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NHAN DAN EDITOR PREVIEWS APPOINTMENTS TO TOP POSTS

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[Francois Nivolon interview with NHAN DAN editor Hoang Tung in Hanoi: "Vietnam: Toward Evolution With Continuity"--date not given]

[Excerpt] Hanoi--1981 is an important year for Vietnam's internal policy. The National Assembly, elected on 26 April, will meet in the second 2 weeks of June.

But more important than that--since the National Assembly is not much more important than a rubber-stamping chamber [chambre d'enregistrement], the Communist Party, which has a monopoly of power, is to hold its fifth congress in December and will have to make crucial decisions in all spheres.

Mr Hoang Tung, member of the Communist Party Central Committee and editor of NHAN DAN, the party's official organ, received me for more than 2 hours late one Sunday evening, "the only free time I have," he explained with a smile. He is 71 years old, obviously in bad health, speaks very polished French and is the prototype of the old revolution. He was formerly a teacher in a private school and back in 1946 became party secretary for the city of Haiphong and was responsible for five coastal provinces.

I questioned Mr Hoang Tung on the political choices the National Assembly will make. "We have a tradition in Vietnam," he replied, "of not concentrating power in the hands of one man. Le Duan does not have other state functions in addition to his role as party secretary general. We are going to elect the State Council which will replace the presidency of the republic and will in fact be a collective presidency. We are going to appoint a prime minister from the 17 existing Political Bureau members. I myself do not yet know who it will be. But he will be younger than the existing prime minister, Pham Van Dong, who is 75 years old. Several of these 17 members can already be ruled out--for example Vo Van Kiet."

"In summary," Mr Hoang Tung continued, "three posts have to be filled: that of the prime minister, the chairman of the State Council and the chairman of the National Assembly. These three posts will be allotted to three different people and excluding Secretary General Le Duan."

Mr Hoang Tung's statements show that, contrary to long-standing rumors, Mr Le Duan will not be both Communist Party secretary general and chairman of the State Council. In addition Mr Pham Van Dong will no longer be government chief and his "younger" successor could well be General Vo Nguyen Giap.

The most widely-held belief in Hanoi is that Mr Pham Van Dong will become chairman of the State Council, with Mr Truong Chinh keeping his previous position as chairman of the National Assembly, but another hypothesis reverses the positions of these two figures.

Mr Hoang Tung continued: "In the first 6 months we have concentrated mainly, in the political sphere, on the new Constitution, the State Council created by that constitution and elections to the National Assembly. In the second 6 months our work will be devoted to the party whose congress will take place in December. There will be a major Central Committee reshuffle. Some of the newcomers will be little more than 40 years old. The change will involve replacements but also continuity because some of the old members will remain in the Central Committee. The others will go and rest before leaving this world."

After pausing for thought, Mr Hoang Tung concluded: "As for the Political Bureau, a few members will leave and others will enter. It is possible that the Political Bureau may be expanded but that has not yet been decided. We plan to bring in a few younger members. But it is better that the older ones should remain because on the other side, I mean in China, there are old-timers in the Political Bureau, too."