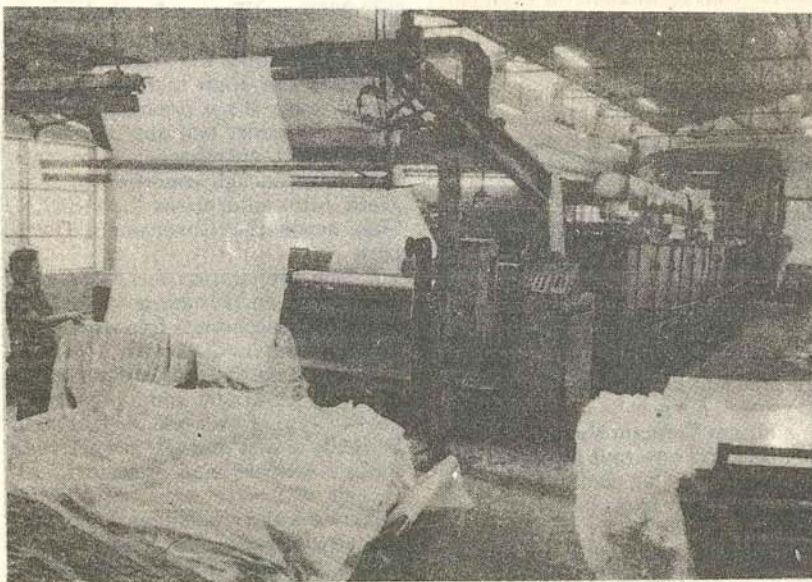


O N THE CONCEPT: RICH PEOPLE STRONG NATION CIVILIZED SOCIETY

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Recently, the concept of *rich people strong nation civilized society* (many documents read: *civilized and equitable society*) was mentioned frequently. It was considered as the target of Vietnam's strategy for socio-economic development in the next two, or three decades. Many people considered it as a new model (or a new view on) of the future socialist society, but many others thought that this concept was vague, not to say inexact.

1. Logical basis of the concept

The phrase "rich people strong nation civilized society" (the word "equitable" is left out here and will be discussed later) could be written, and understood, in three ways:

+ *Rich people strong nation civilized society* (with no punctuation) is a general concept which is inseparable and has an explicit content.

+ *Rich people, strong nation, civilized society* (with two commas) are three concepts (three problems, three targets) with separate meanings. These concepts are arranged in order of their importance. If this order is changed, the meaning of the phrase will change accordingly.

+ *Rich people-strong nation-civilized society* (with two hyphens) expresses three separate concepts which have relation to one another. The above phrase could be read as follows:

- If the people are rich, then the nation will be strong and the society civilized, or

- Rich people make nation strong, or

- Rich people and strong nation make society civilized.

Whatever our ways of understanding this phrase are, we all know that "rich people strong nation civilized society" is not the exclusive socio-economic characteristic or target of a specified nation. It is the dream of the human being throughout history since the human society passed the primitive stage of civilization. Any progressive state, any healthy government and any serious political party could consider it as the target for all stages of socio-economic development. "Rich people strong nation civilized society" considered as the target of Vietnam's strategy for development in the next decades didn't blur the characteristics of this period, national features, socialist orientation and party spirit, on the other hand, it clarifies our goodwill in integration into the world economy, internationalization of our socio-economic life and renovation of our way of thinking in accordance with global

trend. The problem remains that we should determine norms and criteria appropriate to each stage of our development.

2. How to measure the people's wealth and the nation's strength?

The wealth and strength of a nation is a concept of relative meaning which could be estimated in the following three relations:

- With average level of wealth of the world.

- With surrounding countries' wealth.

- With the previous period of the nation under consideration. In order to estimate the level of development of a nation, the wealth of the people and the economic strength of a nation, the following indicators are usually used:

- GNP and per capita GNP (in US\$).

- GDP and per capita GDP expressed in US\$ and calculated according to Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) method.

- Annual growth rate of GDP and GNP.

- Some indicators of economic structure and export-import structure.

- Some indicators of population and social affairs, and human development index (HDI).

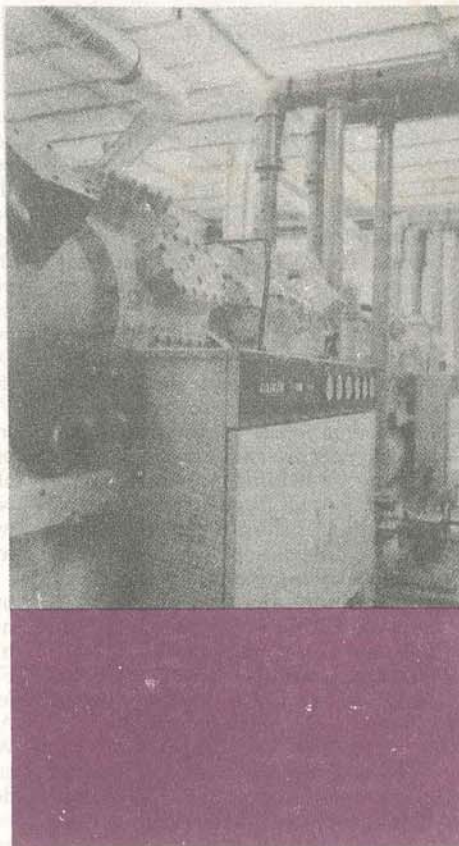
Each indicator and each method of making statistics has its own limits, so we can't use one indicator or two, but we should analyze many indicators in order to learn about a nation's wealth. The following examples could illustrate the point:

- Taking per capita GNP into consideration, by mid-1995, Thailand's figure is US\$2,315, Vietnam's US\$220, that is, a Thai is ten times richer than a Vietnamese on average, but taking PPP into account, a Thai earns US\$6,390 a year, while a Vietnamese 1,263, that is, the difference reduces to three times (*Asiaweek*, June 30, 1995).

- According to UNDP, of 173 nations classified in 1992, Vietnam was ranked among the group of the lowest earning nations (the 150th) if the per capita GNP is taken into account. But considering HDI (life expectancy, level of education and per capita GDP according to PPP method), Vietnam ranked 116th, in the same group as Thailand and other 63 medium nations.

In reality, there are many rich countries (per capita GNP and GDP are high) but their economies aren't strong and societies aren't civilized (some oil exporting countries for example).

Before mid-XX century, measuring the strength of a nation, one usually paid attention to its military or political strength, but in recent decades, socio-economic resources have attracted a lot of attention and were considered as the real strength of a nation.



3. How to measure civilized and equitable state of a society?

With many indicators and methods of measuring, one could learn a lot about a nation's strength and wealth, but it's hard to find out exact indicators of a civilized and equitable society.

Firstly, we think that we needn't discriminate equitableness from civilizedness (even if we want to emphasize the one or the other), because civilizedness includes equitableness: there must be equitableness in a civilized society. Moreover, in legal aspect, equitableness means equality, and in ethical aspect, it means fraternity. An equitable society isn't an egalitarian one. It's a society where one should pay money for work; eve-

rybody is equal before law, everybody is treated kindly, one's getting rich doesn't make the others poor, property and social benefits are distributed reasonably. These factors form the very core of a civilized society.

The present civilization isn't attached to the birth of great empires with powerful expeditionary forces. It esteems not only spiritual values but also economic, scientific, educational, health caring achievements, along with overall development of the human being and quality of living. That is why "rich people and strong nation" become preconditions for a civilized society.

Many small countries could build a civilized society if its economy develops well. The above-mentioned indicators, to some extent, could give information about a civilized society. International statistics organizations are trying to perfect and systematize these indicators and methods of making statistics with a view to estimating the socio-economic development, quality of living and civilizedness of a nation more exactly.

According to the UN Human Development Report Office, since 1990, one has been able to quantify comparatively the wealth, strength and civilizedness of most nations in the world. Beside the HDI, there are over 150 indicators or indexes about human disasters, life expectancy, health care, difference between the rich and the poor, food supply, social evils, education, mass media, job supply, pollution, foreign debt and aid, use of natural resources, etc.

The mass media are developing strongly all over the world, methods of measuring the socio-economic development with a system of indicators become clearer and fuller. They could help us discern exactly level of wealth, strength and civilizedness of a nation ■

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