

Ho Chi Minh

On revolutionary morality



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President Ho in Viet Bac (1948) - a sketch by Phan Ke An

On revolutionary morality - Ho Chi Minh (1958)

Ever since the beginning of its existence mankind has had to struggle against nature - wild beasts, the weather, etc, - in order to survive. To succeed in this struggle each individual must rely on the force of large numbers of people, on the collective, on society. Alone, he cannot get the better of nature and subsist.

In order to survive, man must also produce to get food and clothing. Production, too must rely on the collective, on society. Alone, the individual cannot produce.

Our era being a civilized, revolutionary era, one must rely all the more on the force of the collective, of society, in all undertakings. More than ever the individual cannot stand apart but must join the collective, join society.

Therefore, individualism goes counter to collectivism; collectivism and socialism will certainly prevail while individualism will surely disappear.

The mode and forces of production ceaselessly develop and change; so do, therefore, man's thinking, social systems, etc. All of us know that from the past to the present, the mode of production has evolved from the use of tree branches and stone axes to that of machines, electricity and nuclear energy. Social systems have also developed from primitive communism through slave-ownership and feudalism to capitalism, and today nearly half of mankind is progressing to socialism and communism.

No one can stop this development and progress.

With the coming into being of private ownership, society has been divided into classes - exploiting classes and exploited ones -, hence the emergence of social contradictions and class struggle. Any person necessarily belongs to one class or another and no one can stand outside the classes. At the same time, each individual represents the ideology of the own class.

In the old society, the feudal landlords, capitalists and imperialists mercilessly

oppressed and exploited the other social strata, especially the workers and peasants. They plundered the common property produced by society, turned into their own private property and lived in clover. But they kept ranting about "virtue", "freedom", "democracy"...

Refusing to endure this oppression and exploitation for ever, the workers, peasants and other toiling people have risen up and made the revolution in order to liberate themselves and transform the wicked old society into a fine new one, in which all labouring people would live happily, and from which the exploitation of man by man would be banned.

To succeed, the revolution must be led by the working class - the most advanced, conscious, resolute, disciplined and best organized class - with the proletarian party as its staff. This has been incontestably borne out by the revolution in the Soviet Union and in the other socialist countries.

To make the revolution, to transform the old society into a new one is a very glorious, but also extremely heavy task, a complex, protracted and hard struggle. Only a strong man can travel a long distance with a heavy load on his back. A revolutionary must have a solid foundation of revolutionary morality in order to fulfil his glorious revolutionary task.

Born and brought up in the old society, we all carry within ourselves, to varying extent, traces of that society in our thinking and habits. The worst and most dangerous vestige of the old society is individualism. Individualism runs counter to revolutionary morality. The least remaining trace of it will develop at the first opportunity, smother revolutionary virtues and prevent us from wholeheartedly struggling for the revolutionary cause.

Individualism is something very deceitful and perfidious, it skillfully induces one to backslide. And everybody knows that it is easier to backslide than to progress. That is why it is very dangerous.

To shake off the bad vestiges of the old society and to cultivate revolutionary virtues, we must study hard, and educate and reform ourselves in order to progress continuously. Otherwise we shall retrogress and lag behind, and shall

eventually be rejected by the forward-moving society.

It is not only by going to school or attending training courses that we can study and educate and reform ourselves. In every revolutionary activity, we can and must do it. Underground revolutionary activities, the general insurrection, the war of resistance, the present building of socialism in the North and the struggle for national reunification are very good schools where we can acquire revolutionary virtues.

People with revolutionary virtues fear neither difficulties, hardships nor failures; they neither waver nor step back. For the sake of the interests of the Party, the revolution, the class, the nation and mankind, they never hesitate to sacrifice their own interests, and if need be, even their own lives. This is a very clear and lofty expression of revolutionary morality.

In our Party, Comrades Tran Phu, Ngo Gia Tu, Le Hong Phong, Nguyen Van Cu, Hoang Van Thu, Nguyen Thi Minh Khai and many others have laid down their lives for the sake of the people and the Party, thus setting brilliant examples of total dedication to the public interest and complete selflessness.

People with revolutionary virtues remain simple, modest, and ready to face more hardships, even when meeting with work think of how best to fulfil our task, not of how to get the greatest reward. We must avoid boasting about past achievements and claiming special prerogatives, or indulging in bureaucratism, conceit and depravation. This also is an expression of revolutionary morality.

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In brief, revolutionary morality consists of the following:

To devote one's life to struggling for the Party and the revolution. This is the most essential point.

To work hard for the Party, observe Party discipline, and implement

Party lines and policies.

To put the interests of the Party and the labouring people before and above one's own interests. To serve the people wholeheartedly. To struggle selflessly for the Party and the people and to be exemplary in every respect.

To endeavour to study Marxism-Leninism and constantly use self-criticism and criticism to heighten one's ideological standard, improve one's work and progress together with one's comrades.

Each revolutionary must deeply realize that our Party is the most advanced and close-knit organization of the working class, the leader of the latter and the labouring people at large. At present, our working class, though still not very numerous, is developing with every passing day. In future, agricultural co-operatives will be organized everywhere, machines will be widely used in the countryside, and peasants will become workers. The intellectuals will become well acquainted with manual labour and the difference between brain and manual workers will be gradually wiped out. Our country's industry will develop day by day. Hence, the workers will be ever more numerous, their strength will grow, and the future of the working class is great and glorious.

It will reform the world and itself as well.

The revolutionary must clearly realize this and firmly stick to the stand of the working class so as to struggle whole-heartedly for socialism and communism, for the working class and all the labouring people. Revolutionary morality consists in absolute loyalty to the Party and the people.

Our Party pursues no other interests than those of the working class and the toiling people. Therefore, its immediate objective is to struggle for the gradual building of socialism in the North and the reunification of the country.

Under the Party's leadership our people have fought heroically, overthrown

the colonial and feudal domination, and completely liberated the North of our country. This was a great success. But the revolution is not yet totally victorious, and the present aim of the Party is to struggle for national reunification in order to build a peaceful, reunified, independent, democratic and prosperous Vietnam, to eliminate exploitation of man by man all over the country and build a new society with happiness and abundance for all.

However, our industry is still backward. Thanks to the devoted help of the fraternal countries, first of all the Soviet Union and China, it is developing. For our effort to succeed, our workers must emulate one another and strive to produce ever more, faster, better and more economically, observe labour discipline and actively participate in the management of their enterprises: we must oppose waste and embezzlement, and our cadres must be truly industrious, thrifty, honest and upright, and join the workers in labour.

Land has been allotted to our peasants, whose life has been partially improved. But the mode of production is still scattered and backward; hence the yields have not yet increased much and living conditions have improved but slightly. The movement for setting up work-exchange teams and co-operatives in our countryside must be extensively and firmly pushed forward in order to bring about a firm increase in production; only then can our peasants escape poverty and see their condition improved.

Therefore, revolutionary morality consists in striving to achieve the Party's objective, faithfully serving the working class and the toiling people, and never wavering.

Most members of the Party and the Working Youth Union and most cadres have done so, but some have not. They wrongly think that now that the colonialist, and feudalists have been got rid of in the North, the revolution has been successfully completed. That is why they let individualism develop within themselves, demand enjoyment and rest, and want to pick their own work instead of fulfilling the tasks entrusted to them by their organization. They want high positions but shirk responsibilities. Their combativeness and energy gradually weaken, and so do their revolutionary courage and noble virtues. They forget that the prime criterion of a revolutionary is his resolve

to struggle all his life for the Party and the revolution.

We must realize that the successes recorded by us so far are only the first steps on a thousand-league road. We must advance further, the revolution must make further progress. Otherwise, we shall regress, and the successes we have gained cannot be consolidated and developed.

To advance to socialism, we must wage a long and hard struggle. We must have revolutionaries for there still exist enemies, who oppose the revolution.

There are three kinds of enemies:

Capitalism and imperialism are very dangerous ones. Backward habits and traditions are also big enemies: they insidiously hinder the progress of the revolution. However, we cannot repress them, but must seek to correct them with caution, perseverance and over a long period of time.

The third enemy is individualism, the petty-bourgeois mentality which still lurks in each of us. It is waiting for an opportunity - either failure or success - to rear its head. It is the ally of the two above-mentioned categories.

Therefore revolutionary morality consists, in whatever circumstances, in resolutely struggling against all enemies, maintaining one's vigilance, standing ready to fight, and refusing to submit, to bow one's head. Only by so doing can we defeat the enemy, and fulfil our revolutionary tasks.

It is due to its correct policy and unified leadership that our Party can lead the working class and the entire people to socialism. This unified leadership springs from the unity of thought and action of all its members.

Without this unity we would be like "an orchestra in which the drums play one way and the horns another." It would not be possible: for us to lead the masses and make revolution.

The Party members' words and deeds have a great bearing on the revolution for they exert great influence on the masses. For instance: the present policy

of our Party and Government is broadly and closely to organize work-exchange teams and co-operatives, to carry out agricultural co-operation. But a number of Party and Working Youth Union members do not join them, or, having joined them, do not actively contribute to their building and consolidation. It is individualism which has led those comrades to do as they please and to go counter to the Party's organization and discipline. Wittingly or unwittingly, their actions impair the prestige of the Party, hinder its work and impede the advance of the revolution.

All the Party's policies and revolutions aim at serving the people's interests. Therefore, for a Party member revolutionary morality consists in resolutely implementing them, whatever the difficulties, and setting an example for the masses. Each Party member must heighten his sense of responsibility to the people and the Party. He must guard against and resolutely oppose individualism.

Our Party represents the common interests of the working class and the entire labouring people, not the private interests of any group or individual. This everyone knows.

The working class struggle not only to free themselves, but also to liberate mankind from oppression and exploitation. Therefore, their interests and those of the people are at one.

The Party member, in the name of the Party, represents the interests of the working class and the labouring people. That is why his own interests lie within, not without, those of the Party and the class. Success and victory for the Party and the class means success and victory for the militant. Separated from the Party and the class, no individual, however talented, can achieve anything.

Revolutionary morality, for a Party member, consists in putting the Party's interests above everything else, in all circumstances. If the Party's interests are in contradiction with those of the individual, the latter must absolutely give way to the former.

For having not cleansed themselves of individualism some Party members still boast of "their services to the Party," for which they claim the Party's "gratitude". They want to enjoy favour, honour, rank and privilege. If their desires are not satisfied they bear resentment against the Party, complaining that they have "no future" and are "sacrificed". They gradually drift away from the Party worse still, they sabotage its policies and discipline.

Many cadres and fighters in the period of underground struggle and the war of resistance heroically laid down their lives; many labour heroes and elite workers have done their utmost to increase production. Those comrades have never asked for rank and honour, never demanded thanks from the Party.

Our Party has a mass character, and hundreds of thousands of members. Owing to the situation in our country the bulk of Party members spring from the petty bourgeoisie. There is nothing surprising in it. In the beginning, under the influence of bourgeois ideology the stand of some Party members may lack firmness, their outlook may be confused and their thinking not quite correct, but owing to the fact that they have been tempered in the revolution and the war of resistance, our Party members are by and large good militants, faithful to the Party and the revolution.

Those comrades know that those Party members who commit errors will lead the masses into error; therefore, they stand ready to correct any mistake they may make, and this in a timely way, and do not allow small errors to accumulate into big ones. They sincerely practise criticism and self criticism, which makes it possible for them to progress together.

This conforms to revolutionary morality. During its many years of underground activity, our Party, although harshly repressed by the colonialists and meeting with numerous difficulties and dangers, developed and grew stronger with every passing day, and then led the revolution and the war of resistance to victory. This is due to its effective use of this sharp weapon: criticism and self criticism.

However, there still remain some Party members who, unable to shake off individualism, become arrogant and conceited and keep flaunting their

merits. While criticizing others, they do not like being criticized; they avoid self criticism or practise it without sincerity and seriousness. They are afraid they might lose face and prestige. They pay no attention to the opinion of the masses, and make light of non-Party cadres. They do not realize that it is difficult not to commit any errors in one's work. We are not afraid of possible mistakes, but of failure to correct them resolutely. To redress them, we must listen to criticism by the masses and practise sincere self-criticism. Otherwise we shall lag behind and regress, which will lead to our being cast aside by the masses. This is the inevitable consequence of individualism.

The forces of the working class and the labouring people are immense, boundless. But they must be led by the Party if they are to win. At the same time the Party must stay close to the masses, and skilfully organize and lead them, if the revolution is to triumph.

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Revolutionary morality consists in uniting with the masses in one body, trusting them and paying attention to their opinion. By their words and deeds. Party and Working Youth members and cadres win the people's confidence, respect and love, closely unite them around the Party organize educate and mobilize them so that they will enthusiastically implement the Party's policies and resolutions.

That is what we have done during the revolution and the war of resistance. But at present, individualism is haunting a number of our comrades. Claiming to be clever in everything they stray from the masses, refuse to learn from them and want only to be their teachers. They are reluctant to engage in organization propaganda and education work among the masses. They become infected with bureaucratism and commandism. As a result the masses neither trust nor respect them much less love them. Eventually, they can do nothing good.

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The North of our country is advancing to socialism. This is the urgent aspiration of millions of labouring people. This is the collective

undertaking of the toiling masses under our Party's leadership. Individualism is a big obstacle to the building of socialism. Therefore, the success of socialism cannot be separated from that of the struggle for the elimination of individualism.

To struggle against individualism is not "to trample on individual interests". Each person has his own character, his fortes, his private life and that of his family. There is no harm when the interests of the individual do not go counter to those of the collective. But one must realize that only under the socialist regime can each person improve his private life and develop his personality and his strong points.

No system equals socialism and communism in showing respect for man, paying due attention to his legitimate individual interests and ensuring that they be satisfied. In a society ruled by the exploiting class only the individual interests of a few people belonging to this class are met, whereas those of the toiling masses are trampled underfoot. But in the socialist and communist systems, of with the labouring people are the masters, each man is a part of the collective, plays a definite role in it and contributes his part to society. That is why the interests of the individual lies within those of the collective and are part of them. Only when the latter are secured can the former be satisfied.

The interests of the individual are closely tied to those of the collective. If there is any contradiction between them, revolutionary morality demands that the former yield to the later.

The revolution unceasingly progresses. So does the Party. And so must the revolutionary.

The revolutionary movement involves hundreds of millions of people. Revolutionary work involves thousands of extremely complex and difficult tasks. In order to be able to assess all complex situations, clearly see the contradictions, and correctly solve the various problems, we must strive to study Marxism-Leninism.

Only by so doing can we consolidate our revolutionary morality, firmly maintain our stand, raise our theoretical and political level, and fulfil the tasks entrusted to us by the Party.

To study Marxism-Leninism is to learn the spirit in which one should deal with things, with other people and with oneself. It means to study the universal Marxist-Leninist truths in order to apply them creatively to the practical conditions of our country. We must study with a view to action. Theory must go hand in hand with practice.

But some comrades only learn by heart a few books on Marxism-Leninism. They think they understand Marxism-Leninism better than anyone else. Yet, when faced with practical problems, they either act in a mechanical way or are thrown into confusion. Their deeds do not match their words. They study books on Marxism-Leninism but do not seek to acquire the Marxist-Leninist spirit. They only want to show off their knowledge, not to apply it to revolutionary action. This is also individualism.

Individualism spawns hundreds of dangerous diseases: bureaucratism, commandism, sectarianism, subjectiveness corruption, waste... It ties up and blindfolds its victims whose every action is guided by their desire for honour and position, not by concern for the interests of the class and the people. Individualism is a cruel enemy of socialism. The revolutionary must do away with it.

At present, the task of our Party and people is to endeavour to increase production and practise thrift in order to build up the North, gradually take it to socialism, and turn it into a strong base for the reunification of the country. This is an extremely glorious task. Let all members of the Party and the Working Youth Union, let all cadres within and without the Party be resolved to devote all their lives to serving the Party and the people. This is the noble virtue of the revolutionary, this is revolutionary morality, the Party and class spirit, which ensures victory for the Party, the class and the people.

Revolutionary morality does not fall from the sky. It is developed and consolidated through persevering daily struggle and effort. Like jade,

the more it is polished the more it shines. Like gold, it grows ever purer as it goes into the melting pot.

What can be a greater source of happiness and glory than to cultivate one's revolutionary morality so as to bring a worthy contribution to the building of socialism and the liberation of mankind!

I earnestly hope that all members of the Party and the Working Youth Union and all cadres within and without the Party will strive hard and progress.

Source: <https://alt.politics.communism.narkive.com/Sb205tXJ/ho-chi-minh-on-revolutionary-morality>