

Tạp chí Lý Luận Chính Trị Và Truyền Thông

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In the modern world where the imprint of personalities and events can be quickly overwhelmed by an ocean of information and the fast pace of life, President Ho Chi Minh remains historically exceptional. Despite his demise more than half a century ago, the vitality and value of his thoughts continue to shine.

1. To correctly understand the nature of the times - Ho Chi Minh's outstanding ability

Throughout human history, original human reasoning rarely emerges without the presence of an urgent requirement. Karl Marx once said, "Every social epoch needs its great men." (1) To become a great man, first and foremost, the rare individual must thoroughly grasp the events of his epoch in order to lay the foundation to create the model of his historical contribution. If 'epoch' is used in a scientific context, in discussing Marxism-Leninism, 'today's era' is used here to refer to world history since the Russian Revolution of 1917. The perception of a modern epoch is essentially the awareness of the culture and their civil laws in place at any given point in history. If the unique character of an epoch is not taken into consideration in all its dimensions, one will become lost in history. Ho Chi Minh's ideological and practical success in both the cause of national liberation and building a new country is mainly due to his unique ability to perceive the 20th century epoch from a Vietnamese perspective and out of this understanding seize the moment.

At the beginning of the 20th century, the direction of Vietnamese national salvation remained an open question. Unlike his predecessors, Ho Chi Minh wanted to "go abroad to see for myself" (2) when he was still a young man. His inspiration to go

abroad demonstrated his broad vision and exceptional attention to the 'issues of the epoch.' Political sensitivities, intense aspirations for national liberation, and active, practical activities pushed Nguyen Ai Quoc to embrace Marxism-Leninism. Armed with its scientific methodology, he gradually realized the significance of the Russian Revolution and the characteristics of the epoch it inaugurated. This paved the way to success, as Vladimir Lenin said, "only on the basis of understanding the characteristics of an epoch can we take into account the detailed characteristics of this country or another country." (3) Based on Lenin's assertion that the Russian October Revolution had "opened a new era in world history," (4) Ho Chi Minh suggested some fundamental ways to view the new 'epoch.'

First, Ho Chi Minh emphasized the epochal significance of the Russian Revolution. The Russian Revolution was considered a great liberation because it broke the weakest link of capitalism and created genuine socialism in Russia. Ho Chi Minh wrote "The Russian Revolution opened the way to liberation for all nations and mankind, opening a new era in history." (5) While much of the world was living under colonial enslavement, the light of the Russian Revolution illuminated that painful part of world politics. In the article "Lenin and the colonial peoples" (1925), Ho Chi Minh emphasized "In the eyes of the colonial peoples, in their history of suffering and loss of rights, V.I Lenin is the creator of a new life, a beacon guiding the way to liberation for all oppressed humanity." (6) Thus, the October Revolution signaled the opening a new epoch in human history.

Second, Ho Chi Minh perspicaciously defined the characteristics of the new epoch. He asserted, the new epoch as "the era of transition from capitalism to socialism all over the world" (7). In other words, capitalism was approaching an age of decline and gradual collapse while the era of socialism was approaching on a worldwide scale. For people oppressed by colonialism like the Vietnamese, the new epoch was the beginning of an "era of revolution against imperialism, the era of national liberation." (8) The birth of Soviet Russia, later organized as the Soviet Union, garnered the help and support of the Russian people. It weakened capitalism and strengthened liberation movements the world over. It shattered the colonial system of imperialism and paved the way for hundreds of millions of people to become liberated from the shackles of slavery and move towards independence and freedom.

The new epoch also marked "the era of new foreign policy, the policy of peace and friendship among nations." (10) After the October revolution, Lenin described what Ho Chi Minh and colonially oppressed people desired most. All peoples in the world had the right to self-determination. As a stronghold of peace and armed against aggression, the Soviet Union served as a model for oppressed peoples and became an invincible force ready to repel any invasion. Imperialism could no longer lay down the law and therefore had to adjust its foreign policy.

In Ho Chi Minh's perception, the new epoch also foreshadowed a new era of social progress and scientific invention. It would also be an age of new morality with socialist ethics which profoundly opposed selfish individualism. Depending on each specific context, Ho Chi Minh emphasized one feature or another of the new era. However, in general, he concluded, "ours is a glorious era, an era of victory of socialism, national independence, and the weakening of imperialism." (11) It would also be an "era when Marxism-Leninism became the ideal and conscience of every progressive person on earth." (12) The accurate definition of the nature of the epoch demonstrated Ho Chi Minh's extraordinarily prophetic mind.

Third, Ho Chi Minh stressed that in the new era, the issue of nationhood must be resolved from the stand of the working class. With his broad world view, Ho Chi Minh asserted, "In the present day, the national liberation revolution is an integral part of the proletarian revolution on a worldwide scale; the national liberation revolution must develop into a socialist revolution to achieve complete victory." (13) By this he meant that the national liberation revolution must follow the trajectory of the proletarian revolution. National independence would be the first step towards a socialist society, and only socialism could guarantee the values of "Independence, Freedom, and Happiness."

The inception of a new epoch in human history takes shape as an objective rule but to understand correctly the idea of a new epoch meant finding the right path. Defining this path was the talent and merit of Ho Chi Minh. His vision was the starting point to success.

2. What defines the vitality of Ho Chi Minh's thought in the era?

The turbulent 20th century came to an end with the integration of socialist thinking around the globe, thanks to the contribution of many great people, including Ho Chi Minh. However, Ho Chi Minh's thought is not a memorial to the past. Here are some of the many contribution to the everlasting strength and vitality of Ho Chi Minh's thought.

First, Ho Chi Minh's core content of "national independence associated with socialism" is consistent with the natural law of the times. The desire for freedom is a basic human instinct. Therefore, when colonialism pushed countless nations into slavery, the struggle against colonialism and the many struggles for national independence became an inevitable trend. To find a way to save Vietnam, Ho Chi Minh assumed the role of representative of oppressed peoples' fight not just in Vietnam, but around the globe. He represented the leadership for the right to be a human being and live with equality and freedom. Armed with the scientific methodology of Marxism-Leninism and practical experience, Ho Chi Minh discovered the truth about the path of national salvation and the direction of nation-building. He said, "In order to save the country and liberate the nation, there is no other way than the proletarian revolution"(14) and "only socialism and communism can liberate the oppressed nation and its working class from slavery."(15) He developed many creative theories on the means of liberation. He believed the revolution of the French colonies must be active and concentrated. It should not wait for a successful revolution in France. It will succeed before a revolution is carried out in France.

As history shows, by trusting his leadership, the Vietnamese people gained independence and freedom for their own country. They also contributed to the breakdown of the entire colonial system and helped defeat both the old and new colonialism on a global scale. Therefore, Ho Chi Minh was the person who "contributed to transforming the world map. He pushed the wheel of history in the direction of progress".(16) British philosopher Bertrand Russell wrote, "President Ho Chi Minh's selfless pursuit of Vietnamese independence and unity for over half a century made him both the father of the nation and a leading architect of the post-colonial world".(17)

Thus, national independence associated with socialism is a handbook for national deliverance and a guideline for nation building for all people living under the oppression of colonialism. Outlining a revolutionary path suitable to the characteristics of the new era, Ho Chi Minh became the guide of the Vietnamese revolution and the leader of the national liberation movement on a worldwide scale.

Second, Ho Chi Minh's thought crystallizes the eternal values of mankind: peace, national independence, democracy, and social progress. The world still honors Ho Chi Minh as a great man of peace and culture because he strove to resolve conflicts among other peoples through peaceful dialogue. He never abandoned the hope to stop wars. When war became inevitable, he tried to minimize the scope of war to protect the regional and international peace. Ho Chi Minh was a peace lover but always devoted his efforts to the real peace - the peace of independence and freedom. As he stated, "All peoples in the world are equal from birth; all the peoples have the right to live, to be happy and free".(18) Ho Chi Minh explained that independence and freedom are political goals and moral values of man. A self-respecting person, or a patriotic nation would not commit to a life of slavery. When the world was still full of injustice, Ho Chi Minh's thought informed the people that "Nothing is more precious than independence and freedom." This belief became the great truth of the times and the measure of human dignity.

According to Ho Chi Minh, "independence, freedom, and happiness" is an inseparable value system. He often stated, "If the country is independent, but the people do not enjoy the happiness and freedom, independence is nonsense".(19) Therefore, achieving national independence must turn to socialism because "only socialism and communism can liberate the oppressed peoples and working people of the world from the yoke of slavery".(20) Only socialism can effectively solve the relationship between individuals and their social communities. Only socialism can create conditions for each individual to develop their "human capacities fully," as Marx said. Therefore, socialism in Vietnam "is both rationally and sentimentally suitable" thanks to its scientific and human nature.(21) Ho Chi Minh explained, socialism was synonymous with independence, freedom, happiness, democracy, and social progress, all of which are eternal aspirations of humanity. Therefore, Ho Chi

Minh's thought continues to encourage those who fight for that aspiration.

In the current era, Ho Chi Minh's thought tells us that "Nothing is more precious than independence and freedom." It holds its validity because the more the world integrates, the stronger the need for independence becomes. President of the World Peace Council Romesh Chandra once said, "In any place where people are fighting for independence and freedom, for peace and justice, for a new world, against poverty, Ho Chi Minh's thought and his flag is flying high".(22)

Third, Ho Chi Minh's thought represents the best aspiration for solidarity and friendship among nations. Aware of the world's trend of political association and integration, Nguyen Ai Quoc asserted, "The revolution of Annam is also a part of the world revolution. Whoever makes a revolution in the world is a comrade of the people of Annam".(23) This can be considered as the beginning of his strategy of international solidarity. This strategy was not reserved for political purposes but also addressed the sentiments of the fellowship of man. "Peoples in the world all are brothers".(24) In 1923, a Soviet poet named Osip Mandelstam wrote, "In the nobility of his manner and in the dim, soft voice of Nguyen Ai Quoc one can hear the approach of tomorrow, the oceanic silence of universal brotherhood."(25)

When he became President of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, Ho Chi Minh immediately declared, Vietnam is ready to "make friends with all democratic countries and hold no enmity with anyone".(26) He constantly educated people about friendship and the principle of "mutual help." Although the Cold War at that time was forcing nations and people to choose one side or other, President Ho Chi Minh still affirmed, "Countries with different social regimes and different forms of ideologies can also live together in peace".(27)

Ho Chi Minh attached great importance to the concept of solidarity. He tried to serve as a bridge and persistently implemented a balanced foreign policy between the Soviet Union and China when the two countries experienced conflict and a complicated relationship. American journalist Bernard Fall commented, "Since there was tension in the Sino-Soviet relationship, Hanoi has cleverly navigated its ties between the two lines".(28) To his last breath in pursuit of international solidarity, Ho

Chi Minh, in his testament, entrusted the Vietnam Workers' Party to contribute to the restoration of solidarity in the communist movement. Ho Chi Minh always sought to gather nations together rather than to drive them apart. He always tried to find a "common link" as opposed to deepening the differences. With the spirit of finding unity in diversity, Ho Chi Minh was a leader with a modern international mindset, a spirit of cultural tolerance, the great ambassador of Vietnam worldwide.

Fourth, Ho Chi Minh's thought applies the spirit of innovation and integration, the mainstream trend of our current era. Ho Chi Minh was particularly in favor of innovation. He defined revolution from an innovative point of view. "Revolution is disruptive that we break the old to make the new, break the bad to create the good".(29) He was loyal to Marxism but also questioned it with his critical thinking and innovative spirit. "Marx built his doctrine based on a certain philosophy of history, but which history? European history. What is Europe? That is not the whole of humanity".(30) Ho Chi Minh applied and creatively developed Marxism-Leninism with new arguments appropriate to the Vietnamese revolution. In the process of building socialism, he instructed cadres to refrain from being dogmatic. He asserted they "should not rigidly stick to the outdated mind"(31) and should constantly innovate. In his testament, while not directly using the concept of 'Renovation,' he outlined a renewal strategy on a large scale. "This is a fight against the outdated and perish, to create the new, good ones".(32) The cause of Doimoi initiated by the 6th National Party Congress was a retrieval of that spirit which brought about significant achievements. It also classically demonstrated Ho Chi Minh's strategic foresight.

As the world continues to rapidly develop, Ho Chi Minh's innovative thought becomes more meaningful and reliable today. So as not to fall behind and become dependent, Vietnam must constantly innovate under Ho Chi Minh's spirit to "flexibly deal with the hanging world with a calm mind."

Ho Chi Minh also laid the foundation for Vietnam's policy to open up and conjoin international economic integration. Ho Chi Minh perceived that economic integration comes from the need for economic development and strengthening of world peace. Shortly after the revolutionary state was born, he pursued the policy of opening up and called for investment through an appeal to the United Nations on January 12, 1946. In

international trade, Ho Chi Minh declared, "Vietnam will trade with all countries in the world that want to do business with Vietnam honestly".(33) Today, comprehensive international integration has become an unstoppable trend, which Ho Chi Minh foresaw through his policy on economic cooperation with countries holding dissimilar political organization in the 1940s. He understood Marx's prediction that our "history becomes the world history."

Fifth, Ho Chi Minh's thought on culture and morality helps to boost mutual understanding among nations and is a model of human dignity. Ho Chi Minh viewed all culture as a "culture of life" which is not superficial and must contribute to eliminating backwardness, ignorance, vanity, and luxury in the customs and upgrading of all people's intellectual level so each individual can reach their best ability. Culture is also the 'identification card' of a nation, helping people understand, respect, and assist each other on their way to prosperity. It was a profound moment when Ho Chi Minh said that the acquisition of world culture should go hand in hand with promotion of national culture to mutually shared benefits among nations who engage in cultural exchange.(34) In the relationship between preserving national identity while absorbing world culture, the national culture must be taken as the root because only when it maintains its uniqueness and identity can that nation contribute

to all humankind. UNESCO has assessed that Ho Chi Minh's thought "is the embodiment of the aspirations of all people who wish to enhance their cultural identity and mutual understanding among peoples".(35)

Ho Chi Minh was also a thinker who was particularly interested in morality. His thought of revolutionary morality and human morality was specific and profound. Ho Chi Minh constantly asserted the importance of morality by viewing it as the root of man, the strength of a revolutionary party, a condition for people to fulfill their talent while creating the attraction of a revolutionary doctrine. Ho Chi Minh said that the highest morality is to strive to make sacrifices for the sake of national independence, the happiness of the people, and all humanity. Ho Chi Minh's thought on morality is persuasive because of its scientific and humanistic nature. His life is frequently

described as “clear and pure as light,” and is evidenced by his complete dedication to his people and country. Not only Vietnamese people but also great minds of the times have acknowledged, “When it comes to a person whose whole life has left a deep love for the people, there is no one other than Ho Chi Minh”.(36) Ho Chi Minh’s humanism is the humanism of the new era – a communist humanism with the philosophy of action and practical improvement.

Ho Chi Minh’s thought on morality has tremendous significance in today’s paradoxical world. As can be seen today, much of the world is making gains in affluence and lifestyle. However, the gap between rich and poor continues to expand, and inequality between classes and ethnic groups is still severe due to the excessive development of individualism. Consequently, many people in the world have lost their lives or fallen into a crisis of life and faith based on their class and economic status. Violence and a deviant lifestyle of a part of the world’s population has increased. Some use the phrase ‘civilized but barbaric’ to describe the modern world. Indian Prime Minister Nehru was correct to conclude, “The world today is going through a crisis... What is needed now is an approach to peace and friendship. Ho Chi Minh’s thought gives us an approach”.(37) Ho Chi Minh’s thought on humanity and morality holds the philosophy of “being in life and a person” is full of the spirit of kindness and altruism that will awaken the compassionate part in each person, helping them find the proper and ethical behavior to reach true happiness. For the Vietnamese people, practicing Ho Chi Minh’s thought and moral example in their everyday lives will prevent moral deterioration in the Party and society.

It is impossible to fully explain in one article what gave life to the era of Ho Chi Minh’s thought. Continuing to explore, apply and creatively develop the spiritual legacy left by Ho Chi Minh will always require a lifetime of practice and a command from the heart of each of us. Commenting on Ho Chi Minh, international scholars have said, “without him, history could have taken a different path”.(38) The earthquake of the late 20th century collapsed the socialist regimes in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. But the wheel of history has not been reversed. The nature of the present day has not changed. Ho Chi Minh’s thought has identified the fundamental problems of the current era. Therefore, “the world is still changing, but Ho Chi Minh’s thought lives

forever”.(39) The pervasive spread of Ho Chi Minh’s cultural values will also create contrasts and make those who plot to distort him reveal their intellectual inferiority and weakness. Thus, while the years have passed, Ho Chi Minh “is not a memory of the past. He is a wonderful man for all times”.(40) That is the proper heritage that mankind has given to our respected Uncle Ho.

Tài liệu tham khảo

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