relations, abolish the exploiting classes, and build a new production relation which is free from exploitation and oppression. To do that, we must gradually transform our country from a backward agricultural country into an industrial country. We must gradually collectivize agriculture. We must carry out the socialist reform of private industry, commerce and handicrafts. We must turn an ignorant, miserable country into a country of high culture and happy life. We have to carry out those tasks in special conditions of our country, that is, on the basis of a society that has just escaped from the yoke of colonialism, feudalism, and is very backward”¹.

Ho Chi Minh's approach to socialism as a value system has become a guiding light for construction of socialism in Vietnam, especially in the Doi moi period, specially in terms of determining

¹ Ho Chi Minh (2011): Complete Collection, National Political Publishing House, Hanoi, Vol. 11, p. 91-92

target system of socialism to create the basis for proposing directions and tasks to build socialism suitable for each stage of the country's development.

2. The application of the Communist Party of Vietnam in the Doi moi period

Thoroughly grasping Ho Chi Minh's approach to socialism as a value system, in the Doi moi period, the Communist Party of Vietnam affirmed that if we want to let the people know what the socialism that Vietnam has built is, the difference between the socialist regime and the existing social regimes in history, first and foremost, we will determine target system of socialism. When we determine which specific values are included in the target system of socialism, we will have a basis to answer the next question: "What is the purpose of building socialism?" that is, to propose directions and tasks of building socialism which is suitable for each period and then successfully implement those directions and tasks. This issue is confirmed throughout the documents of the Party Congress in the Doi moi period.

In the 6th National Congress (1986) - The Congress marked our country's renewal path in all fields, the Communist Party of Vietnam identified the target system of socialism in Vietnam are three core values: *rich people, strong country, civilized society*, in which, first of all, priority is given to the first two values (rich people and strong country). This is mainly because the socio-economic crisis before Doi Moi has led serious consequences, causing low economic growth and galloping inflation (3-digits, up to 774.7%), people's lives are extremely difficult and lacking. Therefore, the urgent task is how to promote production development, strongly release productive power, create material wealth in order to stabilize and step by step improve people's

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living standards, first of all the material life, towards realizing the goal of a rich people and a strong country, creating the basis for building a civilized society. Therefore, the 6th Congress determined that the focus of innovation was economic innovation, from which to gradually carry out renovation in all other areas of social life from politics, culture, national defense and security and foreign affairs.

After 5 years of *Doi moi*, the 7th National Congress (1991) approved the *Platform on National Construction in the period of transition to socialism* (Platform 1991), for the first time systematically present six basic characteristics and also specific values in the value system of socialism built by our people under the leadership of the Communist Party. That is: “Owned by the working people; Having a highly developed economy based on modern productive forces and public ownership of the main means of production; Having an advanced culture imbued with national identity; People are liberated from oppression, exploitation, injustice, work according to their ability, enjoy according to their work and are entitled to wellbeing, freedom and happiness and are blessed with opportunities for comprehensive development.; All ethnic groups in the country are equal, united and supportive of each other to grow together; Having friendly and cooperative relations with people of all countries in the world”¹. To build socialism with these core values, the 1991 Platform also provides seven basic directions, focusing on the

¹ Communist Party of Vietnam (1991): *Platform on National Construction in the period of transition to socialism*,

<https://tulieuvankien.dangcongsan.vn/ban-chap-hanh-trung-uong-dang/dai-hoi-dang/lan-thu-vii/cuong-linh-xay-dung-dat-nuoc-trong-thoi-ky-qua-do-len-chu-nghia-xa-hoi-1558>.

main tasks: *In politics*: Building a socialist state, a State of the people, by the people, for the people, fully realizing the people's democratic rights; Building a clean and politically, ideologically and organizationally strong Party on a par with their assigned mission. *In economy*: Developing a multi-sector commodity economy with many forms of ownership, following the socialist orientation, operating according to the market mechanism under the management of the State with many forms of distribution, in which the distribution according to labor results and economic efficiency is the main one. *In culture - society - people*: To carry out the socialist revolution in the field of ideology and culture to make the Marxist-Leninist worldview and Ho Chi Minh's ideology and morality hold the leading position in social spiritual life. Inheriting and promoting the nation's fine cultural traditions while absorbing the quintessence of human culture, building a democratic and civilized society for the sake of genuine interests and human dignity. *In national defense and security*: To increase vigilance, strengthen national defense, protect political security, social order and safety, defend the Fatherland and revolutionary achievements. *In foreign affairs*: To implement a foreign policy of peace, cooperation and friendship with all countries, etc¹.

In the Document of the 7th Midterm National Conference (1994), in the target system of socialism, the Communist Party added a value of "fairness" and made it the target system of well-off people, strong country, fair and civilized society. This is an extremely necessary and correct addition because equity is one of

¹ Communist Party of Vietnam (1991): Platform on National Construction in the period of transition to socialism, <https://tulieuvankien.dangcongsan.vn/ban-chap-hanh-trung-uong-dang/dai-hoi-dang/lan-thu-vii/cuong-linh-xay-dung-dat-nuoc-trong-thoi-ky-qua-do-len-chu-nghia-xa-hoi-1558>

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the social values that embody the characteristics and nature of socialism, and it is also a goal to strive for in the process of building socialism in Vietnam. To realize the goal of equity (first of all in the economic field, to facilitate the realization of equity in all other fields of social life), at the 8th National Congress, in the distribution mechanism, in addition to the distribution based on labor results and economic efficiency which are mainly recognized in the 1991 Platform, the Party added a form of distribution based on the contribution of other resources to production and business results and distribution through social welfare¹. In fact, the distribution according to labor results and economic efficiency (working more, enjoying more, working less, enjoying less, not working enjoy nothing) can only really ensure absolute equality when the workers have the same starting point, the same conditions of access to the means of production, and the same level of ability, same state of health and no difference resulting from innate gender characteristics. However, in reality, this is impossible, so if only distributing according to labor results and economic efficiency will be unequal and unfair to the disadvantaged groups in the social (the elderly, disabled, ethnic minorities...). Therefore, it is necessary to add other forms of distribution, especially distribution according to social welfare (at the 8th Congress) and later, the distribution through social security (at the 9th Congress) to link economic growth with the realization of social progress and justice, ensuring economic growth results really benefit everyone and all social strata, creating a basis for improvement and enhancement the quality of life for the people in all aspects.

¹ Vietnam Communist Party (1996): Documents of the 8th National Party Congress, National Political Publishing House, Hanoi, p. 92

Especially at the 9th National Congress, the perception of the Communist Party of Vietnam on determining the target system of socialism has made great progress because compared with the target system indicated at the 8th Midterm National Conference (1994) which is: well-off people, strong country, fair and civilized society, the 9th Congress added the value of "democracy" to make the target system: well-off people, strong country, fair, democratic and civilized society. This addition is very important because democracy is both the goal and the driving force of the renovation and building of socialism, and is also the feature that most clearly shows the nature of socialism that we are building - a society owned by the working people.

On the basis of inheriting the valuable viewpoints and ideas of the 1991 Platform and the spirit of the 7th, 8th, 9th, 10th Congresses, and at the same time, on the basis of summarizing 20 years of implementing the 1991 Platform, 25 years of conducting Doi moi, closely following the reality of the country and the times, at the 11th National Congress (2011), the Party supplemented and developed the 1991 Platform, marking major breakthroughs in the theory of socialism and the path to socialism in Vietnam, especially in terms of identifying 8 features and 8 upward directions to build socialism. Compared with the 6 features and 7 directions given in the 1991 Platform, there has been a great addition and development, especially in the features that express the core values of socialism that our people are building.

Specifically, compared with the 1991 Platform, in the 2011 Supplemental and Development Platform, there are 2 unchanged features: "owned by the people" and "Having an advanced culture imbued with national identity", and the remaining 6 features have all been modified, supplemented and developed, specifically: "well-off people, strong country, democracy, justice and

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civilization" (A new feature, not found in 1991 Platform. In particular, compared with the target system of socialism defined at the 9th National Congress: *well-off people, strong country, equitable, democratic and civilized society*, in the 2011 Supplemental and Development Platform, democratic has been put before justice, showing the position and importance of democratic values. This change is completely reasonable because only by realizing democracy and promoting the people's mastery, we will have a basis for building a truly fair and civilized society for all people, all social strata); "Having a highly developed economy based on modern productive forces and suitable and progressive production relations" (in Platform 1991 "Having a highly developed economy based on modern productive forces and public ownership of the main means of production"); "People have a prosperous, free, happy, and comprehensively developed life" (in the 1991 Platform: "People are liberated from oppression, exploitation, and injustice, work according to their ability, enjoyed according to their labors, have a prosperous, free and happy life, and have conditions for comprehensive personal development"); "Ethnic groups in the Vietnamese community are equal, united, mutually supportive and helping each other to develop" (In the 1991 Platform: "The nationalities of the country are equal, unite and help each other for progress"); "There is a socialist rule of law state of the people, by the people, for the people led by the Communist Party" (A new feature, not included in the 1991 Platform); "Having friendly relations and cooperation with countries around the world" (In the 1991 Platform: "Having friendly and cooperative relations with the people of all countries in the world").¹ In order to build socialism with the above 8

¹ Vietnam Communist Party (2011): Documents of the 11th National Party Congress, National Political Publishing House, Hanoi, p. 70

features, the 2011 Supplemental and Development Platform offers 8 basic directions: "To strengthen the industrialization and modernization of the country in association with the development of the knowledge economy, and the protection of natural resources and the environment. Developing a socialist-oriented market economy. Building an advanced culture imbued with national identity; building people, improving the standard of people's living, realizing social progress and justice. Firmly ensure national defense and security, social order and safety. Implement the foreign policy of independence, self-reliance, peace, friendship, cooperation, development, active and positive international integration. Building a socialist democracy, realizing great national unity, strengthening and expanding the National Unified Front. Building a socialist rule of law state of the people, by the people and for the people; Building a clean and strong Party"¹

The 12th and 13th Party Congresses continued to affirm the set of goals of socialism that Vietnam must maintain and gradually realize by suitable steps, forms and methods to each stage of development of country. It is a *well-off people, strong country, democracy, justice and civilization*.

Thus, it can be seen that, thoroughly grasping Ho Chi Minh's approach to socialism as a value system, in the period of renovation and transition to socialist construction, the Communist Party of Vietnam has focused on clearly defining the goals of socialism which are also the core values of socialism in Vietnam: well-off people, strong country, democracy, justice, civilization – the values makes socialism qualitatively different from all social

¹ Vietnam Communist Party (2011): Documents of the 11th National Party Congress, National Political Publishing House, Hanoi, p. 72

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systems that have existed and are in history. It is a society that, as General Secretary Nguyen Phu Trong has pointed out: “development is truly for humans, not for exploitation and dehumanization for the sake of profit”, “economic development accompanied by social progress and equality, not an increase in the gap between the rich and the poor or greater social inequity”, “a society of compassion, solidarity and mutual assistance towards progressive and humanistic values, not unfair competition where “the weak are meat, and the strong do eat” to satisfy the selfish interest of a few individuals and cliques”, “sustainable development in harmony with nature to secure a clean living environment for present and future generations, instead of unlimited exploitation and possession of resources, unrestrained consumption and destruction of the environment”, “a political system where power truly belongs to the people, is enforced by the people and serve the people, not merely in the interest of the wealthy few”¹. These are the values that characterize the essence of socialism, as well as the goal of the social regime that President Ho Chi Minh, the Communist Party and the Vietnamese people have chosen to build since the 1930s and now are resolutely, persistently pursuing and implementing. These are also the core values that all mankind aspires to in the struggle against all oppression, exploitation, injustice, inequality, etc. throughout thousands of years of history.

¹ Nguyen Phu Trong (2021): Some theoretical and practical issues on socialism and the path towards socialism in Vietnam, Communist Review, retrieved from https://www.tapchicongsan.org.vn/web/english/mega-story/-/asset_publisher/lc29uIxCb05g/content/some-theoretical-and-practical-issues-on-socialism-and-the-path-towards-socialism-in-vietnam, 29/9/2022.

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