

NORTH VIETNAM

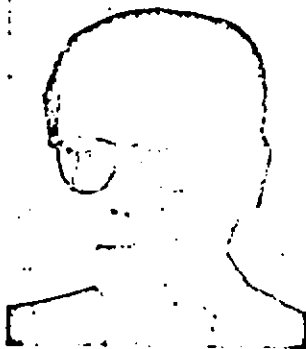
Hoang Minh GIAM

*Minister of Culture
Deputy Secretary-General of the Socialist Party
Chairman of Vietnam Committee for Solidarity
with the American People*

Giam, an "old-timer" in the North Vietnam leadership, was a close friend of Ho Chi Minh, for whom he once acted as an intermediary.

Born in 1903 in the Nghe An Province of Central Vietnam into a prominent family, he was educated in Hanoi and later became a teacher in Phnom Penh (Cambodia). His political development was typical of that of his generation: anti-colonialism coupled with a yearning for social reform.

Giam took up journalism in the 1920s and, after working in Saigon, he moved to Hanoi in 1930 where he taught at the "Thanh Long" school. Vo Nguyen Giap was one of its tutorial staff. Giap's friendship and political dynamism are said to have had a profound influence on his outlook, which by then was strongly coloured by nationalism. Around 1937 Giam joined the French Socialist Party (SFIO).



In 1939, Giam left for Southern China and after the formation of the Viet Minh in 1941 came rapidly to the fore as a political figure. He belonged to that section within the Viet Minh which stood for independence without severing Vietnam's cultural links with France. In 1945, he became a member of the Committee for the Liberation of the People of Vietnam which a few weeks later became the first Provisional Government of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV).

Although not officially a Communist or holder of an official position, Giam became an important "go-between" for Ho Chi Minh in the negotiations with the French after September, 1945. He established his reputation as a spokesman for the DRV and collaborator with the Viet Minh. In July, 1946, he was included in the DRV delegation to the Fontainebleau Conference. While in France, he supported the creation of a new Vietnamese Socialist Party in Vietnam. On his return to Hanoi the following November he was made Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

With the outbreak of the Indochina War in December, 1946, Giam joined Ho Chi Minh and the Viet Minh leadership in the jungles of North Vietnam. In 1947, he was appointed Foreign Minister of the DRV; a post he held until August, 1954, when he resigned on health grounds, being succeeded by the Communist Premier Pham Van Dong, who had represented the DRV at the Geneva Conference in July, 1954.

Giam ranks as a "moderate" in the Communist hierarchy, and before 1947

RMG-I-NV (10/69)

had many contacts in the French Socialist Party. In January, 1950, he recognised the Mao Tse-tung régime as the legitimate government of China. Four days later China extended diplomatic recognition to the DRV and became the first Communist government to take this step.

In 1955, Giam was deputy leader of the DRV delegation to the Bandung Afro-Asian Conference. In 1957, he led a delegation to Cambodia for the Buddha's 2,500th birthday celebrations. Later in the year he accompanied Ho Chi Minh on his tour of Communist States, and in 1958 accompanied Ho on State visits to India and Burma. In 1960, he led delegations to Iraq and Indonesia, and in 1961 to Cuba. He attended the World Fellowship of Buddhists Conference in Phnom Penh in November, 1961. He also attended the Indo-chinese People's Conference in Phnom Penh in 1965. In July, 1968, he became Chairman of the Vietnam Committee for Solidarity with the American people. In this capacity, he led the North Vietnamese delegation to the Hemispheric Conference on Vietnam in Montreal in November, 1968, and to an International Conference on Vietnam, sponsored by the World Peace Council, in Stockholm in December, 1968. He played a prominent part during the visit to Hanoi by a delegation of the National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam in March, 1969.

Giam's career provides another example of the usefulness of a non-Communist figurehead as an administrator in a Communist-dominated régime. His Ministry of Culture has been a vehicle for policies devised by the Lao Dong Party. The Socialist Party he represents has been for more than two decades subordinate to Lao Dong direction. He is a long-standing member of the Presidium, or governing body, of the Fatherland Front, and President of the Vietnam-Indonesian Friendship Society. In 1964, he was elected Vice-Chairman of the (North) Vietnam Afro-Asian Solidarity Committee, and in the same year was also re-elected to his government posts.

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