



PHAN BOI CHAU'S THOUGHT ON NATIONAL LIBERATION

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Abstract- Phan Boi Chau made great theoretical contributions to the historical flow of Vietnamese ideas. With extremely deep theoretical meaning and values, Phan Boi Chau's thought has become one of the premises and steps for future thinkers to inherit and develop, especially the viewpoint of national liberation. He said that in order to free the nation, it is essential to unite all people to create collective strength to drive away the enemy. Phan Boi Chau is a great patriot of the Vietnamese nation. Although he has not yet solved the national historic tasks, he laid the foundation for the next generation's revolution.

Keywords: nation; liberation, thought, history, solidarity.

I. INTRODUCTION

It can be affirmed that all theories, reasoning or ideas have been always formed on a certain practical basis. Phan Boi Chau's thought about national liberation was born not by accident or from subjective will but from urgent demands of contemporary society, which was the fluctuation of social-history of Vietnam and the world at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century. Those upheavals made a series of thinkers to appear, who could answer urgent requests of Vietnamese society at that time, which was the comprehensive liberation of Vietnamese nation.

Researching on ideas of Phan Boi Chau so far has attracted a large number of scientists who have been passionate about these issues. However, his thought of national liberation has still been an unanswered matter. To clarify the problems posed, we use several research methods such as logic, history, analysis and synthesis. The article will clarify the content of Phan Boi Chau's thoughts on liberation ideas as well as give some discussions on this.

II. CONTENT

2.1. Phan Boi Chau's point of view on national liberation

The national liberation movement was a movement to claim national independence and protect the nation's independence of colonial and dependent countries in the world in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Prior to, most of underdeveloped countries in the world were colonies of rich ones. During their rule, the imperial countries tried their best to exploit natural resources, human's labor and wealth. That reality created contradictory conflicts between the ruling power and those indigenous people. National independence movements in the colonies emerged strongly but were soon suppressed by many different reasons. However, since 1945, colonialism began to be weakened, along with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights approved by the United Nations and on December 10th, 1948 in Paris, France made a great resonance towards the oppressed nations. During that period, a number of national liberation revolutions were successful and resonating such as Indonesia and Vietnam. This event promoted the national liberation movement to take place strongly all over the world. Entering the 21st century, most countries in the world were liberated. However, poor countries have been still dependent on rich countries in many ways, and rich countries have always been looking for ways to intervene those poor countries in a variety of fields. Multi-polarity in the world has been a trend today, in which rich countries use overwhelming political, military, diplomatic, economic and cultural power to influence on, dominate and shape policies and behaviors of other countries in the world as well as control the movement of the international relations system, international trends and the global problem-solving solutions. Hence, "national liberation is a movement to claim independence and protect the independence of oppressed nations".

Thought is the real reflection of consciousness, the manifestation of relationships between people and problems about the world around them. Thus, thought is an awareness of an individual and a community, which contains a system of opinions, conceptions and arguments built on a philosophical foundation. Concepts are consistent, the views represent the will and aspirations of individuals, class,

a nation which have been formed on a certain basis and return to direct practical activities as well as reform reality.

The views of thought stem from the ideas of highly - visionary thinkers. Not everyone who has an idea is considered a thinker due to the fact that according to the scientist Lenin, he thought that a thinker has to know how to solve political, strategic and organizational problems. Thought is not pre-existing or framed. It can be born and come out during human thought and communication. Thought is selectively absorbed by everyone in the form of comprehension and criticism. Accordingly, thought is something unlimited, which has been always formed through human's consciousness. Thought can be manifested in the negative and positive forms.

Phan Boi Chau (1867 - 1940) is a great patriot, cultural activist and thinker of Vietnam in modern times. He was seen as a hero, an angel who devoted his life for independence, and was honored by twenty million people who were living in slavery. His thoughts are the combination of contemporary social practical conditions in accordance with the traditional values of the Vietnamese nation with the elite ideas of the world, all of which aimed to form the ideology of national and class liberation to meet the historical requirements at that time.

To liberate Vietnamese nation, Phan Boi Chau said that it is essential to start with the liberation of classes. First of all, he stood on the Confucian points of view to divide the society into classes such as scholar, peasant, industrialist and merchant, in which scholar was the central class and the leadership of the society. Based on the assessment of the social situation of Vietnam at the end of the 19th century and early 20th century and on the basis of the differences in occupation, social status, lineage, and religion of people groups in the community, Phan Boi Chau divided the society into five categories of people: family lineage, poetry; those who had feud with the Dharma; Giato followers; hard workers; those of the few who had got yellow skin.

When coming to Marxism-Leninism, Phan Boi Chau's concept of class changed. In the work *Class*, according to Phan Boi Chau: "Class means steps; human now has a noble rank which is high status; another rank is nefarious which is low status" (Phan Boi Chau (2000), *Complete works*, volume.7, P. 147). He said that any society has two basic classes that are the ruling class and the ruled class. The ruling class is usually the one that is empowered the economics and politics to rule other people. The ruled class is the one that is not economically and politically empowered, which exists in a dependent manner but is the main productive working class to feed the society. He said that in human history, each period will have corresponding classes. In ancient times, there were class of aristocracy and slaves; in the Medieval Times, there were landlords and peasants; in Middle Ages, there were bourgeois and proletariats. The cause of class appearance, according to Phan Boi Chau, stems from economic reasons. He pointed out that the ruled class were those who "had no land, no fields, only made a living as hired laborers which plowed fields, raised buffaloes. Although they were soaked in the sun and rain and worked hard all the time, their possessions just could help them avoid hunger and deprivation; they had not got enough money to build a mechanic factory or open a construction site. For a lifetime they were just selling their labor to their great landlord. Their only ownership which included enough food to eat, clothes to wear, having a wife and children to bond, holding a little money in hands in a corner of the kitchen, in a house, those people were called the proletariat class" (Phan Boi Chau (2000), *Full Collection*, episode 7, p. 253). The rulers under the Medieval Ages had their property given by the King; the rulers under Middle Ages had their possessions due to the exploitation of labor force of the workers and people. Conflicts of interests among social classes led to constantly fights against each other. Those struggles were defined as victory or defeat by violent force and economic and military potential.

Phan Boi Chau said that the cause of class struggles was "just because those classes are not equal" (Phan Boi Chau (2000), *Complete works*, volume.7, P. 147). The classes are always unequal, in which "people of the upper class often oppress those of the lower class. One side is high, other side is low; one side is rich, other side is poor, which is the position to oppose each other. When the situation is described as "even a worm will turn", it causes struggles, sometimes attacking in front of each other, sometimes fighting each other in the back, the fights become more and more messy, theses struggle have changed many times "" (Phan Boi Chau (2000), *Complete works*, volume 7, p. 147-148). The essence of the class fighting, according to him, is the struggle to resolve conflicts of economic and political interests among social classes. "Those oppressed people, cannot endure forever, must find a way to reform; If they want to achieve their goal, they must get up and fight. Because of this situation, it is the the reason why social organizations have to be reformed, a time when there will never be class fighters" (Phan Boi Chau (2000), *Complete works*, volume.7, p. 148).

Mentioning about class struggles, in capitalist society, he pointed out: "The proletariat must fight with the bourgeoisie, which is indispensable in human society. The fighting styles of those two

classes are as follows: initially, they fight in the economic arena, and later in the political arena. The reason is that, when holding political power, economic rights can be sustainable; when political and economic rights belong to the workers, it is time to achieve the reformative goal "(Phan Boi Chau (2000)), Complete works, volume 7, p. 148). And in this struggle, in order to win, all working people need to unite into one block to create collective strength. The unifying strength of all people is the key to open the wings of national and class liberation. According to Phan Boi Chau, the proletariat is the largest collection of people in society and class struggle is one of the driving forces of the development of a caste society. At the same time, according to him, classes and class struggle are historical "if everyone is equal, the class will not exist; if there is no class, then there will be no fight" (Phan Boi Chau (2000), Complete work, volume 7, p. 147).

Phan Boi Chau claimed that in order to liberate the people, it is necessary to promote the role of class liberation. According to him, national independence is the spiritual right of the nation and also the aspiration of himself. Regarding the independence, from his perspective, the meaning of independence is not "means that each person takes care of himself alone is independent" (Phan Boi Chau (2000), Complete works, volume 7, P.79). Phan Boi Chau has criticized the wrong viewpoints which "independence is when anyone only takes care of himself, so that a father leaves his children, a wife is separated from her husband, a husband leaves his wife, the friends and brothers and sisters all break up. When will the family be reunited as well as the society never has union, so the word "independence" is so disastrous? "Ow"! Thus, accepting two-syllable word "independence" is completely wrong, the independent meaning is telling people not to rely on it "(Phan Boi Chau (2000), Complete works, volume 7, P. 52). According to him, independence not only means standing alone, nor a country is dependent on another country, but also that country that do not interfere in each other's internal affairs. In each country, all people must have the same consensus, strength, direction and goals to make the country develop.

When a country has been developed in all aspects, no one dares to invade this country's border. Phan Boi Chau affirmed that independence and freedom are the rights of each nation that no one has the right to invade, in which independence associates with sovereignty. He wrote: "The vital issue for Vietnam is our sovereignty; The significant thing of sovereignty is independence, which means people are not oppressed by invaders as well as they can hold power inside the country. All people have the right to learn and make progress. That is the complete sovereignty of a country, a full independence. "(Phan Boi Chau (2000), Complete Works, Volume 3, P. 60). On the basis of asserting national sovereignty, the fight to regain the right of independence and freedom for our nation is in accordance with natural and international law. He said that it was essential to "defeat the French colonialists,, wait for the independence of our country , then discuss something else" (Phan Boi Chau (2000), Complete works, volume 6, P. 116).

Phan Boi Chau said that the force for national liberation was all Vietnamese citizens. Towards the invasion and ruling of the French colonialists, witnessing the loss of the country ruled, Phan Boi Chau exclaimed that the ruler considered the people of the colony like trash. The reason why the colonists were looked down was their illiteracy and poverty. illiteracy and poverty turned Vietnam into a fertile land for colonial invasion and ruling. To liberate the nation, people need to unite, be brave and dare to sacrifice themselves to reclaim independence. All citizens need to know and embed the pain of losing their country as well as be loyal to repay their country. In order to call on people to stand up together to defeat the enemies, Phan Boi Chau tried to propagate his thought in many different forms including poems. The solidarity of Vietnamese nation is regardless of genders, classes, ages or anyone living in the country or outside the country. Anyone who loves Vietnamese nation and shares the same will to defeat the invaders in order to built a civilized and beautiful Vietnam would unite together. Phan Boi Chau said that when the Vietnamese people "have consensus, we can defend our country; if we have not one mind and heart, our nation might be invaded; the consensus can control invaders; without consensus, we can be controlled by invaders (Phan Boi Chau (2000), Complete works, volume 2, p. 216).

The method of national liberation, according to Phan Boi Chau, must be carried out by violence. From his point of view, the colonial invaders were enemies that were incompatible with Vietnamese people. The invaders did not allow Vietnamese people to develop their economy, expand their culture and education. Also, they brutally suppressed all our protest, even the most peaceful ones. Thus, it was impossible to use the path of peace to gain national independence, but the only option was the violent approach. He wrote: "Even knowing that violence and suicide are the business of those who are narrow-minded, not having foresights, but if the situation forces suicide, it is better to turn violence and kill oneself. Since employing violence might obtain a success one day. No matter what I have contemplated many times, at this time there is nothing worth more than carrying out

commotions "(Phan Boi Chau (2000), Complete works, volume. 6, P. 48). In 1911, when Tan Hoi Revolution led by Ton Trung Son successfully, from new practice and perception, Phan Boi Chau advocated renouncing monarchism's principle and turning into the stance of democratic bourgeois. In 1912, he founded the Vietnam Quang Phuc Association. The association's sole principle and purpose were to expel the French invaders, restore Vietnamese nation, and establish a republic democracy through revolutionary violence. He pointed out that "now the situation has changed, I have proposed the proposal to the public to change the monarchy into democracy. Firstly, Mr. Dang Tu Man, Luong Lap Nham, Hoang Trong Mau, and his fellows in Central North Vietnamese comrades all agreed, only a few Southern people objected to this project. Because our people living in the South highly and deeply honored Ky Ngoai Hau, so it so difficult to suddenly change their thought. The elderly man Nguyen Hai Duong showed that he did not really allow democracy; however, he reluctantly approved it. As a result, most of them tended to approve the democracy and were determined to annihilate Duy Tan Association as well as established a new and replacement agency called Vietnam Quang Phuc Association. The program of the Association was created by Phan Boi Chau, fortunately admitted by all members. The principle of the first thing which is "Destroying the French invaders, restoring Vietnam and establishing the Republic of Vietnam" is the unique principle of the Association "(Phan Boi Chau (2000), Complete works, vol. 6, p. 216). In his opinion, in order to carry out the mission of restoring Vietnamese reunification, "It is necessary to build up an army to eliminate those invaders, forcing the enemies to return the freedom to Vietnam for the sake of national independence. Also, it is significant to raise the five-star national flag to radiate our Vietnamese nation in the world to become a completely independent country "(Phan Boi Chau (2000), Complete works, vol. 3, P. 367). In 1924, imitating the Nationalist Party of Ton Trung Son, Phan Boi Chau had advocated to reform Vietnam Quang Phuc Association into Việt Nam quốc dân đảng (Vietnamese Nationalist Party). Also during this period, he approached with Marxism-Leninism, he saw the superiority and revolutionary power of socialism and was inclined to change the revolutionary way into socialist tendency. However, when he had not done this task, he was arrested and imprisoned in Hue the French colonialists.

Thus, Phan Boi Chau's point of view on revolutionary method, in each stage, step by step changed from innovation thought into violent struggles, combining legal public propaganda with violence, and from violent struggles to peaceful struggles then turning back to violent path and approaching Marxism-Leninism. Although his approach is not suitable, but the value in his thoughts is to fight continuously for the cause of national liberation.

The thought of Phan Boi Chau was not only aiming to liberate the nation and regain the independence, but also was a noble thought about the cause of human liberation. Mentioning about human liberation, Phan Boi Chau said that the issue of human liberation is essential, consistent with the rules and will inevitably win. The feudal colonial regime's conspiracies and tricks of oppression which made the country increasingly poor and backward were revealed. They applied brutal law, heavy taxes, heroine and alcohol, genocide, market tax, human tax and treated local people like animals. Facing to this situation, he argued that it was necessary to pay attention to the cause of the comprehensive human liberation - both physical and mental issues. Phan Boi Chau said that in order to reform society and liberate human beings, it is crucial to have people with good humanity, who both have wisdom and a heart to be ready to sacrifice for the nation. People who sacrifice for the nation and their fellow humankind are well-educated ones. Therefore, in order to liberate people, Phan Boi Chau said that it is pivotal to perform two tasks which are nurturing the people and educating them.

From the point of view of Confucianism, Phan Boi Chau focused on two things that are nurturing the people and educating them. These two issues have a close and complementary relationship, contributing to a better human life. Phan Boi Chau said: "Nurturing people is taking care of their material life while educating people is concerning about their spiritual life. Nurturing goes together with educating people is the same practice, but the level is a bit different, in which it is better to nurture at first and educate the people later "(Phan Boi Chau (2000), Complete Works, volume 10, p. 71). Phan Boi Chau believed that taking care of the people is the job of the state. The State must create conditions and force all people to work to meet their needs as well as avoid injustices in society. However, Phan Boi Chau also said that except for the elderly people who are nurtured by society. He wrote: "Even we desire that all the people will have prosperity, everyone has clothes to wear and food to eat, it is so challenging in current times. Hence, the idea of nurturing the people is only for the elderly, while the best thing at that time is having enough food for all people in the society "(Phan Boi Chau (2000), Complete works, Volume 10, p. 74-75). According to Phan Boi Chau, to perform the task of human and national liberation, it is vital to follow the socialism of Marx - Lenin. One of the thought about human liberation in Marxism-Leninism is the historical materialistic view of socialism.

To liberate the nation sustainably, it is pivotal to have social management policies. In Phan Boi Chau's opinion, politicians play a crucial role in the management and administration of the country. On the basis of absorbing ideas in Tan Thu (*Book of Jin*), especially documents about the Meiji reform in Japan, Phan Boi Chau advocated building a new Vietnam with the aim of independence, self-monarchy which is rich and strong as seen in Japanese model, which is the constitutional monarchy. As stated by him, Vietnamese state model would be organized in the form of parliament. The Parliament has great power and is run by the people and carrying out the people's ownership. The legal form, the ordinance, the taxation and the consumption are all decided by the parliament which is organized by the people, so the government cannot interfere into these businesses. Annually, when the parliament holds meetings, the members have to gather. The government must present the projects to parliament and get the consensus before they can be proceeded. Mentioning about the relationship between the government and the people, Phan Boi Chau pointed out that it is a relationship that affects each other closely, in which the people are the basis and the key, "The government must rely on the people for the national peace. People also rely on the government to become valuable ones. The people are obliged to be the director of the government. If the people fulfill their obligations, then the government dares not do something wrong; the government has duties to protect their people. If the government complete this task, the people will not lose their support. The government are on the representatives for the whole country only, and the basic or the key is the people"(Phan Boi Chau (2000), Complete works, volume 3, P. 69).

2.2. Discussion

There have been many researchers, who have made researches on Phan Boi Chau's thought on national liberation set in the historical process, have made comments such as: Phan Boi Chau's thought was influenced and not completely removed from Confucian conception ; or his thought had not yet made a step from Vietnamese revolution to the proletarian revolutionary movement; there were contradictions due to being determined by class stance and historical conditions...etc. These evaluations are completely correct but incomplete for the following reasons. Firstly, all of thought at birth were influenced by the historical and social circumstances at that time and Phan Boi Chau's thought of national liberation was not an exception. It is crucial to figure out that Phan Boi Chau was born in a poor and backward nation which was influenced by Confucian ideology and then transformed into a colonial country. Vietnam at that time was completely separated from the outside world, so it cannot be said that he could not absorb the essence of humanity.

On contrary to these above statements, we found that Phan Boi Chau's thought of national liberation was deeply humanistic. On the basis of inheriting the beautiful traditional values of Vietnamese nation, absorbing the values of the East and the West, all of which shaped in Phan Boi Chau the thought of politics which is fully humanistic. The humanistic value in Phan Boi Chau's ideology on politics was manifested in the thought of love and appreciation for people; fighting for the cause of human and national liberation and building a regime for the sake of people. Deeply sympathizing with the miserable fates of people, Phan Boi Chau was always aiming for human liberation. He said that if Vietnamese people are happy, even sacrificing himself will not regretful to him. Towards the desires to liberate people, to fight for human rights, according to Phan Boi Chau, it is crucial to liberate the nation. On the basis of national liberation, Phan Boi Chau aimed to build a state model which he thought that the ideal one which must be the state respecting human rights, especially the people's rights.

To liberate the people, Phan Boi Chau said, it is essential to put the interests of the nation and the people as the highest goals. Under historical and social conditions of Vietnam at that time, it is necessary to fight for independence and sovereignty for the country, as well as freedom and happiness for the people. These are also the historical and social requirements set out for Phan Boi Chau to explore and resolve during his revolutionary activities. To liberate the nation, Phan Boi Chau sought many different ways; however most notably, he was aware of national liberation through the path of violent commotions. According to him, only the path of violent armed forces could overthrow the invaders and liberate the country because revolutionary violence was the way to defeat counterrevolutionary violence, being the only right way to gain victory for the revolution.

III. CONCLUSION

In Phan Boi Chau's thought about national liberation, he was the first Vietnamese patriot to set the relationship between the Vietnamese revolution and the world revolution. The Dong Du movement marked a breakthrough action, opening the door to learn and absorb new things for Vietnamese national liberation movement. Although this movement was defeated quickly by the oppression of the enemy, in

fact, Dong Du Movement had a meaning and held a significant position in the Vietnamese revolutionary movement in the early 20th century. This failure created a change in Phan Boi Chau's thought of national liberation. He soon recognized the Party's leadership role in the revolutionary movement.

Hence, he started building the political party very early. In May 1904, a revolutionary organization initiated by Phan Boi Chau was established in Quang Nam province under the name Duy Tân Association. The purpose of this association was to cooperate with loyal people to fight against the enemy, which its goal aimed at restoring Vietnamese country and creating an independent government. It can be seen that, although Duy Tan Association has not led the Vietnamese revolutionary movement to final victory, it has also brought about some certain successes which were arousing solidarity, initially bringing Vietnam's revolutionary movement to be developed into a new stage. Later, he founded Vietnam Quang Phuc Association and advocated the establishment of the Viet Nam Quoc Dan Party (nationalist Vietnam Party) to build revolutionary leadership, which showed his remarkable political maturity.

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