

SOCIAL PROBLEMS RELATING TO THE FAST DEVELOPMENT

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In recent years, the Vietnam economy developed well, the living standard was improved, jobs could be found easier and many people got big salaries. However, the fast development has given birth to many social problems which needed to be solved as soon as possible.

1. Some present social problems

a. The gap between the rich and the poor is on the increase. In Vietnam today, those who earn under VNĐ80,000 per month are considered as the poor. In HCMC, a female worker in clothing industry can earn from VNĐ600,000 to 800,000 a month plus a lunch every day. Workers in foreign-invested companies earn from US\$200 to 400 a month. A shop or a family business can generate a monthly income of some million đồngs. But it's the business circle that earns the highest income (many of them earned from VNĐ30 to 100 million a month). Thus, two classes have made their appearance and the gap between them is increasingly hard to bridge.

b. The prices of real estate are on the increase. This situation made the number of disputes over real estate ownership sky-rockets. Courts of all levels are filled with legal cases of land or house ownership. Many cases came to courts a lot of times and took a long time to settle. This also contributes to the long conflict between the haves and the have-nots.

c. Corruption, smuggling and tax evasion have also become alarming problems. It's difficult to struggle against bribery because both the giver and the taker benefit from it. When a legal case comes to the court, both the accuser and the accused are ready to give bribery with a view to winning the case, and bribe is something irresistible to venal officials especially when their income is low.

According to publicized information, some VNĐ14,240 billion were spent on contraband goods in the first nine months of 1995. At the end of 1994, Võ Văn Kiệt, the Prime Minister, in his speech made before the National Assembly, also recognized that the smuggling and corruption had not been defeated.

d. As the living standard is improved, social evils develop. According to the Social Evils Department, in Vietnam there were 183,000 drug addicts, 77,000 prostitutes and over 1,000 persons infected with HIV (of course, this number is much higher in reality). If necessary measures aren't taken, we will have to pay the penalty for it in the coming decade.

e. The degree of environmental

pollution grew year after year and there came a lot of conflict between polluters and those who were affected by pollution. This conflict becomes more and more severe.

f. Diseases of an industrial society have made their appearance in Vietnam more frequently: heart disease, stress, mental fatigue, etc. Meanwhile, the better part of Vietnamese people are living in rural areas, although they could get more calories from their meals these days, but they still lack protein, vitamin and minerals, so undernourishment is still common.

g. Compared with developing countries and especially countries in Western Pacific, the unemployment rate in Vietnam was high. For many graduates, it's hard to find a job today. Many of them had to do badly-paid work, or jobs having no relation to their professional knowledge. For most families, it's difficult to make both ends meet. For workers in private foreign-invested companies, they usually have to do extra work to fill urgent orders, but sometimes they have to suffer seasonal unemployment.

h. Many industries in Vietnam developed fast because of foreign investment and many foreign companies have made big profits recently, therefore the conflict between Vietnamese workers and foreign owners came into being (because of low wages in comparison with big profits for foreign owners) along with conflict between local and foreign-invested companies. Many skilled workers went away from badly-paid local companies for well-paid jobs offered by foreign companies.

i. In Vietnam, full employment and sustainable prosperity haven't been realized. Output of many industries (such as rice, sugar, paper, steel, cement, shrimp, etc.) rose and caused surpluses, price cuts and stagnation which affected badly the life of laborers.

What mentioned above are issues of outstanding importance because these issues are too numerous to mention.

2. The roles of socio-political and economic measures in solving social problems

Foreign experience shows that the transition from a traditional society to the take-off stage is full of difficulties because of shortages of funds and experience and a need for foreign investment and technology. The social problems will be pressing because of compulsory savings when the personal income is still low.

Thus, to solve socio-economic

problems at the present stage, we must industrialize and modernize the economy with a view to shortening the transition to the post-industrialized stage. If we realize full employment and sustainable development, a lot of current difficulties could be overcome. In order to achieve these aims, we can take certain measures such as reducing interest rates, adopting a reasonable exchange rate, using inflation as an instrument for encouraging investment, investing in import-substitution industries, etc.

Solving social problems also requires funds and instruments, so we have to speed up the development. However, social problems can only be solved by social measures, because even in developed countries such as the US, social problems are no less serious. In Vietnam, for example, there are a lot of ethnic groups, but there is no apartheid, whereas the racial discrimination is very common in the US, and even in Japan. Thus, the economic development can't solve racial problems.



But right economic policies could help to solve social problems. In Japan, the Government is ready to borrow money from foreign countries to build factories by itself thereby preventing conflict between local and foreign companies from occurring. A policy on giving preferential treatment to intellectuals could ensure them well-paid jobs and encourage them to produce goods of better quality than foreign ones, thereby preventing smuggling. The Japanese central bank controls foreign currency circulation very strictly: all companies are under obligation to sell foreign currency to the central bank and re-buy it if they want to import raw materials or machines, so there is no foreign exchange for smugglers.

In Japan, although there is also a gap between the rich and the poor,

but the show-off becomes a target for criticism so the rich usually enjoy the same living standards as their skilled workers. The better part of profits is invested by Japanese industrialists in business, therefore the problem of class struggle is not serious.

The Japanese, from childhood, are taught to obey the law and respect the Mikado, and then, as grow-ups, obey their employers. Their bosses pay them well and employ them for life, so there is sort of cooperation between employers and workers.

In short, in Japan, social problems are solved by social measures, whereas economic measures play only a minor role. And political measures are used to solve political problems.

To solve socio-economic and political problems, one can choose between evolution and revolution. France and Russia for example have chosen revolution, that is, sudden violent changes, whereas Britain preferred evolution to revolution. The Japanese find out its own way that lies somewhere between these two extremes. Eventually, after the World War II, Japan chose to be at peace with the world and tried its best to develop the economy.

3. Measures to renovate the society in Vietnam

Vietnam is developing the multi-sector market economy. This economic system has no social or political features in itself. It has developed under different regimes (Lenin's socialist, Hitler's fascist, Japanese or British monarchist regimes).

Vietnam has many fine traditions (solidarity, patriotism, hunger for knowledge, etc.). Like Japan today, Vietnam wants to be at peace with the world and keep itself from intervening in the domestic affairs of other countries. Its relationship with former enemies such as France and the US has been normalized along with the establishment of diplomatic relations with other nations.

Vietnam is trying to combine the socialism with the market economy. Social evils such as bribery, bureaucracy, smuggling, etc. are totally contrary to the socialist principles. To solve its social problems, Vietnam will take two solutions: developing the multi-sector market economy, and at the same time, building socialism in order to overcome shortcomings caused by the market economy. This is a new and difficult way to development, but we have to work it out in order to survive. To do so, it's necessary to maintain the social and political stability, and then, keep to socialist principles and Hồ Chí Minh's teachings■

