Vietnam - Entire Country Mobilized to Save People from COVID-19

When I used to grow up in a socialist Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union, we were told that even if one single human life was endangered, the entire country had to stop and fight for his or her survival. That is how we were raised. That was our culture, or call it the foundation of our worldview.

I remember, once there was an explosion in Bohemia, a boiler blew up, and people were buried in the rubble of collapsed apartment building. Everything stopped. Heavy equipment was dispatched from all corners of the nation; thousands of volunteers traveled to the disaster area to help. At that moment, saving lives was all that mattered.

Of course, compared to Westerners, we were innocent, enthusiastic, and sincere. U.S. and U.K. were using propaganda radio networks, German television stations, and printed indoctrination materials in order to constantly ‘bombard’ us with deep nihilism, cynicism, and a depressing, twisted parody on the reality as we perceived it.

We were swallowing disinformation. We were taught how to become non-ideological, skeptical, full of dark sarcasm. East European counter-propaganda was weak, compared to the powerful ‘brew’ produced in London and Washington. Because of that, our socialism eventually died, was defeated, destroyed.

But it was not ruined everywhere. Some countries and their people were stronger, much stronger and determined then we were in former Czechoslovakia. Without any doubt, Vietnam and China have been two of these countries.

Earlier, in July 2020, this magazine - New Eastern Outlook – published an essay about the tremendous success of Vietnam, including its epic fight against COVID-19. The report was called: “The Tremendous But ‘Secret’ Success of Vietnam”.

Until now, not one single person died from COVID-19 in this socialist and increasingly important country of almost 100 million. And such staggering success was not reached through some irrational and brutal lockdowns, like those which have been imposed in almost all countries of the West. To be precise, Vietnam was locked down fully only for three weeks, but then, social distancing rules were eased and altogether dropped as early as in late April. Businesses and schools have gradually reopened.

For a while, there were no locally spread new cases reported, for around three entire months, and life began returning to its full old normal, with the exception of foreign travel which has been still not allowed.

Then, suddenly, at the end of July, one new case emerged; then three, and, according to the latest information, eleven.

What followed was amazing!

Almost immediately, a determined socialist nation rose to its feet. A new battle began.

Countless civilian jets descended on the city of Danang, which is not only a ‘tourist destination’, but also the third-largest city in Vietnam, with a brand-new international airport.

One of the biggest evacuation actions in history began. Vietnam’s ruling Communist Party and the government, went to work, feverishly, on behalf of the people. It was ‘direct democracy’ at work. It has been: ‘life of the people above
all', or call it 'Socialism with Vietnam’s characteristics'.

80,000 people have been relocated. Efficient tracing of cases, as well as determined widespread testing, were introduced.

On July 27, 2020, CNN and other global media outlets reported:

“Vietnam is evacuating 80,000 people -- mostly local tourists -- from the popular resort city of Da Nang after three residents tested positive for coronavirus, the government said.

Vietnamese authorities are rushing to nip a potential new outbreak in the bud after the Southeast Asian nation recorded its first locally-transmitted case of Covid-19 in 100 days on Saturday.”

“After the case was announced, Vietnam’s Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc demanded that contact tracing be ramped up and large-scale testing conducted across the city, according to a government press release.”

On Monday, the government made the drastic decision to begin evacuating 80,000 people from Da Nang, a process it said would take four days. Domestic airlines are operating about 100 flights daily to 11 cities around the country, according to the Civil Aviation Authority of Vietnam.”

It is all tremendously impressive, even breathtaking!

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I was visiting Vietnam in February 2020, working in Danang, among other places. And then, just very recently, I traveled to the United States, in order to report on the situation there. The contrast was incredible: a young, rising, confident, optimistic nation, and the empire in irreversible decline eaten alive by decadence, perversion, and cynicism.

I often thought: perhaps we lost in several places, more than 30 years ago, particularly in Europe, but what is now happening in China, Vietnam, Laos, and other Asian countries, is, unmistakably a great victory.

However, it is what I call a ‘secret victory’. A victory belittled, smeared in the West. In order to enjoy, even to detect it, one has to live in Asia, understand and to belong to it.

I knew precisely what would be insinuated by Western analysts. Most likely, they’d say: The reaction is not proportionate to the threat... Quite an expensive reaction for only a few tested cases.

Yes, of course. Perhaps it is true, observed from the Western, capitalist perspective. But Vietnam reacted as a socialist country, a country with one big heart instead of dollar signs.

Nobody will starve as a result of this massive, heroic evacuation. It is not ‘either’ ‘or’. It is not ‘if we take action and bring tens of thousands of people to safety, millions will lose their jobs and social support’.

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In former Czechoslovakia, when I was a kid, I had a Vietnamese friend. We studied English together in a language school. He came to Pilsen to study engineering. His country was still in ruin, after a devastating war with the West. We used to go out for a cup of coffee or a beer together. He told me a lot about Vietnam. He missed it, enormously. Two decades later, I came to Hanoi to live.

One striking thing about Vietnam is that its people are both brave, tough like steel, and at the same time, they are tender, gentle, poetic. They defeated the second most toxic colonialist state on earth – France. And almost immediately after that, they won the war with the most powerful empire – the United States of America.

At the same time, their ballads, their song, and poems are some of the softest in the world.

Now, Vietnam’s fight against COVID-19 is unique as well. It is gentle and robust, rational, as well as emotional.

By airlifting 80,000 people to safety, by mobilizing almost entire civilian fleet, Vietnam wrote yet another powerful epic poem. It is a poem, which will be recited, no doubt, from generation to generation.
Precisely such ‘works of art’, and such actions, are forming a narrative of all great nations. And they are also forming pillars of true socialism.

Brilliant Swiss sculptor, Alberto Giacometti, once uttered: “If I had to choose between my entire art and life of a dog, I would choose a dog.” For him, life, any life, came first.

The life of any human being should come first. Because it is priceless. Even the life of an old dying person is priceless, as a matter of principle. And such norm could be achieved; It is clearly detectable in such countries as Cuba or Vietnam.

Once this rule is compromised, the entire structure collapses. Therefore, it cannot be; it should not be allowed to collapse.

What just happened in Vietnam is a beautiful example of both socialism and humanism.

Perhaps the West is too ‘far away’, already. Perhaps we in the socialist East and the capitalist West, cannot understand, cannot hear each other anymore.

One hundred Vietnamese passenger planes are taking off, bringing people to safety. But the price is irrelevant. As long as human beings can feel safe, as long as they survive.

It was ‘irrational’ to confront France, to fight for freedom, to hope for the victory. It was ‘foolish’ to resist, to defend the country against U.S. carpet bombing, B-52’s, napalm, and systematic rape and torture in the hands of G.I.’s. Yet, Vietnam dared and fought as only very few countries did in modern history, and in the end, it won. Let’s not forget: love is irrational, too. Still, it is worth living for.

Now with COVID-19, again. So far, Vietnam is the most successful ‘model’ on earth.

It is because it puts human lives above profit, and above everything else. It is because this big battle is actually extremely beautiful; it is a Vietnam’s epic poem and a passionate song.

This is essentially how great nations get built: not by the manic chase to increase GDP and arsenal of weapons, but by heart, humanism, determination, and unwavering, selfless love for the country.

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