

Nguyen Ai Quoc's vision in the Colonial Union

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Abstract: *Adopting the Resolution of the Communist International and V. Lenin's Draft Theses on National and Colonial Questions (July 1920) and the French Communist Party's support, Nguyen Ai Quoc co-founded the Colonial Union in Paris (France) with some of his fellows from Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco. By virtue of his independent thinking, self-control, creativity and foresight of the development of the proletariat revolution, he made crucial predictions about the idea of class alliance, the role of revolutionary theory, the power of the press, the idea of gathering and uniting forces against imperialism and the endogenous capabilities and strength of the colonial countries in the Colonial Union.*

Keywords: National and Colonial Issues, Vision, Colonial Union, Les Misérables, Class Alliance, The Idea of Gathering and Uniting Forces, Solidarity, Revolutionary Forces, World Revolutionary Movement, Nguyen Ai Quoc

1. Forewords

Nguyen Ai Quoc's vision in the Colonial Union represents his creative application of Marxism-Leninism theory of solidarity to the struggle by oppressed peoples around the world. The Colonial Union is seen as the first eloquent manifesto of the impoverished, expressing their strong voice. Right from its birth, the Union has clearly defined the nature and goals of the struggle to protect the rights and interests of its members. Nguyen Ai Quoc's vision reflected and properly resolved the basic, critical contradictions and the most urgent requirements of the colonial countries at that time, which was in line with the inevitable trend, the development of the

times, the needs and aspirations of these countries struggling to liberate themselves, and at the same time creating a premise for the world revolutionary movement to make new progress. Although only existed for a short time, the Colonial Union made a great contribution to the world revolutionary movement, especially promoting the colonial countries to stand up to fight for self-liberation.

Nguyen Ai Quoc's vision in the Colonial Union is reflected in his ability to identify and plan goals, methods, abilities, trends, and development on how to conduct the proletariat revolution in the spirit of self-reliance, fight for national liberation, regain independence, and freedom for colonial

countries and poor laborers; mainly creating solidarity, unity, and forces gathering to form synergy to fight against colonialism and imperialism.

2. Five points about Nguyen Ai Quoc's vision in the Colonial Union

The establishment of the Colonial Union by Nguyen Ai Quoc and his fellow activists in France has shown a clear vision, which is of great significance to the world's revolutionary movement from its very first days. For the first time in history, a small-scale organization, initially with only nearly 200 members, dared to confront the imperialist colonial countries, and stand up for and protect the legitimate rights and interests of the weak and the vulnerable. Among them, Nguyen Ai Quoc is a typical and great contributor to the main activities of the Colonial Union, demonstrating his clear, scientific, and correct vision as follows:

First, Nguyen Ai Quoc's vision of the idea of class alliance in the proletarian revolution was to fight for the liberation of the colonial peoples.

As a member of the French Communist Party from 1921 to 1923, Nguyen Ai Quoc was passionate about studying Lenin's theory and the Communist International's line on all aspects of the revolutionary struggle, especially the national and colonial issues, and actively in all practical activities to implement the theory and resolutions of the Communist International. On June 26, 1921, backed by the Communist International and the French Communist Party, after many meetings and exchanges with foreign anti-colonial soldiers living in Paris, Nguyen Ai Quoc participated in the meeting to

establish the Colonial Union. It was a form of an alliance of oppressed peoples that first appeared in the history of national liberation struggles and was a unique form born in the heart of the country that was dominating these countries¹.

Notably, the Third Congress of the Communist International, held from June 22 to July 12, 1921, in Moscow, considered the strategy of establishing a Workers' United Front as the main measure to expand the influence of the Communist Party in the community. By the Fourth Congress from November 5 to December 5, 1922, the outline of the Workers' United Front drafted by the Executive Committee of the Communist International was confirmed. The birth of this primitive frontal organization was the result of active campaigns and mainly due to the creative vision of Nguyen Ai Quoc, and the support of genuine Marxists to put the theory of the Communist International into the practice of the revolutionary struggle.

Second, Nguyen Ai Quoc's vision of creatively applying the revolutionary theory to the operation of the Colonial Union.

During the time of finding a way to liberate the country, combined with the study of Lenin's Thesis, Nguyen Ai Quoc completely believed in Lenin and the Communist International.

¹ See: Article 2 of the Statutes of the Colonial Union states: The Union aims to gather and guide all colonial people living in France to enlighten the colonial people on all aspects of the situation in France to unite them; discuss and study all the political and economic issues of the colonial country (*Biographical Chronicles*, <https://baotanghochiminh.vn/nguyen-ai-quoc-tham-gia-du-thao-nghi-quyet-vechu-nghia-cong-san-va-cac-thuoc-dia.htm>, accessed on 08 June 2022).

He has shown a strategic vision and creatively applied the resolutions of the Communist International to solve specific problems of the world revolution at this time, typically the establishment of the Colonial Union in 1921. In the same year, he actively participated in the Communist International, making great contributions in both theory and practice to the world's revolutionary movement.

The birth of the Colonial Union, demonstrating the broad vision of Nguyen Ai Quoc and many patriots, was one of the important political events for the oppressed peoples present in France at that time. Although it only operated for a short time, the Union played a significant role in uniting the peoples of the colonial countries in a common front against imperialism and building solidarity between them with the working class of France. The Colonial Union and later the Union of Oppressed Peoples in East Asia, founded in 1925, were the first organizations of the national liberation movement, which were established to unite colonial peoples, fighting against imperialism in the international arena. Only then can they win.

Nguyen Ai Quoc was the initiator, organizer, and key leader, which showed both his initiative in contributing to the world's revolutionary movement and his broad vision for the development of the colonial revolutionary movement.

Third, Nguyen Ai Quoc's epochal vision of using the power of the press - the agent of the Colonial Union to fight for freedom and independence for the colonial peoples.

Nguyen Ai Quoc quickly realized the great power of the revolutionary press for

the world's revolutionary cause in general and Vietnam in particular. He clearly understood the role and power of the press; know how to use the press to fight and denounce the crimes of colonialism and imperialism, thereby encouraging the fighting spirit of the people in the colonial countries. Thanks to such early awareness, Nguyen Ai Quoc and his comrades promoted the establishment of the Union's press agency and published *Le Paria* - the world's first newspaper dedicated to the colonial peoples. Besides being in charge of the newspaper's activities, he also published several articles of different genres: editorials, comments, stories, comedy acts, caricatures, reporting, translation, etc.

Nguyen Ai Quoc was the main writer, the soul that helped the newspaper survive and develop for a long time. His articles focused on vehemently denouncing the fierce exploitation of colonialists worldwide in colonial countries, including Vietnam. Initially, he used the press to expose the cruel exploits and tricks of capitalism such as imposing many unreasonable taxes, giving rise to social evils (opium, alcohol), forcing people to join the army, blatantly appropriating land, etc. At the same time, he called for the abolition of those unjust and harsh regimes in no other way than by uniting the people together and standing up to fight for their liberation. Sharing a voice with the French Communist Party's *L'Humanité* newspaper, *Le Paria* newspaper formed a common united front of the colonial people with the French proletariat and working people against capitalism. Nguyen Ai Quoc and

his comrades, with their clear vision and highest determination, published the first issue in April 1922 with the welcome message as follows: “In the history of the indigenous peoples of the French colonies, not a single newspaper has been published to proclaim their suffering and general poverty, regardless of country or race. *Le Paria* newspaper was born out of the common understanding of comrades in North Africa, Central Africa, and West Africa, in Madagascar, Indochina, the Antilles, and Guyam” (Toan, 2022: 1).

Nguyen Ai Quoc repeatedly discussed with his comrades that the newspaper must be kept alive at any cost because its loss would be great harm to the propaganda work of the organization. In a report to the Editorial Board, Nguyen Ai Quoc called on his comrades to continue to donate to the newspaper and bravely embark on the work, which demonstrates his very clear vision of the role of the newspaper in the world revolutionary struggle (Thu Phuong-Hanh Quynh, 2021).

Le Paria became a sharp and effective weapon, and a forum for Nguyen Ai Quoc and the Colonial Union to propagate and organize the colonial people to fight against imperialism more and more effectively. As editor-in-chief, treasurer, publisher, and liaison, Nguyen Ai Quoc deserves to be the soul of the newspaper and the Colonial Union. This work gave him a lot of experience to establish Vietnam's first revolutionary newspaper called Thanh Nien newspaper three years later, in 1925. Nguyen Ai Quoc left a treasure of revolutionary journalism while using the press to fight in the Colonial Union. From the first article Ho Chi Minh published on

La Vie Ouvrière in 1917 in France to the last one entitled “A reply to US President R.M. Nixon” (*People's Newspaper*, August 25, 1969), he had a 52-year career as a journalist. He left a great journalistic legacy with more than 2,000 articles of all kinds, nearly 300 poems, nearly 500 pages of stories and autographs, etc., written in many languages including Vietnamese, English, French, Russian, Chinese... using more than 170 pen names... There were 34 articles by Nguyen Ai Quoc in the 38 issues of the *Le Paria* newspaper published in 4 years from April 1922 to April 1926 (Phuong Lien, 2015).

Fourth, Nguyen Ai Quoc's vision of the idea of gathering forces to fight imperialism.

Before the 1920s, solidarity was the topic of much attention on forums and agendas. However, real solidarity has not been effectively mentioned. Dear compatriots, if the saying “unity makes strength” is not a mere saying, if you want to help each other, if you want to defend your interests, as well as the interests of all compatriots in the colonies, join the Colonial Union” wrote Ho Chi Minh (*Ho Chi Minh, Full Episode*, Volume 1, 2011: 482). The Colonial Union and *Le Paria* newspaper actively contributed to awakening the French colonial peoples to stand up for the national liberation revolution, realize international solidarity, and fight for common goals and interests. Later, during his stay in China, Ho Chi Minh and his comrades from China, India, North Korea, Indonesia, and Burma (Myanmar) established the League of Oppressed Peoples of Asia (1925) to unite the oppressed and vulnerable peoples in a revolutionary organization for liberating

them from the yoke of colonialism and imperialism. The League manifesto states: “Dear friends, we should unite soon! Let’s join forces to claim our rights and freedoms! Let’s join forces to save our race!... Unite with us if you want to escape the clutches of your tormentors! We need your help. We have the same interests, when fighting for us, you are also fighting for yourself. When you help us, you also save yourself” (*Ho Chi Minh, Full Episode*, Volume 2, 2011: 499-500).

Ho Chi Minh’s vision of gathering forces is reflected in the motto that it is necessary to have a close alliance among the colonial peoples, between the colonial people and the proletariat in the colonist country. Ho Chi Minh believed that the era of capitalist manipulation was also an era when a large group of countries led by financial capitalists dominated dependent and semi-dependent countries, so the liberation of countries and oppressed peoples was an integral part of the proletarian revolution. Therefore, first of all, there would arise the possibility and the need for a close alliance between the colonial peoples and the proletariat in the imperialist countries to defeat the common enemy (*Ho Chi Minh, Full Episode*, Volume 11, 2011: 169).

Ho Chi Minh acknowledged that the national liberation revolution was “an integral part”, “one of the two branches” of the world proletarian revolution. He gave a very realistic example as follows: Capitalism is a two-pronged leech - a nozzle that sucks the blood of the proletariat and the working people in the colonist country, a nozzle that sucks the blood of those in the colonial countries.

To kill that monster, you must cut both its nozzles at the same time. If only one nozzle is cut, it will still be alive and the one that is cut will grow back. Thus, Ho Chi Minh raised a specific image indicating the need for an alliance of forces and coordination between the national revolution and the colonial revolution. He does not think that the colonial revolution depended entirely on the proletarian revolution in the colonist country, but equated these two revolutions, which affected and influenced each other. He even thought that revolutions in colonial countries could break out and win ahead of the proletarian ones in the colonist country, and at the same time have the opposite effect to promote the victory of the national revolution. He pointed out: “Faced with capitalism and imperialism, our interests are united; remember C. Marx’s summons: “Workers of the world, unite!”” (*Ho Chi Minh, Full Episode*, Volume 4, 2011: 192).

The birth of the Colonial Union was an important historical event for the colonial peoples who stood up for self-liberation, which both reflected Nguyen Ai Quoc’s wise vision and proactiveness. It was a great initiative that contributed greatly to the implementation of Lenin’s strategic slogan in the era of the proletarian revolution: “Proletarians of all countries, unite”. The vision of Nguyen Ai Quoc in the Colonial Union greatly contributed to the solidarity for fighting between the people of the French colonial countries and the French working class at that time, and among the peoples of the colonies in a common front against imperialism worldwide. What Nguyen Ai Quoc did was seen as a warning bell, awakening

the colonial people to stand up together to fight for freedom and independence as Leo Phighe and Charles Fourniaux commented: "From Paris, Nguyen Ai Quoc has sown revolutionary seeds to the four corners of the world. At the same time, he defends the cause of all colonial peoples" (Leo Phighe and Charle Furnio, 1957: 57).

Fifth, Nguyen Ai Quoc's vision of the endogenous capabilities and strength of colonial countries in the Colonial Union.

Nguyen Ai Quoc's vision of the Colonial Union is reflected in the fact that the main driving force of the colonial revolution is to rely on their strength to liberate themselves. The Union's manifesto drafted by Nguyen Ai Quoc states: "What must you do to be liberated? Applying C. Marx's formula, your liberation can only be accomplished by your efforts" (*Ho Chi Minh, Full Episode*, Volume 2, 2011: 138).

The fact that the Russian October Revolution helped other peoples get out of the tsarist yoke is a testament to what Lenin said about the important support of the proletariat class in the colonist nation to the colonial people. The August Revolution in Vietnam proved that Nguyen Ai Quoc's creative thesis was correct about the strength of the colonial countries, Vietnam made a successful revolution ahead of the French revolution, completely relying on its strength. That vision was recognized by Nguyen Ai Quoc very early in the 1920s.

3. Conclusion

Applying Nguyen Ai Quoc's idea to build a vision for the team of leaders and managers in Vietnam is now of urgent significance because both strategic and local staff still

have certain limitations¹. That is mainly due to the impact of barriers affecting the vision of leaders and managers, such as limitations on information grasping and integrated knowledge; lack of holistic, strategic, long-term, and systems thinking; suffering from empiricism or dogmatism; habits of administrative management style, subsidies, 'ask-give' mechanism, dearth of initiative, creativity, and spirit of dare to think, dare to do, dare to take responsibility.

Therefore, it is necessary to be aware of and well implement the following key solutions: (i) Comprehensively improve the capacity of dialectical, holistic, strategic, and innovative thinking for leaders and managers; (ii) Establish and build trust, sense of responsibility, a mechanism to encourage and inspire leaders and managers with foresight, vision, high sense of responsibility and bravery firmly overcome all difficulties and challenges to have a scientific vision; (iii) Strengthen the capacity to realize the vision for leaders and managers at all levels and sectors; (iv) Focus on expanding strategic-level staff on a par with their duties in the spirit of the

¹ See also: Resolution No.12-NQ/TW of the 4th Session of the Party Central Committee (term XI) on some urgent issues of building the Party today, <https://tulieuvankien.dangcongsan.vn/he-thongvan-ban/van-ban-cua-dang/nghi-quyet-so-12-nqtwngay-16012012-cua-ban-chap-hanh-trung-uong-taihoi-nghi-ban-chap-hanh-trung-uong-lan-thu-4-khoaxi-1694>; "Resolution of the Fourth Session of the 12th Party Central Committee on strengthening the building and rectification of the Party; prevent and reverse the deterioration of political ideology, morality, lifestyle, manifestations of internal "self-evolution" and "self-transformation", the website of the Central Committee for Internal Affairs, accessed on 12 March 2022.

Resolution of the 7th Session of the Party Central Committee (term XII).

Vietnam's process of renovation and international integration in Vietnam is increasingly deepening, and our synergy and international reputation are increasingly enhanced, creating a premise for us to develop quickly and sustainably. Therefore, in building the current team of leaders and managers, especially those at the strategic level, it is necessary to have a long-term vision. The 13th National Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam has formed the Vietnamese revolutionary path for the 2021-2025 term and set a vision goal to 2045, which will continue to comprehensively and synchronously promote the transformation process, build and firmly defend the Fatherland, maintain a peaceful and stable environment, and strive to turn Vietnam into a developed, socialist-oriented country by the middle of the twenty-first century (See also: Communist Party of Vietnam, Volume 1, 2021: 112) □

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