

# UNDERSTANDING THE BIRTH OF THE VIETNAMESE REVOLUTIONARY YOUTH LEAGUE (JUNE 1925)

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## ABSTRACT

*In June 1925, the Vietnamese Revolutionary Youth League was established in Guangzhou (China). From then until early 1930, the members of the association, under the direction of Nguyen Ai Quoc, prepared all the necessary conditions for the birth of the Communist Party of Vietnam. The content of the article explores the process of the establishment of the Vietnamese Revolutionary Youth League in order to clarify the historical mission of the association as well as the important contribution of Nguyen Ai Quoc to the birth of the Communist Party of V.*

**Keyword:** *Nguyen Ai Quoc, Vietnam revolution, the Vietnamese Revolutionary Youth League*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

From the second half of the 19th century to the early years of the 20th century, successive generations of Vietnamese youth took the initiative in all fields to participate in the search for the right revolutionary path to liberate the nation. While most young people had not yet clearly determined the path of struggle suitable for the Vietnamese revolution. In July 1920, Nguyen Ai Quoc found the answer: "To save the country and liberate the nation, there is no other way than the proletarian revolutionary path". After a period of research and study in France and the Soviet Union, on his journey back to the country, Nguyen Ai Quoc and other progressive patriotic youths established the Vietnamese Revolutionary Youth League in Guangzhou (China) (June 1925) to directly prepare the necessary conditions to establish a proletarian political party in Vietnam.

## 2.CONTENT

### ***2.1.Factors affecting the birth of the Vietnamese Revolutionary Youth League***

The late 19th and early 20th centuries were a period of many important historical changes, these events affected all countries in the world, including Vietnam, specifically:

*\* In terms of politics:*

In the world, by the 70s of the 19th century, the achievements of the second scientific and technological revolution allowed capitalism to

create a world in its own shape. It is very clear that the civilizing actions of imperialism or colonialism are essentially colonial exploitation and exploitation, and the specific action is to enslave weak peoples and exploit these peoples for as long as possible. It is also because "as long as possible" that the human rights of people who have been exploited and oppressed for a long time are "awakened".

Meanwhile, in Vietnam, the French colonialists began the war of aggression against Vietnam, opening fire to attack the Son Tra peninsula - Da Nang. After 1884, the process of territorial governance was increasingly consolidated and perfected by the French colonialists. They divided Vietnam into 3 regions with 3 different political regimes, in which all three legislative, executive and judicial powers were actually in the hands of the French colonialists, the Nguyen feudal court only existed in name with no real power.

*\* Regarding ideology:*

Along with the invasion of Western imperialist countries in the journey of internationalizing capitalism, the bourgeoisie spread Western civilization to countries in their colonial system around the world.

For Vietnam, the French colonialists advocated strong reforms in culture and education to suit the colonial exploitation. The content of the educational program focused on "the grace of the motherland's enlightenment". They tried to create people (both Vietnamese and French) with "colonial souls" as the basis for their ideological

and cultural rule. As a result, a colonial-feudal society was formed with many new classes and strata appearing along with the emergence of more conflicts within Vietnamese society. Besides the old social contradictions that still existed (the contradiction between the people (mainly farmers) and feudal landlords), a new contradiction arose in society - the national contradiction (that is, the contradiction between the entire Vietnamese people and the French imperialists and their lackeys). These two contradictions existed in parallel and intertwined, in which the national contradiction covered all. It can be seen that the civilizing work of the motherland France towards the colonies was essentially aimed at extracting immediate material benefits, not as the French imperialists propagandized. That was what became fertile, new ground, creating conditions for new ideological trends from outside to penetrate as well as change the ideological consciousness of the people.

At this time, in Asia, some national reforms of East Asian and Southeast Asian countries took place quite successfully, creating changes in the ideology of colonial and semi-colonial countries (including Vietnam). Along with the national reforms in Japan, Thailand and China was the victory of the Russian October Revolution (1917). From here, it opened up for the world revolutionary movement a fighting trend called proletarian revolution.

All of the above events impacted Vietnam, contributing to awakening the fighting ability and national solidarity spirit of all Vietnamese people in the cause of regaining independence for the nation and freedom for the Fatherland. In particular, when the Can Vuong movement failed, and the struggle of Yen The farmers also failed, it marked the end of the historical role of feudal forces and Confucian ideology in the revolutionary cause of the nation. Among the patriots at that time were Phan Boi Chau, Phan Chau Trinh, Nguyen An Ninh, Huynh Thuc Khang... who gradually combined traditional patriotism with democratic and progressive humanistic values from the West, creating a strong shift in people's awareness and national ideology. They gradually broke away from Confucian ideology to gradually shift to bourgeois democratic ideology. In 1917, the success of the October Revolution in Russia had a profound impact on every country in the

world, in Asia and Vietnam. With political acumen and ardent patriotism, the thinkers proceeded to "introduce" some issues of Marxism-Leninism to Vietnamese society. Although these thinkers did not stand on the proletarian class position but on the bourgeois democratic position, the content of these works resonated with the process of propagating the proletarian ideology of leader Nguyen Ai Quoc, making the theoretical issues of Marxism-Leninism spread into the spiritual life of society, creating a new atmosphere, having the meaning of guiding the Vietnamese people from feudal ideology to bourgeois ideology, as a premise to approach the proletarian ideology.

*\* Regarding revolutionary organization:*

At the end of the 19th century, the 2.0 industrial revolution made the capitalist mode of production increasingly develop in the world, leading to the conflict between the modern working class and the outdated bourgeoisie. By October 1917, under the leadership of V.I. Lenin, the victory of the Russian October Revolution, the birth of the socialist regime in reality in a country that occupies 1/6 of the world's area became an important highlight in human history. From here, the flame of struggle of the working class was fanned throughout the world. In 1918, a series of communist parties of the working class were established in many countries around the world, such as Finland, Austria, the Netherlands, Hungary, Germany, Poland... Besides, communist groups and organizations were also established in many places around the world in 1918-1919, such as Czechoslovakia, Romania, Italy, China, Korea, South Africa, Australia, Argentina... In March 1919, in Moscow, the Conference (considered as the Congress) to establish the Third International took place. From here, the world revolutionary movement had a general staff to ensure the development of the movement as well as lead oppressed peoples and workers around the world to find the path of independence - freedom - happiness.

In Vietnam, by the beginning of the 20th century, in the political ideology of patriotic scholars, although the concept of political parties had not yet appeared, from the practical need to lead the revolution as well as absorb the progressive ideology of "New Books" and "New Literature", they thought and established organizations to gather forces and launch a struggle movement.

In 1904, Phan Boi Chau and Dang Thai Than contacted the scholars in Quang Nam to establish Duy Tan Association in Thang Binh, Quang Nam. By October 1911, the success of the Chinese bourgeois revolution had proven in practice that Phan Boi Chau could not maintain a political organization following the monarchical line, so in the "Great Conference" (June 1912) with the participation of many delegates, Duy Tan Association decided to reform this organization and established Viet Nam Quang Phuc Association. The sole purpose of the Association was "to expel the French invaders, restore Vietnam, and establish the Republic of Vietnam"<sup>1</sup>. Until the 1920s, when Phan Boi Chau approached Marxism-Leninism and the influence of the Russian October Revolution (1917), his political party's viewpoint shifted towards proletarian revolution. Thus, at this time, Phan Boi Chau's political party viewpoint had leaned towards the proletarian revolutionary tendency. However, in 1925, Phan Boi Chau was arrested by the French colonialists, so the revolutionary bases in the political organization built by Phan Boi Chau were later received by Nguyen Ai Quoc during the time he returned to China to operate (November 1924).

Along with the violent trend, there also appeared and developed the trend of saving the country by reform methods initiated by Phan Chau Trinh, Huynh Thuc Khang, Tran Quy Cap... They launched the Duy Tan movement with the policy of "enlightening the people, strengthening the people's spirit, improving the people's lives" combining saving the country with reform, developing the country along the path of bourgeois civilization, following the model of advanced Western countries. Thereby, it raised national and democratic consciousness; people were enlightened about their rights and interests; on that basis, it directly ignited the vigorous struggles, of which the anti-tax movement in Central Vietnam (1908) was typical.

Besides, Phan Chau Trinh strongly opposed the violent method. He tried his best to call and explain to the people to follow the peaceful method of struggle, because according to him, the violent method was "extremely wrong, only

pushing the nation to death, not suitable for the times, not close to the theory"<sup>2</sup>. On the other hand, the peaceful method of struggle did not cause loss of life and material, but on the contrary, it made the people awaken, rise up to make revolution, criticize the monarchy, denounce French officials for violating the people's democratic rights, however, the effectiveness of this method was not high and not thorough.

In April 1908, Phan Chau Trinh was arrested in Hanoi and exiled to Con Dao. In mid-1910, he was released and placed under house arrest in My Tho. From 1911 to 1925, he lived, worked, and worked to find a way to liberate in France. Here, Phan Chau Trinh realized the nature of the capitalist social regime, and he also witnessed the success of the Russian Revolution, the French Communist Party, and a series of Communist parties and workers' organizations in other countries that appeared in the European revolutionary movement from 1918 to 1923. Phan Chau Trinh realized that to defeat the enemy, he had to use revolutionary violence. Therefore, in a letter to Nguyen Ai Quoc (in 1922), he shared: "I sincerely hope that you will change your old methods to plot great things. I wish you success and hope that we will see each other again in our homeland"<sup>3</sup>. In early 1926, a year after returning home, due to serious illness, Phan Chau Trinh passed away on the night of March 24 at 54 Peloranh Street, Saigon (now Pasteur Street, Ho Chi Minh City).

In short, to complete the tasks and goals of national salvation, in addition to the armed struggle of the previous period which was still maintained, patriotic scholars of this period established patriotic associations, combining many new measures in all aspects: politics, economics, culture, diplomacy... Although they did not achieve success because Vietnam at that time did not have all the ripe economic, political and social conditions, the transformation process of the patriotic movement in the first 20 years of the 20th century created solid ideological, economic and social premises to bring the national and democratic movement to continue to transform, entering a new stage of development with a new

<sup>1</sup> Phan Boi Chau (1973), Phan Boi Chau Chronology (Memoirs of Phan Boi Chau), History - Geography Research Group, Saigon, p. 151.

<sup>2</sup> Phan Chau Trinh (2005), Complete Works, Volume 3, Da Nang Publishing House, p. 67.

<sup>3</sup> Pham Ba Linh, Pham Sang, Bua Kham (2005), Ho Chi Minh with the Lao people, the Lao people with Ho Chi Minh, People's Police Publishing House, Thanh Hoa, p. 7.

revolutionary path and a new direction of struggle.

*2.1.2.3. Nguyen Ai Quoc and his journey to find a new solution for independence and freedom for the Vietnamese people*

Although he admired the previous generation, he did not agree with the path of national salvation of his predecessors. Nguyen Tat Thanh followed a different path. On June 5, 1911, at Saigon port, the young man Nguyen Tat Thanh took the name Van Ba and asked to be a kitchen assistant on the Admiral Latouche-Tréville ship to find a new solution for his homeland. One detail that cannot be overlooked is that before going to France, Nguyen Tat Thanh studied for a short time at the Saigon Practical Industrial School (Cho Cu, near Ba Son factory)<sup>4</sup>. That was the first step that helped him understand the life of the working class - laborers on the continents. This is also a sign that he wanted to truly come into contact with Western technology as a worker. What could be more wonderful and correct than penetrating Europe - the world's factory, to clearly see the nature of capitalism from the starting point of a worker. Ba's luggage is the tradition of patriotism, the spirit of national unity, a deep understanding of Eastern culture, and some knowledge of Western culture. That is also the precious capital for him to continue to absorb and inherit the values of the quintessence of human culture.

In July 1920, he read Lenin's "First Draft of Theses on the National and Colonial Questions". The content of the Theses answered Nguyen Ai Quoc's concerns about the path to national independence and freedom, answered the question of who was the leader, the participating forces, and the relationship between the national liberation revolution in the colonies and the proletarian revolution in the mother country... Like a thirsty traveler finding a source of cool water, like a person who has overcome the darkness to see the sunlight, Nguyen Ai Quoc found the direction and basic path of the national liberation revolution, including the Vietnamese revolution. With a passionate spirit, enthusiasm and intelligence, after carefully studying and analyzing Lenin's Theses, Nguyen Ai Quoc began to prepare the

necessary conditions for the birth of a political party of the proletariat in Vietnam: "Return to the country, go among the masses, awaken them, organize them, unite them, train them, and lead them to fight for freedom and independence"<sup>5</sup>.

### **3. THE BIRTH OF THE VIETNAMESE REVOLUTIONARY YOUTH LEAGUE**

#### ***3.1.1. From the "young group" of the Restoration League of Vietnam, the Tam Tam Xa organization was formed***

In 1912, Phan Boi Chau founded the Vietnam Restoration Association to replace the Duy Tan Association. During its existence, the Vietnam Restoration Association carried out many armed struggles throughout the Central, South, and North, and continued its activities until 1917 - 1918. However, in the face of the fierce pursuit of the French colonialists and especially after the "French - Vietnamese Harmonious Political Letter" incident by Phan Boi Chau, most of the members of the Vietnam Restoration Association abroad went to Guangzhou (China) - a place with many advantages to return to Vietnam. They were in a deadlock and there was a division in age and political views, so within the organization, two groups with different tendencies and belonging to two different generations were formed: the "old group" and the "young group". The fundamental difference between these two groups is that the old group still supported Phan Boi Chau's policy, while the young group, with their enthusiasm, eagerness and sensitivity to current events, realized the wavering and deadlock in the organization's stance and struggle, so although they respected the "old group", the "young group" decided to restore the country in their own way. This event marked the dissolution of the Vietnam Restoration Association. At the same time, it was also the time when the Tan Viet Thanh Nien Doan (ie Tam Tam Xa) was born, and the people who founded Tam Tam Xa were members of the "young group" of the Vietnam Restoration Association.

In the spring of 1923, in the boiling revolutionary atmosphere in Guangzhou, Ho Tung Mau and some others, Le Hong Son, Nguyen Giang Khanh (adopted son of Nguyen Thien Thuat; some

<sup>4</sup> Do Quang Hung, Nguyen Van Khoan (2011), The Imprint of Journalist Nguyen Ai Quoc - Ho Chi Minh in the National Liberation Revolution, Information and Communication Publishing House, Hanoi, p. 149.

<sup>5</sup> Ho Chi Minh (2011), Complete Works, Volume 02, National Politics Publishing House, Hanoi, p. 151.

documents record his name as Nguyen Giang Khanh), Dang Xuan Hong, Truong Quoc Huy, Le Cau and Nguyen Cong Vien (aka Lam Duc Thu) founded the Tan Viet Thanh Nien Doan organization<sup>6</sup>. Right from the first day of its establishment, the motto of Tam Tam Xa tried to orient the revolutionary activities of the organization. The founders of Tam Tam Xa had more or less changed in their ideology. They were influenced by the bourgeois democratic ideology (from constitutional monarchy to bourgeois republican democracy) of Phan Boi Chau (1867-1940), or influenced by the reformist and non-violent ideology of Phan Chau Trinh (1872-1926). But faced with the dead end of the revolutionary predecessors as well as the changing situation of the times, with the perspective of youth, they were urged to choose a new path and establish their own organization. Although the leaders of Tam Tam Xa have not found the exact answer, it is certain that there must be a new path, a new organization, suitable for the nation and the times, to be able to gain independence for the Fatherland, freedom for the people.... And the person who realized that was Nguyen Ai Quoc.

### ***3.1.2. Communist Group – The nucleus of the Vietnamese Revolutionary Youth League***

On November 11, 1924, Nguyen Ai Quoc, under the name Ly Thuy (sometimes called Vuong), went to Guangzhou to carry out the mission assigned by the Communist International, which was to promote all conditions to build a communist organization in Indochina and help revolutionary representatives in Southeast Asian countries. At that time, there were many Vietnamese youths active in Guangzhou, among them were those close to Phan Boi Chau. After meeting and exchanging the general outlines of his thoughts with Phan Boi Chau, Nguyen Ai Quoc was trusted by Phan Boi Chau to give him a list of 14 people<sup>7</sup>. These were the people that Phan Boi Chau was hoping for, they shared a patriotic spirit, wanted to liberate the nation, but had different perceptions about establishing an organization and methods of saving the country. The immediate requirement was to awaken the revolutionary spirit for this group of young people. That was

clearly stated by Him in a letter to the President of the Communist International: “I will train them in organizational methods. We will send them back to Indochina to work after 3 months of study; and we will take out another delegation. At this time, this is the only solution”<sup>8</sup>.

From the challenges of training and work, he trained them on the new revolutionary viewpoint and the inevitable development path of the world revolution as well as the Vietnamese revolution. Among the members of Tam Tam Xa who participated in the training class, he realized that there were some conservatives, some who were half-hearted, some who intended to establish a government in exile, only a few of the most progressive people clearly realized that communism must be their ideal. Therefore, he selected a number of active young people to form a secret group, which would be the nucleus of a larger organization later on. The secret group defined itself as a revolutionary organization, regardless of religion, class, and to some extent, regardless of political parties. Although the participants in this revolutionary organization sometimes had different views, they still had to consider each other as comrades to discuss and find the right thing together... The secret group was named Communist Group, established in February 1925, with Ly Thuy as Secretary (Nam Dan - Nghe An).

Thus, at the end of 1924, in Guangzhou (China) - the place known as the Moscow of the East, there was a meeting between a person who was eager to find land to sow the seeds of revolution in the country and an organization of patriotic Vietnamese youth who were ready to accept the newest, most positive, most revolutionary things into their action program.

### ***3.1.3. The Vietnamese Revolutionary Youth League was born (June 1925)***

Based on the establishment and operation of the Communist Youth Union group, Nguyen Ai Quoc proceeded to establish a larger mass organization to gather patriotic youths at home and abroad. Accordingly, in June 1925, the Vietnamese

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<sup>6</sup> Program for collecting documents and writing biographies of senior leaders of the Party and the Vietnamese revolution (2016), Ho Tung Mau - Biography, National Political Publishing House, Hanoi, p. 82.

<sup>7</sup> Song Thanh (Editor-in-Chief) (2006), Ho Chi Minh's biography, Political Theory Publishing House, Hanoi, p. 74.

<sup>8</sup> Ho Chi Minh (2011), Complete Works, Volume 03, National Politics Publishing House, Hanoi, p. 9.

Revolutionary Youth League was born. This organization announced its Program and Charter.

After the establishment of the Association, Nguyen Ai Quoc published the *Thanh Nien* newspaper. The newspaper published 208 issues, the first issue was published on June 21, 1925. At the beginning, the newspaper was published once a week with over 100 copies. Later, due to many difficulties, each issue was published 3 to 5 weeks after the previous issue. The newspaper's cufflinks were written in Chinese and Vietnamese. The number of each newspaper was written in a five-pointed star. Most of each issue had two pages of average size 13cm x 19cm, some had as few as four pages. *Thanh Nien* newspaper was secretly transported to Vietnam by ship, circulated in the branches of the Vietnam Revolutionary Youth League, in the revolutionary bases of overseas Vietnamese in France, Thailand, and China. "It must be said right away that Nguyen Ai Quoc's newspaper was read and copied many times by all party members at home and abroad, as well as many sympathizers"<sup>9</sup>. From Guangzhou, *Thanh Nien* newspaper contributed to the change in the ideology of the people in the country from developed patriotism to proletarianism.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Thus, Nguyen Ai Quoc started from the reality of the country, where 95% of the population were farmers, the vast majority were illiterate, had little education, and no one knew what communism was, and creatively applied the theory of building the Communist Party to that situation by establishing a precursor organization to bring Marxism-Leninism to Vietnam and when Marxism-Leninism was combined with the workers' movement, the Communist Party was built. Obviously, in Vietnam, except for a very small number of Vietnamese people who went to study in Europe, "no one knew what communism was and it was impossible to establish a Communist Party in Indochina when no one understood the meaning of the word

"communism"<sup>10</sup>. "It was only possible to establish a Vietnamese National Socialist Party whose leaders had the task of gradually bringing their members to Marxism"<sup>11</sup>. Therefore, "Nguyen Ai Quoc established the Vietnamese Revolutionary Youth League – a revolutionary organization suitable and within the specific historical conditions of our country at that time"<sup>12</sup> – was an intention, a creative direction, different from the models of establishing Communist Parties in other countries in the region, but completely suitable for Vietnam at the beginning of the 20th century.

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<sup>9</sup> Ho Thi To Luong (2001), "The relationship between the Communist International and the Indochinese Communist Party", Doctoral thesis in history, Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics, Hanoi, p. 181 – 182.

<sup>10</sup> Ho Thi To Luong (2001), "The relationship between the Communist International and the Indochinese Communist Party", Doctoral thesis in history, Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics, Hanoi, p. 179.

<sup>11</sup> Ho Thi To Luong (2001), "The relationship between the Communist International and the Indochinese Communist Party", Doctoral thesis in history, Ho Chi Minh National Academy of Politics, Hanoi, p. 180.

<sup>12</sup> Pham Xanh (2006), *Phuong Dong University - a place to train Vietnamese revolutionary cadres*, Party History Magazine, Hanoi, p. 120.

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