

HO CHI MINH'S IDEOLOGY ON DEMOCRATIC WORKING STYLE

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Abstract: Democracy is the aspiration of humanity. In his revolutionary life, President Ho Chi Minh considered democracy as one of the goals and motivations to participate in revolutionary activities. He spent a significant amount of efforts studying, analyzing, and laying the foundation for the development of democracy in Vietnam. In Ho Chi Minh's ideology, democracy is manifested in a rich and diverse way, among which the democratic work style of cadres and party members is an important component. According to him, practicing democracy is the key to the success of the revolution. Therefore, He placed great emphasis on the need for cadres and party members to develop a democratic work style.

Keywords: Ho Chi Minh's ideology; style; democracy.

I. INTRODUCTION

President Ho Chi Minh is the great teacher of the Vietnamese revolution, the beloved leader of the working class and the entire Vietnamese nation. He was an outstanding and steadfast soldier, a distinguished revolutionary activist in the international communist movement and the national liberation movement. Ho Chi Minh's ideology is most exemplary in its integrity, noble virtue, high intelligence, and the conduct and style of a communist leader and soldier. His ideology on democratic work style forms a comprehensive and profound system of opinions on the position, role, and standards of behavior, work methods, actions and conduct that create the uniqueness of the cadre and party member ranks. This was formed on the basis of inheriting and developing the fine traditional cultural values of the nation, assimilating the essence of human culture, especially in creatively applying and developing Marxism-Leninism. The ideology holds invaluable significance for the Vietnamese people and offers valuable insights for humanity. Researching and clarifying the content of Ho Chi Minh's ideology on this issue is an urgent matter for the specialized field of Ho Chi Minh studies. The practicality of this issue has been and is currently studied by some scholars using various methods and approaches, while research results at different levels have been published. To contribute to the ongoing research and clarification of this issue, our group of author focuses on analyzing and discussing the following details:

II. THE POSITION AND ROLE OF THE DEMOCRATIC WORK STYLE

1. Democratic work style is one of the most important qualities for cadres

During his lifetime, President Ho Chi Minh always emphasized the role of cadres. He asserted: "Cadres are the root of all work" [1, p.309]; "The success or failure of every work depends on the quality of cadres" [1, p.280]. Besides recognizing the significant role of cadres, He also placed special emphasis on the education, training, and development of cadres, considering it "the foundational work of the Party". He pointed out: "The Party must nurture cadres the way a gardener tends to precious plants. We must value talent, cadres, and value each individual who contributes to our common work" [1, p.313]. Focusing on the education, training and development of cadres was crucial for him, as He understood that "no one is perfect" and people have their good and bad, virtuous and evil sides within them. The important issue is how to allow the good to flourish like spring flowers while the bad is gradually eliminated. This requires not only self-cultivation and discipline by each cadre but also significant focus on their training by the Party. The education, training, and development

of cadres ultimately focus on two fundamental issues: talent and virtue, with virtue being the foundation. The talent and virtue of an cadre are manifested in various ways, one of which is the democratic work style. Therefore, during his lifetime, President Ho Chi Minh paid special attention to the education, training, and development of a democratic work style among cadres and party members. He understood that the democratic work style plays a crucial role not only for cadres but also as a key factor in the success or failure of the revolution; it is also the essence of our regime. According to him: “Our regime is a democratic one where thoughts must be free. What does freedom mean? On every issue, everyone is free to express their opinions, contributing to finding the truth. This is both the right and the duty of each individual” [5, p.378]. He believed that a lack of democracy in cadres and organizations is extremely dangerous: “For leadership bodies and leaders, if party members and cadres have opinions or criticisms but dare not speak out or criticize, there will be a gap between superiors and subordinates. The people and the Party will drift apart. The superiors think everything is fine while the subordinates have issues but dare not speak out. This is not because they have no opinions, but because they think their voices won't be heard or considered, and they might even be victimized for it. As a consequence, they keep their opinions bottled up, leading to frustration and disappointment. This leads to habits such as “not speaking to their faces, only speaking behind their backs”, “keeping silent within the Party, spilling the beans outside of it”, or “sneaking around” and other bad habits” [1, p.283].

2. Democratic work style is the key to success

In Ho Chi Minh's ideology, practicing democracy plays an extremely important role. With regards to the strength of practicing democracy, He considered it the key to success. In analyzing the strength of democracy, He affirmed that: “Practicing democracy is the master key to solve all the difficulties” [8, p.325]. Practicing democracy is the most crucial means to avoid authoritarianism and dictatorship which are dangerous diseases, and the seeds of all mistakes in leadership and direction. Practicing democracy serves as the foundation for cultivating the people's talents, intellect, and strength on the basis of relying on the people, promoting their intelligence, allowing them to speak up, contribute ideas, and critique, thereby acting as a mirror for self-reflection, self-correction, recognizing and enhancing the positives, and accurately identifying and rectifying the negatives and limitations.

Recognizing the significant role of democratic work style, He repeatedly advised: “To strengthen the Party, we must expand our democracy” [4, p.287]; “To lead effectively, committees at all levels must be truly united, truly democratic, must practice the system of 'collective leadership, individual responsibility', and engage in criticism and self-criticism to continuously improve” [7, p.448]. For the State, He demanded: “Our State must develop democracy to the utmost, because the nature of our State is a State of the people. Only by developing democracy to the utmost can we mobilize all the forces of the people to advance the revolution” [6, p.376]. He clearly understood that the work style of cadres is one of the most important factors determining the quality of work; therefore, He required: “The conduct must be democratic, relying on the strength of people, learning from their initiatives to lead them” [4, p.149]. To develop a democratic style, “cadres must closely follow production, be close and democratic towards the people” [8, p.526]. To address this issue in-depth and comprehensively, He pointed out the dialectical relationship of democracy: “Democracy, initiative, enthusiasm, these three concepts are closely related. Democracy allows cadres and the people to propose initiatives. When these initiatives are praised, the people involved become even more enthusiastic, and others learn from them. As initiatives and enthusiasm for work increase, many minor shortcomings might also be self-corrected” [1, p.284].

III. MANIFESTATIONS OF DEMOCRATIC WORK STYLE

1. Firmly grasping and effectively practicing the principle of “collective leadership, individual responsibility”

In Ho Chi Minh's ideology, the democratic work style is demonstrated through firmly grasping and effectively practicing the principle of “collective leadership, individual responsibility”. He frequently required cadres, from the Central Committee to the local branches, to correctly implement this principle. He wrote: “From the Central Committee to the local branches, everyone must adhere to the principle of collective leadership and individual responsibility; must oppose the cult of individuality and bureaucratic orders; be honest and straightforward in criticism and self-criticism; and be truly democratic” [5, p.431]. Ho Chi Minh affirmed that collective leadership, individual responsibility is: “the highest principle of our democratic government” [1, p.490]. He believed that collective leadership and individual responsibility is the core manifestation of the principle of centralization and democracy. He stated: “Collective leadership is democracy. Individual responsibility is centralization” [1, p.620]. He explained this principle through many speeches and writings, claiming that collective leadership means that all significant matters must be thoroughly and collectively discussed before a decision is made. He advised: “Democracy means that: For major issues, they must be discussed with team members before a decision is made. For minor issues, cadres should discuss among themselves and act. Do not act arbitrarily, defensively, or

oppressively. Avoid bureaucratic and authoritarian tendencies. Encourage self-criticism and criticism within the team” [5, p.361-362]. He emphasized: “We must wholeheartedly respect the collective, promote internal democracy; absolutely avoid authoritarianism, placing oneself above the organization or outside of the discipline. The more one contributes, the more humble one should be. Do not become arrogant or entitled due to some achievements. Remember that all successes are thanks to the efforts and sacrifices of the entire Party and the people, not of any individual hero. Our glorious duty towards the Party and the people is to be a lifelong loyal child of the Party, a devoted servant of the people” [7, p.67]. On another occasion, He required: “For cadres managing cooperatives, it is necessary to promote the spirit of proactive exemplary, selflessness, integrity, to develop a democratic style, handle everything according to the direction of the people, overcome bureaucratic, authoritarian, arrogant, and dictatorship tendencies” [6, p.360].

According to President Ho Chi Minh: “Why is collective leadership necessary? Because even the most intelligent and experienced individual can only see and consider one or several aspects but not all the aspects of an issue. Therefore, multiple people are needed. More people means more experiences, each seeing a certain aspect of the issue. Combining the experiences and considerations of many people allows for a comprehensive understanding of the issue, leading to a thorough and error-free resolution. The meaning of collective leadership is simple, its truth is clear. The proverb 'The wisdom of the group exceeds that of the wisest individual' explains this” [1, p.620]. He also explained: “Why is individual responsibility necessary? Once a matter has been thoroughly discussed by many people and the plan is made clear, it should be entrusted to an individual or a small group of individuals to execute accordingly. This ensures specialization and smooth operation. Without individual responsibility, the problem of passing the buck arises; as a consequence, no one does the work in the end. The proverb 'Too many cooks spoil the broth' applies here. Therefore, leadership must be collective, but responsibility must be individual” [1, p.620-621]. He asserted: “Leadership without collective consensus leads to defensiveness, authoritarianism, and subjectivity, resulting in failure. Responsibility not assigned to individuals leads to disorganization, chaos, and anarchy, also resulting in failure. Collective leadership and individual responsibility must always go hand in hand” [1, p.621]. He also made it clear: “However, not every trivial matter that can be resolved by one person should be brought to discussion. That is not collective leadership, but an inflexible understanding of collective leadership, wasting time in meetings. Routine matters that can be correctly resolved by one person should be handled with care by the responsible individual. Only important matters should require collective decision-making” [1, p.621]. In summary, President Ho Chi Minh affirmed: “Collective leadership is democracy. Individual responsibility is centralization. Collective leadership and individual responsibility means centralized democracy” [1, p.621].

To effectively implement this principle, President Ho Chi Minh reminded cadres and party members, especially those in leadership positions, to oppose individualism, narrow-mindedness, jealousy, bureaucracy, authoritarianism, dictatorship, complacency, revolutionary elitism, detachment from the people and disregard for the collective. The consequences of these diseases are extremely dangerous; they could lead to the loss of democracy within the Party and the political system, which destroys the key to success, resulting in internal division, factionalism, localism, thus weakening the Party destabilizing the political system.

2. Respecting and promoting the role of the people as masters

In Ho Chi Minh’s ideology, the democratic work style is also reflected in how cadres and party members respect and promote the role of the people as masters. For Him, the people play a significant role: “In the sky, nothing is more precious than the people. In the world, nothing is stronger than the united force of the people” [5, p.453]. He stated: “Our regime is a democracy, meaning the people are the masters. Our Party is the leading party, meaning all cadres, from the Central Committee to the regions, provinces, districts, and communes, at any level and in any sector, must be loyal servants of the people. All cadres must wholeheartedly serve the people; must pay utmost attention to the lives of the people; must follow the Party's policies and adhere to the direction of the people” [7, p.83-84]. Therefore, He consistently demanded that cadres and party members respect and promote the role of the people as masters. They must be close and friendly to the people, must listen to their opinions, rely on them to work, and utilize their talents and intellect to serve the revolution. Follow the direction of the people. He affirmed: “Democracy means relying on the strength of the people, following the correct direction of the people” [3, p.362]. On another occasion, He emphasized: “The Party's guidelines, policies, and resolutions are all the result of party members collectively gathering experiences and opinions. They are then discussed and resolved in Party meetings, where no one should act arbitrarily or authoritarily” [4, p.286]. According to him: “In all tasks, from the planning stage and throughout the implementation, it is necessary to mobilize the people, instilling in everyone the spirit of collective ownership” [8, p.325].

In addition, He placed special emphasis on the fight against bad habits among cadres and party members, especially the issues of revolutionary elitism, heroism, bureaucracy, arrogance, authoritarianism, detachment from the people, etc. In Ho Chi Minh's ideology, these are extremely dangerous diseases for the Party, the regime, and the revolutionary cause, that need to be eradicated.

3. Effectively implementing the principle of self-criticism and criticism

In Ho Chi Minh's ideology, "Criticism is the right and duty of everyone, it is the practice of democracy. Subordinates have the right to criticize superiors. The people have the right to criticize cadres, the government, the Party, and organizations. Everyone has the right to criticize each other for mutual progress" [3, p.114]. He pointed out: "The purpose of criticism is primarily to help each other to correct and improve. It is to improve the way of working to make it better and more accurate. It is for internal unity and solidarity" [1, p.272]. He frequently demanded within the Party: "We must expand the movement of criticism and self-criticism in the Party, in organizations, bodies, in the press, and among the people. Criticism and self-criticism must be regular, concrete, democratic, from top to bottom and from bottom to top. Finally, the Party must have strict inspection procedures" [3, p.34]. He clearly stated: "The Party is the servant of the people, and should welcome the people's criticism. The wider the criticism, the more accurate the policies, the higher the credibility. Do not fear criticism leading to loss of credibility. The people are perceptive; they know how to distinguish the truth from lies. The people are only afraid to speak out against us for fear of retribution. The more we self-criticize in front of the people, the more they respect and support us" [2, p.370].

According to him: "Not to criticize means to give up one's democratic right. However, criticism must be upright, legitimate, definitely not "whispering behind their backs", writing anonymous letters,..." [3, p.114]. To implement criticism effectively and correctly, He asserted: "The goal of criticism is to help each other correct shortcomings, so the attitude of the critic must be sincere, serious, and appropriate. It is necessary to point out why the shortcomings exist, what their negative consequences are, and what methods should be used for correction. The remedy must fit the issue. Absolutely avoid sarcasm, digging up dirt, or seeking revenge. Do not criticize for the sake of criticism. In particular, avoid 'not speaking upfront, but backbiting behind the scenes" [3, p. 114]. According to President Ho Chi Minh: "Criticism must be keen, thorough, honest, unbiased, and sufficient. It is necessary to clearly identify both strengths and weaknesses. At the same time, avoid using sarcastic, bitter, or jeering words. Criticize actions, not people" [1, p.272]. Emphasizing this issue in his Will, President Ho Chi Minh advised: "In the Party, widely practicing democracy, regular and serious self-criticism and criticism is the best way to consolidate and develop the unity and solidarity of the Party. There must be mutual love comradeship" [1, p. 611].

IV. CONCLUDE

In conclusion: The democratic work style in Ho Chi Minh's ideology is correct, profound, comprehensive, and holistic. It differs from the work style of authoritarianism, dictatorship, bureaucracy, tyranny, arrogance, disregard for the collective and the people, detachment from reality, lack of effort in self-improvement, and reluctance to learn and improve. Furthermore, the democratic work style is also completely alien to the manifestation of "blindly following the people", "yes-man" mentality, excessive democracy, or "talking democracy, but acting autocratically". The democratic work style in Ho Chi Minh's ideology involves relying on the collective, cultivating collective intelligence, effectively implementing the principle of collective leadership, individual responsibility; respecting and promoting the role of the people as masters; and effectively practicing the principle of self-criticism and criticism. This is one of the important qualities of cadres and party members in Vietnam in general, and by extension, also an important issue that any cadre of any regime in the world should have and practice well.

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