

The Humane, Humanitarian and Progressive Values in Hồ Chí Minh Thought on Journalism

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Abstract: *Hồ Chí Minh's writing career aimed at gaining national independence and socialism, striving for freedom and happiness of the Vietnamese people, building a revolutionary press for the people and by the people. The article focuses on the values in Hồ Chí Minh Thought on journalism, namely the humane, humanitarian, and progressive values which are considered a unique feature and play an orienting role in the current revolutionary press.*

Keywords: *Hồ Chí Minh; Hồ Chí Minh Thought; the humane; humanitarian; progressive values of journalism.*

President Hồ Chí Minh—the founder and great teacher of Vietnam's revolutionary press—considered journalism a sharp weapon in the struggle for national independence and in the building of a new social regime. His journalism career has left us a legacy of unique and valuable journalistic works, contributing to the creation of core values, in which the *humane, humanitarian and progressive values of journalism* are always the guiding principle for all activities of Vietnam's revolutionary journalism today.

Firstly, the humane, humanitarian and progressive values of the press is reflected in its pioneering role in the uncompromising struggle against the enemy, to eliminate oppression and exploitation, to gain national independence and to build socialism *to the people and for the people*. That is the most outstanding feature in Hồ Chí Minh's journalism career.

Starting from the noble goal of the revolutionary cause: “to make our country completely independent, our people completely free, all compatriots have food to eat, clothes to wear, anyone can study”⁽¹⁾ that laid the foundation for his writing career, Hồ Chí Minh said: “Our press must serve the working people, serve socialism, serve the struggle to achieve national unification, for world peace”⁽²⁾. Ultimately, the *humane and progressive values of the press* are directed towards the cause of national liberation, class (social) emancipation and human liberation. Therefore, the task of the revolutionary press is to be the pioneer in exposing the reactionary, deceitful nature of the enemy, fighting against what is contrary to common sense and against history. “For us journalists, our pen is a sharp weapon, our article is a revolutionary proclamation to mobilize the

masses to unite and fight against old and new colonialism, against imperialism headed by American imperialism, for national independence, social progress, and world peace”⁽³⁾. That is also the goal throughout his writing career as he said: “Regarding the content of the writings, which you call “topics”, all the articles I have written had only one “topic”: fighting against colonialism, imperialism, feudalism, and landlordism, and propagating national independence and socialism. That was my fate with the press”⁽⁴⁾. Therefore, Hồ Chí Minh directly wrote articles, using them as a sharp weapon, a forum to denounce and attack the enemy. From the 1920s, Hồ Chí Minh’s articles pointed at the enemy with sharp, incisive arguments, specific data and evidence. Hồ Chí Minh’s articles exposed the nature of colonialism and imperialism, thereby contributing to awakening oppressed peoples and progressive people around the world to better understand that the so-called “civilization” of imperialism was actually the “robbery”, and “murder” nature, thereby they stood together with the colonial people to eradicate evil, for the humane and progressive cause of mankind.

In each revolutionary step, the press clearly demonstrated its progressive vanguard characteristic, fighting for national independence. During the period 1936 - 1939, the Party advocated bringing the press to public publication, effectively contributing to the promotion of Marxism-Leninism and the revolutionary line against imperialism and feudalism, preparing conditions for the new revolutionary stage. When the revolutionary opportunity came, the requirements of the cause of national liberation were more urgent than ever, the revolutionary press had several names like Vietnam Independence (1941), National Salvation (January 1942) and Liberation Flag (October 1942) that effectively contributed to the victory of the August Revolution in 1945. During the resistance war against French colonialism, the press closely followed the reality requirements: promptly served the requirements of the resistance war, by posting the Party’s guidelines such as “Resistance and national building”, increasing production, practicing thrift through slogans “rice jars to save the famine”, “Every inch of land is gold”, “popular education”. The resistance war against French colonialism ended, the country was temporarily divided into two regions, with two different strategic tasks, the press had two goals: building socialism in the North and fighting for national reunification in the South.

Currently, in the period of promoting industrialization, modernization, international integration, building and developing the country, the humane, humanitarian and progressive values of the press demonstrate its pioneering mission in propagating and educating on the Party and State’s guidelines and policies, reflecting the reality of building and safeguarding the Fatherland. The

revolutionary press continues to carry the mission of being a sharp weapon on the cultural and ideological front, contributing to helping the people and international friends understand the achievements of the renovation process, the guidelines and policies on socio-economic development, security, national defense and international integration of our Party and State. Along with that, the press also contributes to fighting against the distorted and destructive arguments of hostile forces; strengthening national solidarity, gaining support from international friends; and establishing a peaceful environment for development.

Secondly, the humane, humanitarian and progressive values of the press are reflected in the goal of raising people's knowledge and enhancing people's comprehensive development. The press contributes to criticizing and fighting against bad and anti-progressive things, promoting good people and good deeds, preserving the cultural beauty of the nation, and guiding people towards the values of truth, goodness and beauty.

The press must enlighten the people, and help them "open their eyes and ears"⁽⁵⁾, understand what is right and wrong, righteousness and evil, help readers gain more knowledge about the history and culture of the country and the world, help people gain knowledge in building new ethics, new lifestyles and new ways of life, contributing to building a joyful and happy cultural life. He requested: "In the Party newspaper, there should be such columns as: Marxist-Leninist theory; The world and country situation; The Party's and the Government's domestic and foreign policies and guidelines"⁽⁶⁾.

In his *Letter to the Huynh Thuc Khang Journalism Class*, Hồ Chí Minh pointed out: "The task of a newspaper is to propagate, agitate, train, educate, and organize the people, to mobilize them to a common goal"⁽⁷⁾. According to Hồ Chí Minh, journalism is also a political activity, the press is a weapon of revolutionary struggle, so besides fighting and orientation, the press must have the role of propagating, agitating, training, educating, and organizing the people to guide them to the common goal of resistance to final victory, and national construction to final success. The press "is to educate, explain, agitate, criticize. To serve the masses"⁽⁸⁾, this means that the purpose of journalism is to write to serve the masses, to write for the masses. "The purpose of writing is to educate and motivate; if the audience cannot remember or understand, this means the writing is not written correctly and for the wrong purpose. If you want the audience to understand, remember, and follow, you must write at the appropriate level for the audience to understand, write clearly and concisely, and refrain from using flowery words"⁽⁹⁾.

Humane and progressive journalism is the one that contributes to raising people's knowledge, building and perfecting the people. To this end, journalist topics must originate from the realities of life, the production, the struggle and the study of the masses themselves. Journalists must know how to praise the truth, the goodness and the beauty inside the people, thereby spreading typical examples so that all the people know, learn and practice proficiently. Revolutionary journalism must guide, suggest, introduce good practices, typical and excellent examples in production, good deeds, good people to spread and multiply in order to stir up national pride, aspirations, visions, cultural values and the Vietnamese people. "The press and the arts must investigate and propagate, praise the advantages and criticize the shortcomings during the dissemination of initiatives and experiences. That is a glorious task of the press and the arts, practically contributing to the patriotic emulation movement"⁽¹⁰⁾. At the same time, we must resolutely fight against evil and backwardness, prevent and gradually push back corruption, wastefulness and bureaucracy. It is necessary to fight against and refute wrong, reactionary and hostile viewpoints. The humane and progressive values of revolutionary journalism are also clearly demonstrated when Hồ Chí Minh proposed to open a "readers' opinions" column in the newspaper so that readers can express their opinions in the fight against evil and negativity. Criticism must be specific and clear. Criticism and self-criticism are measures to strengthen the fighting spirit and demonstrate the progressive nature of revolutionary journalism.

Thirdly, the humane, humanitarian, and progressive values of the press is also reflected in *the Partyness of the Vietnamese revolutionary press, for the freedom and happiness of the people*.

The press is a part of the revolutionary cause led by the Party, therefore, it must operate according to the Party's and the people's goals of national independence and socialism; participate in protecting the ideological foundation, and fight against wrong and hostile views. The Party's leadership is mandatory to the revolutionary press, and is a criterion to distinguish the revolutionary press from the counter-revolutionary press. Accordingly, the Party must lead the press. This is a principle affirmed by Hồ Chí Minh from the very early days: "The Central Executive Committee must control the Party's press to avoid technical and political shortcomings"⁽¹¹⁾. The press is humane and progressive when it is led by a Marxism-Leninism based Party which has the nature of the working class, closely associated with the people, serving the working people and fighting for the cause of national liberation and building socialism. The press participates in the cause of human liberation, building a

social regime for the people, by the people. Therefore, the press must stand on the communist humanitarian stance to fight for that ideology. Hồ Chí Minh always asked the question: Who does the press serve? Then he answered: “Our press is not for a small number of readers, but to serve the whole people, to propagate and explain the Party and Government’s guidelines and policies, so it must have the popularity and fighting spirit”⁽¹²⁾. He pointed out: “Our Party is strong because our Party has unified ideology and action, from top to bottom. The Party’s newspaper has the task of making ideology and action clear and unified”⁽¹³⁾. With his outstanding contributions, Hồ Chí Minh built a revolutionary press led by the Party, taking Marxism-Leninism as the ideological foundation. It is the people’s press, always fighting for the people’s interests. The principles and goals of revolutionary press are also the goals of the Party, which is to contribute to the cause of fighting against colonialism, imperialism, feudalism, gaining national independence, bringing freedom and happiness to the people. That goal demonstrates the humane and progressive values of Vietnam’s revolutionary press.

Nowadays, the booming trend of integration with many opportunities and challenges has required to strengthen the Party’s leadership over the press: “The press is the voice of the Party, the State, the socio-political organizations and a forum for the People, under the direct leadership of the Party, the management of the State, operating within the legal framework; ensuring the spirit of ideology, humanity, combativeness and diversity”⁽¹⁴⁾. It is necessary to well perform the task identified by the Resolution of the 13th National Party Congress: “Building a professional, humane and modern press and media. Well-planned and well-arranged press and media system. Review the planning of the publishing, printing and distribution agencies towards streamlined, good quality and modernization. Strengthen the management and development of media and information types on the Internet. Resolutely fight and eliminate toxic, distorted, reactionary products and information that negatively affect politics, society and fine traditional customs”⁽¹⁵⁾. More than ever, the press and media agencies must properly implement their principles, purposes and target audiences, and enhance humanity and scientific values. Resolutely prevent and overcome the commercialization of journalism, in favour of trivial tastes of a segment of readers, and straying from the principles, purposes, and target audience that will destroy the humane and progressive values of revolutionary journalism.

Fourthly, the humane and progressive value of journalism is also demonstrated in the objectivity, honesty and accuracy of journalism, correctly

reflecting the objective requirements and historical realities of the struggle against wrong, evil and backward things.

The *objectivity and honesty* of a journalistic work refer to the unfeignedness, the authenticity in a specific situation, in accordance with the requirements of history and in a specific era. There is no fiction or false reflection between the article and the targeted subject. Ensuring honesty and accuracy will make the article convincing and trustworthy to readers and listeners. To achieve that, the writer must stick to reality, understand people's lives and the developments of things and phenomena. Therefore, Hồ Chí Minh required that journalists must conduct an elaborate investigation and collect documents, must "speak with evidence, report with proof", and the actual data must be complete. To do so, journalists must know how to listen to the people's opinions and not depend solely on the reports of the cadres. Hồ Chí Minh said that writing "must be truthful. Do not make things up"⁽¹⁶⁾, "Reports must be: honest, concise, clear, and practical. Documents and figures must be analyzed and verified, not vague or lengthy. If you know something, say it, if you do not know something, say you do not know it. Do not speak carelessly"⁽¹⁷⁾, "When there is nothing to say, nothing to write, do not say, do not write carelessly"⁽¹⁸⁾, if "You have not investigated, have not researched and understood clearly, do not say nor write"⁽¹⁹⁾.

President Hồ Chí Minh required that genuine journalists must reflect information honestly, objectively, and respect the truth. That means writing must be truthful, not just writing about the good and the beautiful things while hiding the bad; not writing for personal purposes or profit. He said: "When writing about good people and good deeds, you must write simply and truthfully, not fabricate, not just reflect one-sidedly, not just propagate the good and hide the bad. Writing about the good and the beautiful things must be moderate, write as it is, do not exaggerate". "Write to highlight the good and the beautiful things of our people, our soldiers, our cadres, and our friends. At the same time, write to criticize the shortcomings of our cadres, people, and soldiers... Our army and people have enough good things to mention, there is no need to fabricate them"⁽²⁰⁾. Truthfulness is a mandatory principle that Hồ Chí Minh set not only for revolutionary journalists but also for all cadres and Party members when speaking and writing. The opposite of honesty is deceitfulness. Hồ Chí Minh criticized the way of "amplifying the little success, hiding and ignoring shortcomings and mistakes"⁽²¹⁾ as a crime against the people. The phenomenon of writing inauthentically and inaccurately will create misunderstandings and shield the bad things. President Hồ Chí Minh himself has always been an exemplary model when he frankly admitted his mistakes and shortcomings in

the process of leading and directing the revolution. With the same spirit, the Communist Party of Vietnam has the courage to “look straight at the truth”, “frankly evaluate the truth”, which is the basis for successful innovation in our country today.

Fifthly, the humane, humanitarianism, and progressive values are also demonstrated in the ethics of journalists.

According to Hồ Chí Minh, journalism is a special field that requires high intellectual capacity, professional skills and extensive practical experience. Each article, besides featuring capacity and broad knowledge, also demonstrates the heart and ethics of the journalist. Journalistic ethics is the core of journalistic activities. Without ethics, it is impossible to build an honest press that respects the truth, protects the truth, justice, protects the people, and serves the interests of the people and the nation. An ethical journalist is the one who always protects the truth, justice, and fights for justice as the guiding principle for his writing career. Therefore, journalists must constantly practice and improve their knowledge, skills and professional ethics. Hồ Chí Minh affirmed: “Journalists are also revolutionary soldiers. Pens and paper are their sharp weapons”. To fulfill their glorious historical mission, journalists need to “strive to improve their ideology, expertise and culture; focus on political study to grasp the Party and Government’s guidelines and policies; make deep research into reality, make deep research into the working masses”⁽²²⁾.

Humanity in journalism also requires maintaining journalistic ethics in the process of working and creating journalistic works. Accordingly, Hồ Chí Minh required press staff to be revolutionary soldiers. Journalists must have a firm political stance, humble and desire to learn, constantly study to improve their qualifications in all aspects, must have practical knowledge, know how to integrate into people’s lives to understand and write in accordance with practical requirements, in accordance with the mood and aspirations of the people. As he said, journalism is to “serve the people, to propagate and explain the Party and Government’s guidelines and policies”⁽²³⁾, “Your pens are also sharp weapons in the cause of supporting the righteous and eliminating the evil”⁽²⁴⁾. Therefore, press staff must constantly cultivate revolutionary ethics, must self-criticize and criticize, considering it as “a necessary and sharp weapon that helps us correct mistakes and develop strengths. Journalists must have determination, “Not afraid of difficulties, and be determined. If you don’t know, you must try to learn, and if you try to learn, you will definitely learn”⁽²⁵⁾.

Nowadays, the fourth industrial revolution has been changing the way journalists work. Journalists are trusted, and known as the representatives of the

eyes and ears of the people, of fairness and justice, thus, this requires journalists to cultivate virtue, train their minds, and take virtue as the foundation of their profession. It is necessary to build a team of journalists with political courage, professional expertise, pure moral qualities, and a consistent heart in each work – as the heart must be strong, the virtue must be bright, “Bright eyes - Pure heart - Sharp pen” (Hữu Thọ), wholeheartedly serving the cause of successfully building socialism and striving for freedom and happiness of the people.

To conclude, as the founder of Vietnam’s revolutionary press, President Hồ Chí Minh always paid attention to press activities and used the press as an effective tool for the revolutionary cause. For his 50 years of revolutionary activities and journalism, Hồ Chí Minh left behind a huge number of journalistic works with “more than 2,000 articles of various types”⁽²⁶⁾ written on many different topics and genres. His journalistic legacy is revolutionary and scientific, demonstrating humane, humanitarian and progressive values for and by the people. Hồ Chí Minh’s instructions on the press are always exemplary values that guide the construction and development of Vietnam’s revolutionary press today./.

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