

UDC 32

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THEORIES ABOUT SOCIALISM MODEL IN THE RENOVATION PERIOD OF VIETNAM

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Abstract. Up to now, despite going through many ups and downs and temporarily falling into recession, socialism in many countries is still making effort to find the path of reform and renewal in order to keep moving forward. In theory, socialism does not change but in reality its expression has gone through many transformations. The emergence of models and paths to socialism is essential for countries to successfully build socialism. In other words, the general laws of socialism in specific cases need to be implemented in different ways depending on location and time and on the basis of history and the existence of various ethnicities in promoting the development of socialism in each country. This is a characteristic of socialism in this era. It can be said that socialism is moving and developing with more vigour, diversity, and uniqueness than ever, more in line with realistic developments. Under the leadership of the Communist Party of Vietnam, Vietnam is in the process of building socialism. Since its inception up to now, the Communist Party of Vietnam has consistently combined the basic principles of Marxism-Leninism, Ho Chi Minh Ideology with the reality of the country, leading the country to a successful implementation of national revolution, people's democracy and advancing to socialism. Since the beginning of socialism construction, especially in the context of the renewal of our country, we have increasingly determined the development path to suit the situation of the country and the trend of the era, forming a model of socialism with Vietnamese identity.

Keywords: socialism; the Communist Party of Vietnam; development; renewal of the country.

Marxism-Leninism maps out the most general and synoptic characteristics of the future socialism, but it fails to map out a clear and detailed path, not to mention details of the model to socialism for nations and ethnicities, especially for a country that has not gone through capitalism, an obsolete Eastern nation like Vietnam. Therefore, building a model of socialism is a difficult task, and it is even more difficult for Vietnam.

The process of formation and development of the path to socialism as well as the identification of the socialist model in our country is a process of hardship with research, innovating theoretical thinking, summarizing rich practices and creativity of the people. Sometimes we have to conduct experiments over and over again, learning and making inevitable mistakes in the process.

From the construction of Soviet-style socialist model in the pre-renovation period

Acquiring and applying Marxism-Leninism in Vietnam right at the moment it was founded, in the *Brief Political Platform and Brief Policy* by Nguyen Ai Quoc, the Communist Party of Vietnam affirmed its intention of conducting a bourgeois civil rights revolution and land revolution to advance towards socialism [6], which means that it would start from the anti-imperial and feudal civil rights revolution in order to regain independence for the people, land for plowers, and then move to socialist revolution, bypassing the phase of Capitalism. The goal of Vietnamese revolution is the national independence and socialism. The affirmation of the socialism goal is an objective inevitability which is at the same time completely

consistent with the advancing movement of our country's revolution and the world revolution's trend. On the other hand, it is also derived from the specific conditions of a semi-feudal colony and the heartfelt aspirations of Vietnamese working class.

After the August Revolution (1945), in the difficult context of the resistance war against French colonial rule, our Party understands that the path to socialism would be a long-term cause full of difficulties and challenges. With the motto "resistance along with national construction" aiming to bring the democratic national revolution forward, our Party remains consistent with the goal of socialism: "The Vietnamese Labor Party aims to complete the mission to make our nation liberated, abolish feudal and semi-feudal ruins, develop the people's democratic regime and make Vietnam become an independent and unified, democratic and free, prosperous nation advancing to socialism" [8].

After the victory of the resistance war against French colonialism (1954), the North was completely liberated. Based on the analysis of reality and the characteristics of revolution and referring to the experience of brotherhood socialist countries, our Party gradually formed the path and the model of socialism, which was established at the 3rd National Congress of the Party (1960), supplemented and developed through the subsequent Central Conferences. The 3rd Congress marked the formation of the basic line of socialist revolution in the North, the struggle to liberate the South and reunify the country. The highlight was the notion that the North would bypass the stage of capitalism and move on directly to socialism while backing up the South. The North would carry out simultaneously the reform of socialism and the construction of socialism.

All in all, over the period from 1930 to 1975, our Party made efforts to explore and formulate the conception in a fundamental and systematic way about socialism in half of the country in the context of war over the whole country. For a long time, people often

conceived that socialism could only be built in peaceful conditions, but in Vietnam, socialism was built in parallel with the liberation war, which is a very specific feature of our country.

The 4th National Congress of the Party (1976) mapped out the line to build socialism across the country: "Mastering proletariat specialized, promoting collective ownership of the working class and conducting three revolutions simultaneously: production relations revolution, scientific – technical revolution, ideological and cultural revolution, in which scientific – technical revolution is the key and promoting Socialist industrialization is the central task of the transition period to socialism, building a socialist mastery regime, building a new culture and a new commune socialism" [6].

However, during this time, Vietnam also made some mistakes when it came to the conception and organization of implementing the path to socialism. The biggest drawback is the lack of creative use of experiences from the Soviet Union and other socialist countries in building socialist models, overemphasis on "speeding up", "advancing" the socialism without fully calculating the form, steps, relationship between the reform and the construction of socialism in the fields, overemphasizing production relations while neglecting the need to match with the development of production forces. These are the consequences of the outdated thinking which based on the physical economy, absolute state and collective ownership; management based on centralized, bureaucratic, subsidized, economic planning models; the political system focusing on the administrative management of orders, applying the model of socialism and the perspective of people from Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union countries.

During the organizing process, we again expressed the subjective feeling, impatience, ignored the "initial step" and did not implement beforehand the policy to maintain "multiple economic components". We did not consider accurately the domestic and interna-

tional real situation, did not create a driving force for development, which led to many incomplete socio-economic objectives and difficulties in people's lives along with the decreasing beliefs in socialism, especially in the early 80s of the twentieth century.

Well-aware of this, our Party continued to adjust a step in the line of Vietnam's leadership towards socialism in the following years. The Party defined that our country was at the beginning of a transition period; established the details of the transition period; adjusted one step in the economic structure, emphasized agriculture as the leading front, etc. However, due to not being fully aware of systematic issues, such adjustment of economic structure, investment structure and economic forms did not include necessary and strong enough innovations. In particular, due to the oversight of the objective law, the perception of socialism that was not true with Vietnam's reality, we were not fully aware that the transition period to socialism would be a relatively long history process and go through many stages. Due to the subjective and impetuous guidance, we made serious and prolonged mistakes concerning the guidelines, big policies, wrong strategic direction and the organizing implementation that made our country fall into status of socio-economic crisis.

To define the model of a socialist society with Vietnamese identity from conducting the renewal of the country till now

The 6th National Congress of the Party (in 1986) set out the path of renewing the country, which was a milestone marking the turning point in the development of the construction path to socialism, marking an important transition in awareness and the organizing implementation of the accurate road to socialism, in accordance with the law and the heart of the people.

The country's development in practice has confirmed the correctness and effectiveness of the Party's exploration and exploitation of success. By the end of 1990, our country had not yet escaped from the socio-

economic crisis but had achieved certain important initial achievements.

In the complex and challenging context of exploring and developing the theory of socialism, inheriting the lessons (both successful and unsuccessful lessons) of the cause of socialist construction and the defence of our country in many decades, in 1991, the 7th National Congress of the Party defined a rather new concept and system of socialist society. This is an objective premise of theory and practice for the proposal of the *Platform on national construction from the transitional period to socialism*, identifying the six characteristics of the socialist society our people are building. This platform has become a guiding ideology which led to achievements helping our country overcome socio-economic crisis. This is the model of socialism, the nature and appearance of socialism, the process of shaping socialism in Vietnam. Our Party clearly defined: "The socialist society that we are building is a society owned by working class; a highly developed economy based on modern production forces and a public regime of major production materials, a society with an advanced culture imbued with national identity. People are liberated from oppression, exploitation, injustice, they work based on their capacity and distribute in accordance to labour performance. People lead a free, plentiful and happy life, can develop comprehensively and have conditions for personal development. Ethnic groups in the country live in equality, solidarity and mutual support and have friendly and cooperative ties with all countries in the world" [6].

These six characteristics display the development in our Party's theory concerning the construction of a socialist social model: Firstly, it defines that the ownership of socialist society belongs to the working class. Secondly, a highly developed production force is the condition, the premise in order to increase labor productivity, create a material basis for socialism, and to improve people's lives. However, in order to help people enjoy

the results in accordance to labour performance, it is imperative that a public regime of primary means of production should be implemented. It is the condition and means to implement basic economic benefits. The public regime of primary means of production is the economic nature of socialism, which is the basis for ensuring the economic ownership of the working class. Thirdly, people should be put at the center of development. In theory, culture is creative people's activities towards humanity and human values, the aspiration towards the true, the good and the beautiful to develop people and society. It is the basis for planning the sustainable development strategy of the country. Fourthly, the Party attributes great importance on building a great national unity, because only by solidarity can we gather people with intellectual strength, creativity, self-dependence, self-reliance, beautiful personality, etc. to focus on the country development process.

It can be said that the characteristics of socialism stated in the *Platform of national construction in the transition period to socialism* are the essential characteristics using to identify socialism. These characteristics in some ways also state clearly the motivation and the goal of the process of socialist construction.

At the 10th National Congress of the Party which summed up more than 20 years of the country's renewal, the Communist Party of Vietnam gained a deeper understanding of the nature of socialism with eight characteristics. Eight characteristics are: "Prosperous people, a strong and democratic nation; a fair and civilised society; owned by the people; a society with an advanced economy based on modern production forces and production relations in accordance with the development level of production forces. It is a society with advanced culture imbued with national identity; a society where people are free from oppression and injustice, enjoy a life of plenty, freedom and happiness, and could develop comprehensively, where all ethnic groups in the Vietnamese community live in equality,

solidarity and mutual support. It is a society with a socialist law-governed state of the people, by the people and for the people under the leadership of the Communist Party; having friendly and cooperative ties with all countries in the world" [6].

Compared to the *Platform on national construction from the transitional period to socialism* in 1991, in the 10th National Congress, the awareness of the nature and characteristics of socialism have new developments. The purpose of socialism is stated clearer, more specific and more defined. The socialist society model has a new feature, which is the establishment of a socialist law-governed State of the people, by the people and for the people, under the leadership of the Communist Party. This is an important addition to the nature of the socialist society that our Party and people are building. It is appropriate to identify the people as the owners instead of the working class. Our Party also puts the general goal system "Prosperous people, a strong and democratic nation; a fair and civilised society" as the first of 8 characteristics.

Inheriting the 10th National Congress, *Platform on national construction from the transitional period to socialism* (supplements and amendments in 2011) identifies: The socialist society that our people are building is a society with: Prosperous people, a strong and democratic nation; a fair and civilised society; owned by the people. It is a society with an advanced economy based on modern production forces and a public regime of major production materials; an advanced culture imbued with national identity. It is a society where people are free from oppression and injustice, enjoy a life of plenty, freedom and happiness, and could develop comprehensively, where all ethnic groups live in equality, solidarity and mutual support. It is a society having a socialist law-governed State of the people, by the people and for the people under the leadership of the Communist Party; having friendly relations and cooperation with countries around the world" [6].

Compared to the 1991 Platform, the Platform (supplements and amendments in 2011) indicates some new points:

Firstly, two features are added: The overarching, general characteristic: "Prosperous people, a strong and democratic nation; a fair and civilised society" and the characteristic "a socialist law-governed State of the people, by the people and for the people under the leadership of the Communist Party". These two characteristics are added in 10th Congress. A new point compared to 10th Congress is that the word "democratic" is put before the word "fair" in the general characteristic, because both theory and practices show that democracy is a condition, the premise of equity, civilization; and emphasize that our society's nature is a democratic society in accordance with Ho Chi Minh's Thought.

Secondly, a number of suitable features are added and developed, such as: "owned by people" is stated instead of "owned by the working class" from the Platform in 1991. In terms of people, the Platform in 1991 defines: People are liberated from oppression, exploitation, injustice, working based on their capacities, distribution in accordance to labour performance, living a free, plentiful and happy life and being able to develop comprehensively. The platform (supplements and amendments in 2011) identifies: "People live a free, plentiful and happy life and are able to develop comprehensively". Regarding the ethnic characteristics, the 1991 Platform identifies: the ethnic groups in the country live in equality, solidarity and mutual support. The platform (supplements and amendments in 2011) defines: "The ethnic groups of the Vietnamese community live in equality, solidarity and mutual support". With regards to the international cooperation's feature, the 1991 Platform defines: "having friendly and cooperative ties with all countries over the world". The platform (supplements and amendments in 2011) expands to "having friendly and cooperative ties with countries around the world".

Thirdly, in terms of economic characteristics, the 1991 Platform states: "There is a highly developed economy based on modern production forces and a public regime of primary production materials". Regarding this, 10th Congress indicates: "There is a highly developed economy, based on modern production forces and production relations in accordance with the development level of production forces". The platform (supplemented and developed in 2011) affirms: "There is a highly developed economy based on modern forces of production and progressive relations of production." (adding the word "progressive" and removing the phrase "with the development level of production forces" compared to the 10th Congress).

The characteristics of the socialist society model that our Party defines indicate that socialism in Vietnam is the brilliant and profound embodiment of Ho Chi Minh's thought, is the essential and creative reality of the Marxism-Leninism in line with the country's reality. This is the combination of "theoretical model of socialism" and "socialism model" which vividly expresses the nature of socialism. In other words, Vietnam on the one hand follows basic principles, on the other hand bases on the country's reality, thoroughly grasps and applies those principles in an active, independent and creative way. While having difficulties in finding and developing the theory of socialism, the Communist Party of Vietnam clearly demonstrates the theoretical thinking, political bravery and the notion of socialist society in accordance with Vietnam and the world context. Socialism with Vietnamese identity is a discovery, creation of a socialist path and model that is in accordance with Vietnam's specific historical conditions. The model of socialism in Vietnam is a diverse and vivid manifestation of the vitality of scientific socialism's common principles in specific historical context of Vietnam.

The construction process and the characteristics of the socialist model in Vietnam also show that socialism in Vietnam stems

from its reality and contains the Vietnamese identity. Socialism with Vietnamese identity today is the socialism that has been renovated in model and the way of building based on specific conditions, and the key condition is the reality of Vietnam. During that process, Vietnam affirms its outlook on socialism, methods and measures to build socialism have changed considerably and become clearer. The career of building socialism in Vietnam marks a turning point of socialism from traditional model to a dynamic one, containing both common rules and unique characteristics of Vietnam and characteristics suitable to the era. Indeed, that model still inherits the logical elements of the traditional model. There is no change in the goal of socialism but there are important innovations in the model, which contributes to marking a new historical period in the development of socialism. Comrade I. Stoilov, Vice Chairman of the Bulgarian Socialist Party said: "... Vietnam's impressive achievements are mainly based on the construction of its own model and the combination of reforms and the country's historical traditions" [7]. Vietnam's renewal "is a creative process based on Marxist-Leninist theory while adjusting in accordance with national features" [11].

The socialism model in Vietnam is also a model containing and expressing the features of today's era. As a part of the global movement, socialism is inevitably unable to be separated from the path of human civilization, unable to develop in a closed and isolated state. If socialism want to be strengthened, unquestionably it must accumulate, acquire and convert the values created by mankind in order to enrich, develop strongly and sustainably. The feature which is also the major disadvantage of the traditional socialist model is that it is not aware of the importance of this factor. Learning from history, our Party has defined and recognized clearly that new characteristics and trends of the world situation in the context of international relations today are important basis to set the right

goals and directions for the construction of a socialist society in Vietnam.

The characteristics of the socialist society we are building have formed socialism with Vietnamese identity. However, Vietnamese identity is not simply or merely "unique Vietnam" or "Vietnamese characteristics". This way of thinking would deteriorate the way of understanding Vietnamese identity. It must be seen that the meaning of the socialist model with Vietnamese identity is the vivid embodiment of the relationship between the unity and the diversity of socialism in this era. Although the construction of socialism of the world still faces difficulties, if the historical lessons are properly summarized, the basic principles of Marxism-Leninism are combined with specific situation of the country and the new situation of the era's trends, socialism will overcome the difficulties when moving forward, through the practice of each country, and will constantly strengthen and develop, expressing vitality, creating a strong and bright future.

Vietnam's achievements in constructing and actualizing the socialist society model are important initial steps, but there are still many difficulties and challenges. These achievements not only have created great confidence in the building socialism career for Vietnamese people but also encouraged people of other countries to follow the path to socialism. That achievement of Vietnam is highly appreciated by public opinion and international friends. In the opening of the 8th Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam, international delegates said: "The comrades' consistency of with the ideals of socialist civilization and the comrades' achievements in socio-economic development today is an encouraging example for us in the struggle to restore socialism, etc. The temporary failure of socialism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe cannot reverse history. Evidence of that is the success of socialist countries, including the success of Socialist Republic of Vietnam in economic construction and cultural development. Evidence

of that is also the desire of the working class in former Soviet Union countries to return to the path of socialist development, to re-establish Soviet government of peoples and alliances of peoples” [7]. The achievements in concretizing an appropriate path to socialism are not only invaluable assets of Vietnamese communists but is also a source of inspiration and confidence to the communists, revolutionaries and working class worldwide.

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