

Ho Chi Minh - an Infinite Inspiration for Revolution and Culture of Humanity

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Abstract: *Ho Chi Minh is a brilliant leader of the Party, State and people, a hero of national liberation, an outstanding cultural celebrity of Vietnam and the world. He accumulated and promoted all quintessence of national culture and the times, East and West, tradition and modernity, courage and humanity, greatness and simplicity. He is an infinite source of inspiration for national, social, class and human liberation. Also, he is a never-ending inspiration for writers, poets, journalists, artists in many different forms of journalism and arts.*

Keywords: *Ho Chi Minh, revolution, culture.*

President Ho Chi Minh was born into a poor patriotic Confucian scholar's family, closely connected to the working people. His homeland, Nghe An province, for thousands of years, has contributed to building and defending the nation, and has always been a land of fertile alluvial soil, known as the "hotbed of lakes and rivers and the significant land to various dynasties"⁽¹⁾. The glorious tradition of his homeland and family profoundly influenced and shaped his childhood, personality, ideology, and morality. Later, he sailed across the oceans to seek a way to save the country, immersed himself in the struggle of the working class and laboring people in Asia, Europe, Africa, America, and Australia, joined the French Socialist Party and co-founded the Communist Party of France. He was introduced to and embraced Marxist-Leninist theory and the light of the October Revolution. As the leader of the Communist Party of Vietnam, President Ho Chi Minh brought the cultural, patriotic, and revolutionary traditions of the nation and his homeland to new heights: patriotism with profound humanist content; the liberation of the nation linked with the liberation of the class, society, and human beings; the emphasis on human beings as the decisive factor in history; the national revolution and democracy inevitably

developing into socialist revolution; the strength of the nation linked with the strength of the times. He especially valued the people, elevated “the people are the root”, “the people are the masters” of the revolution and the country, as the ones who made history. His ideology valued patriotism, love for the people, and respect for human beings; the truth that “nothing is more precious than independence and freedom”; the high, pure, and self-sacrificing morality for the great cause; the simple, approachable, humble, and thrifty style of living... All of these are valuable cultural and ideological heritage that he left for the country, the people, and humanity.

On June 5th, 1911, the patriotic young man Nguyen Tat Thanh, who later adopted the name Van Ba, boarded a ship named Admiral Latouche-Tréville at the Saigon port, heading towards the West. As he recounted later, “I wanted to go abroad to see France and other countries. After seeing how they operated, I would return to help our people”⁽²⁾. In France, he, Phan Chau Trinh and Phan Van Truong sent the “Petition of the Vietnamese People” to the Versailles Conference (1919), wrote “French Colonization on Trial” (1920), and voted in favor of the Third International (Communist International), becoming one of the founders of the French Communist Party and the first Vietnamese communist. In 1922, he founded the newspaper *Le Paria*, which in the first issue, asserted the mission of the newspaper to “liberate humanity”. After more than 10 years in the West, working hard to make a living and searching for a way to save the country and the people, Nguyen Ai Quoc came to a painful and resentful realization that: capitalism and colonial imperialism were the perpetrators of all oppression, exploitation, and suffering for workers, peasants, and other classes in both the colonies and the metropolis. He said, “At first, I was a patriot, not a communist. It was through my activities, searching for a path for the nation, that I came to understand that only socialism and communism could liberate oppressed nations and working people around the world”⁽³⁾. From patriotism, he came to Marxism-Leninism, absorbing Lenin’s theories on national and colonial issues. This historic encounter and interaction were not accidental or lucky; it was a commitment, a proactive choice of path, an objective necessity with a scientific and revolutionary nature.

Before Nguyen Tat Thanh – Van Ba's trip in 1911, Phan Boi Chau from Nam Dan had a close relationship with Nguyen's father and chose the path to the East. However, Japan, which shared the same race and culture, was invading China and Korea and ordered the expulsion of Phan Boi Chau and Vietnamese patriotic students. The failure of Kang Youwei's and Liang Qichao's reforms in China showed that China could not follow Japan's reform path. Although the Xinhai Revolution (1911) overthrew the imperial throne, it could not abolish the feudal land ownership and exploitation of the landlord class or the colonial oppression of foreign imperialists. Many contemporary Vietnamese intellectuals also went to France, some of whom were only concerned with studying, making a living, and getting rich, while others studied and sought ways to rescue the nation and people. Phan Chu Trinh, a former official, and lawyer and doctor Phan Van Truong represented the second group. However, after living and working in France for many years and coming into contact with the French radical forces, they still could not find the right path to liberate the nation and people and to embrace Marxism-Leninism, as Nguyen Ai Quoc did. According to a report from the French Socialist Party Central Committee, seven Vietnamese joined the French Socialist Party in 1913, 80 Vietnamese joined the party in 1919, but only 20 remained by 1920, and only Nguyen Ai Quoc (who joined the French Socialist Party in 1918) became a communist⁽⁴⁾. Phan Chau Trinh wrote in a letter dated February 18, 1922, from Moscow to Nguyen Ai Quoc in Paris: "I am like a caged bird, a fish in a pot... My situation is like a dying flower, grieving for the country's decline, and even if I wither away, I must still cry out. Perhaps I can awaken my soul from its slumber". Phan Chau Trinh compared Nguyen Ai Quoc to "a resolute willow tree, who has a surplus of determination, has worked hard to study, and has a deep theoretical understanding... It won't be long before his ideology is deeply rooted in the hearts of the people and the leaders of our country"⁽⁵⁾.

In 1923, Nguyen Ai Quoc secretly left France for the Soviet Union. In the country of Lenin, he diligently studied and researched, hoping to one day return to his homeland to liberate his country, bring freedom and happiness to the people. Soviet poet Osip Mandelstam met Nguyen Ai Quoc at that

memorable time and wrote about him: “Nguyen Ai Quoc shows culture, not European culture, but perhaps the culture of the future”..., “The Annamese are a simple courteous people. In the nobility of his manner and in the dim, soft voice of Nguyen Ai Quoc one can hear the approach of tomorrow, the oceanic silence of universal brotherhood.”⁽⁶⁾ Several decades later, in the Russian capital of Moscow, there is a square named after Ho Chi Minh, built by the government and people of Russia. There stands a statue of Ho Chi Minh with the immortal words “Nothing is more precious than independence and freedom”. Petrozavodsk State University has the Ho Chi Minh Academy, specializing in researching Ho Chi Minh and the history and culture of Vietnam.

President Ho Chi Minh also spent years working in China. In the 1920s, he went to Guangzhou and opened the first training courses for Vietnamese revolutionaries. He chose House No. 13 (now No. 248-250) on Wen Ming Street as the headquarters of the Vietnamese Revolutionary Youth Association. More than 15 years later, he traveled to Guangxi and was arrested by the Chiang Kai-shek government. In those circumstances, his “Prison Diary” was created, which included the lines:

*“Guangxi’s thirteen districts, a sight to behold
But eighteen prisons left my story untold”*

Or

*“The body may be confined within a cell
But the spirit roams free, unbound by its shell
To achieve great things, the spirit must soar
Higher than the prison walls that it bore”.*

Day and night, he was always concerned about “the golden five-pointed star in dreams”... Later on, his works, including his political and literary essays, gained high praise from both domestic and foreign audiences for their ideology, humanity, and artistry. These works included his French-language debut “French Colonization on Trial”, short stories published in *Le Paria* followed by “The Revolutionary Path”, “The Diary of a Sunken Ship”. In particular, the poetry collection “Prison Diary” and two epic works “Declaration of Independence” and “Appeal for General Insurrection” have

become timeless classics. President Ho Chi Minh wrote “Prison Diary” in Chinese, consisting of 133 poems in Tang poetry style, during his imprisonment by the Chiang Kai-shek government in Guangxi, China, from August 1942 to September 1943. In this collection, he made a declaration of purpose for poetry, literature, and art in general:

*“Now, poetry must be bold as steel
And poets must lead, with a vanguard zeal”.*

He conveyed strength, faith, and optimism to those in danger and hardship with lines such as:

*“Only on the road will we truly know,
The hardships that make our spirits grow,
We’ll face mountains, higher than before,
And at the top, behold rivers and more”.*

On December 10, 1951, he wrote a letter to artists on the occasion of the Exhibition of Resistance Art in Viet Bac. In the letter, he affirmed: “Culture and art are also a front. You are soldiers on that front”. For journalists, President Ho Chi Minh was the founder and mentor of Vietnam’s revolutionary press. He urged journalists: “Journalists are also revolutionary soldiers. Their pen and paper are sharp weapons”.

In the book “Short Stories about the Life and Work of President Ho Chi Minh”, author Tran Dan Tien recounts: “Someone asked Nguyen Ai Quoc: What kind of person are you? Are you a communist or a follower of Sun Yat-sen’s ideology?” After explaining, Nguyen Ai Quoc asserted: “Confucius, Jesus, Marx, and Sun Yat-sen have something in common, don’t they? They all want to seek happiness for humanity and pursue welfare for society. If they were still alive today and gathered in one place, I believe they would live together in perfect harmony like close friends”⁽⁷⁾.

The ideas of unity, compassion, tolerance, and humanity that Ho Chi Minh upheld have touched the hearts of many nations, ethnic groups, social strata, and religions. The beloved names “Ho Chi Minh” and “Uncle Ho” are commonly used in many countries. During his second friendly visit to India in 1958, Ho Chi Minh was warmly welcomed and respected by Indian

leaders and people. At a joint performance by over three thousand Indian children to welcome the President of Vietnam, they shouted in unison: “Father Ho, Father Ho!”

During his lifetime, President of Cuba Fidel Castro praised President Ho Chi Minh, saying “The glory of all ages belongs to President Ho Chi Minh. The greatest example of a great revolutionary is increasingly admired, respected, and always loved not only by the Vietnamese people but also by other peoples around the world”. Cuban poet Felix Pita Rodriguez commented, “In the works of President Ho Chi Minh, farmers in Vietnam, Algeria, Tunisia, Congo, people oppressed on the islands of Antigua, or in the ‘old southern region’ of the United States, all have a devoted advocate”. The Cuban poet also wrote many poems about President Ho Chi Minh, including two notable works “Ho Chi Minh, the name is a poem in itself” and “Hanoi, the capital, remembers Uncle Ho”.

Many politicians, writers, journalists, and researchers who visited the Ho Chi Minh Mausoleum in Ba Dinh, Hanoi ⁽⁸⁾ were impressed and expressed their admiration and affection for Ho Chi Minh. Algerian President Abdelaziz Bouteflika wrote: “We are proud and appreciate the modesty, simplicity, and nobility of Ho Chi Minh. The life of this great man will live forever, immortalized in the memory of his people. He is still a source of hope and a beacon for peoples struggling for a world of peace, justice, freedom, progress, and prosperity”. The Politburo member of the Communist Party of the United States of America Genni praised: “Although he lived modestly, he left an invaluable asset to his descendants, the heroic Vietnamese people, and the people of the world who yearn for a better life: socialism”. Representatives of the Australian Communist Party wrote with emotion: “Like all true great revolutionaries, Ho Chi Minh was the flesh and blood of the people. He lived a very modest life in his greatness, devoting himself wholeheartedly to the lofty cause of independence and freedom for Vietnam, and the revolutionary path for workers and oppressed peoples around the world”. Stanley Mabilela, leader of the Revolutionary Council of the African National Congress, wrote during his visit to Vietnam, to the place where Ho Chi Minh lived during his lifetime: “A simple house,

a simple bed. He lived an extremely humble life while he could have lived like a king. He always deserves to be a model for all revolutionary times. He is a person who has worked all his life for a better life, not only for the Vietnamese people, but also for people in Asia, Africa, Latin America, and everywhere there is injustice". Ms. Etge Petrarca from Chile wrote: "The place where comrade Ho Chi Minh lived and worked is truly a great lesson for all revolutionaries in the world. His simple and humble life proves that he has surpassed all material desires. Ho Chi Minh devoted his whole life to his people. Therefore, he became great and beloved to his people. For the peoples of the world, he became a person worthy of respect and admiration". Indian President Ramaswamy Venkataraman praised: "... Ho Chi Minh is not only a prominent national liberation fighter. With courage and talent, he led his people to liberate themselves from the shackles of colonialism, creating an indelible image in the hearts and minds of those who love Vietnam. He was also a great internationalist: dedicating his life to the belief in the lives of other brotherly peoples, for the lofty purposes of humanity across five continents. He was a source of motivation and aspiration for all those who love peace in the world, in all eras". French journalist and writer Madeleine Riffaud visited Vietnam many times, staying for many days, and was honored to be adopted by President Ho Chi Minh. She presented Uncle Ho with the book "In North Vietnam writing under the bombs" with the dedication: "To Uncle Ho, this small but sincere contribution to the heroic struggle of the Vietnamese people, with all my heart". Cambodian Prime Minister Norodom Sihanouk wrote: "... President Ho Chi Minh has gone down in the history of Indochinese peoples and Asian, African, and Latin American peoples as a symbol of the struggle for national independence. Beloved by the people, admired by friends, respected by enemies, he was one of the political figures and the noblest leader of this century..." Professor H.Din of Boston University (USA) wrote: "He is one of the great leaders of this century. At a time when many places in the world needed a revolution, he led two revolutions in Vietnam, one to change the social structure that had long existed in Vietnam, so that more people could enjoy the achievements of society, and another to overthrow the rule of foreign

countries, first France, later the US...” Thirty years ago, on the solemn occasion of the 100th anniversary of President Ho Chi Minh’s birth, Dr. M. Ahmed, Director of the Asia-Pacific Region at UNESCO, said: “Few figures in history have become legends while still alive, and clearly President Ho Chi Minh is one of them”.

In France, there are about 45 historical sites that preserve many relics, documents, and valuable artifacts related to President Ho Chi Minh’s revolutionary activities from 1911 to 1927 and 1946. The most prominent one is House No. 9, Compoin Alley, District 17, Paris. Through the establishment of the Intercolonial Union and the newspaper “The Pariah”, he contributed to bringing a new wave to the oppressed people of various countries, uniting them in the common struggle against imperialism. In Cuba, a statue of President Ho Chi Minh is located in the center of the Peace Park on 26th Avenue, one of the largest avenues of the capital city of Havana. This park is affectionately known as “Ho Chi Minh Park” by the people. The Lao people hold deep respect and reverence for Uncle Ho. In Sekong Province in Laos, Ho Chi Minh’s portrait is placed on the altars of most families. On every important holiday, they light incense on the altar, hoping to receive Uncle Ho’s blessings. The song “Beloved Ho Chi Minh” by Buangeun Saphouvong is often performed at major events in both countries.

After the victory at Dien Bien Phu, which was “glorious in five continents and shook the earth”, British musician Ewan MacColl wrote “The Ballad of Ho Chi Minh”. The song has been translated into many languages and become familiar to the public in many countries. The poetry collection “Prison Diary” by Uncle Ho has been translated into 35 languages worldwide, and some translations have been reprinted many times. In the poem “Ho Chi Minh”, Algerian poet Trapani Akhmet wrote:

*“His name rings with ‘anti-imperialism’,
Higher than the clouds he soars with rhythm,
A name greater than speeches, his words true,
Echoing across the land, calling anew,
To take up arms and fight for what is due”.*

Bulgarian poet George Veselinov wrote about him:

*A leader and a child, in understanding,
 Their connection, long ago, so commanding,
 Sincere and steadfast, the bond so strong,
 The child remembers, proudly and lifelong,
 The day he and his father met Ho Chi Minh, with honor and song.*

Poet Dagio from Indonesia praises him:

*When virtue shines like precious jade so fair,
 A velvet chair can't compare.
 The Greek people recite lines of poetry that honor him under his portrait:
 Immortal he has become,
 beyond our grasp,
 A hero among the legends of Mount Akrocorinth, to last.*

In Ho Chi Minh's country, from 1945 until now, tens of thousands of works of journalism, literature, poetry, theory, music, theater, film, fine arts, photography, dance, architecture, folk arts, and ethnic minority arts have been created and spread about the themes of Ho Chi Minh, the image of Uncle Ho, and about his cultural, literary and artistic works. It is not easy to list some outstanding works that depict Uncle Ho when looking back at the heights that have been reached in the past 75 years. Learning and following the teachings of Uncle Ho, in the field of journalism and literature, generation after generation of journalists, writers, and artists have emerged, eager to lead the struggle for "eradicating corruption and defeating evil". Many people have fought on the battlefield, participating in campaigns such as the Winter-Spring, Viet Bac, Border, Dien Bien Phu... Among them are many who have sacrificed heroically, such as writers and journalists Nam Cao, Tran Dang, Tran Mai Ninh, Thoi Huu... During the period of the resistance against the US to save the country, thousands of artists "cross the Truong Son range to save the country", going to the front lines and making important contributions to the national unification cause, such as journalists and writers Anh Duc, Nguyen Thi, Nguyen Sang, Phan Tu, Nguyen Trung Thanh, Tran Hieu Minh, Pham Tien Duat... There were those who bravely sacrificed themselves like Le Anh Xuan, Duong Thi Xuan Quy, Nguyen Trong Dinh, Chu Cam Phong... and martyrs who

were directors and cameramen like Le Van Bang, Le Viet The, Nguyen Nhu Dung, Nong Van Tu...

Regarding music, there are some notable works such as “In Praise of President Ho Chi Minh”, “Thank You, Uncle Ho Chi Minh”, “Ho Chi Minh Is the Most Beautiful Name”, “He is the Belief of Victory”, “The Song Offered to Uncle Ho”, “The Singing in the Forest of Pac Bo”, “Visiting the Mausoleum of Uncle Ho”, “Visiting Nha Rong Wharf”, “Who Loves Uncle Ho Chi Minh More Than the Younger Generation”.

In fine arts, we can mention painter Diep Minh Chau from the early anti-French period in the South. After hearing the Declaration of Independence and the children’s choir singing “In Praise of President Ho Chi Minh” by Luu Huu Phuoc, in a surge of emotions, the artist cut his arm with a knife to use his blood to paint a portrait of Uncle Ho with three children representing the children of North, Central, and South Vietnam. The painting was then sent to Viet Bac as a tribute to beloved Uncle Ho. Another blood painting was created near the end of the anti-American resistance by painter-soldier Le Duy Ung, on April 28, 1975. On that day, Le Duy Ung’s unit was only thirty kilometers away from Saigon when he was severely injured by the enemy’s anti-tank gun, which destroyed both of his eyes. When he woke up and could not see anything, he thought he could not make it. The artist fumbled for paper, used his finger as a pen, and used the blood from his eye wound as ink to draw a portrait of Uncle Ho on the background of the national flag and the party’s flag. That special painting is currently on display at the Ho Chi Minh Museum.

In cinema, for several decades, there have been documentary films by director Bui Dinh Hac such as “Nguyen Ai Quoc with Lenin” (1979), “Road to the Motherland” (1980), “Ho Chi Minh - Portrait of a Person” (1990). For fictional films, there are “Hanoi in Winter 1946” (1997) by director Dang Nhat Minh, “Nguyen Ai Quoc in Hong Kong” (2003) by director Nguyen Khac Loi, and films like “Looking Towards the Sea” (2010), “Crossing Shanghai” (2010), “Thau Chin in Thailand” (2015), and “The Prophet” (2015) by directors Trieu Tuan, Pham Dong Vu, Bui Tuan Dung, and Vuong Duc.

There are countless works, stories both domestically and internationally where Ho Chi Minh is a source of inspiration, a beautiful symbol, a belief, a flame, and a great source of strength for nations and all people to overcome hardship, shackles, bombs and bullets to liberate their own people, liberate society, liberate humanity, strive for a life of freedom, democracy, justice, warmth, happiness, to be a citizen of an independent country, to be a simple, humane and honest person./.

(1) According to “*Lich Trieu Hien Chuong Loai Chi*” (*Regulations of Successive Dynasties*) by historian Phan Huy Chu.

(2) According to the book “*Vua di duong vua ke chuyen*” (*Stories on the road*) by author T. Lan, printed in 1976 by Su That Publishers.

(3) Ho Chi Minh (2000), *Complete Works*, National Political Publishing House, Hanoi, vol. H, pp. 126-128 (article “The path that led me to Leninism”, published in the journal “Issues in the Orient”, Soviet Union, 1960, on the occasion of the 90th anniversary of V.I. Lenin’s birth).

(4) Ho Chi Minh and his homeland Nghe Tinh (proceedings of the scientific conference commemorating the 100th anniversary of President Ho Chi Minh’s birth) (1990), Nghe Tinh Publishing House, p. 146.

(5) *Ho Chi Minh and the land of Quang* (2000), National Political Publishing House, Hanoi.

(6) “Little Fire” newspaper, in Russian, 1923 by Osip Mandelstam (quoted in the book “Culture and Art are also a Front”, Literature Publishing House, 1981, p. 477).

(7) *Ho Chi Minh and his homeland Nghe Tinh* (proceedings of the scientific conference commemorating the 100th anniversary of President Ho Chi Minh’s birth) (1990), Nghe Tinh Publishing House, p. 94.

(8) *Impressions of international visitors at the Ho Chi Minh Heritage Site* (Presidential Palace), Ba Dinh, Hanoi.