

Hoang Quoc VIET born in Bac Ninh Province, North Viet-Nam, not far from Hanoi in 1905, is the best known "worker" in the VWP, and one of the Party's most authoritarian bureaucrats. He was one of the earliest recruits to the I.C.P. His father before him had been an urban manual worker, and Viet was able to attend Haiphong Technical College, really a vocational school, from which he emerged a skilled turner one of pre-1940 Viet-Nam's tiny "aristocracy labor." He elected to go to sea as a mechanic and worked on vessels plying between Saigon and Marseilles. As a member of Ho Chi Minh's Revolutionary Youth League and then of the I.C.P. he propagandized Saigon seamen and port workers until he was arrested in 1930.

Released in 1936 he went to Hanoi where he worked with Truong Chinh on communist and "Democratic Front" publications as well as carrying on his own "working class" communist organizing work in the Hanoi area. Viet was a leader of a wide spread strike movement that swept North Viet-Nam in 1937. So well known did he become that when Nguyen Ai Quoc changed his name to Ho Chi Minh some Party members and supporters at first thought Viet was Ho. In fact Viet had escaped to China in 1939 and for a time at least assisted Ho in organizing the Viet Minh in the border areas. He seems to have been the principal links between that grouping and the one around Truong Chinh, then Party secretary, which was preparing for the August Revolution closer to Hanoi.

When the August Revolution was defeated in Saigon Viet was sent there briefly to reorganize the Party in the South, a job which then fell to Le Duan. Viet was for a time in 1946 styled Governor of Central Viet-Nam. At the end of the year he was aligned with Truong Chinh in urging all-out war against the French, a position which differed somewhat from that of Ho who wished to negotiate as long as possible.

When the "Resistance War" did break out Viet went with most of the VWP senior leaders into the back country of North Viet-Nam. While there he was elected to the first Politburo of the VWP, Chairman of the Viet-Nam Federation of Trade Unions, and a member of the presidium of the precursor to the Viet-Nam Fatherland Front. He was listed in the international communist movement as a member of the presidium of World Federation of Trade Unions. [WFTU]

As the VWP was restored to power in Hanoi in 1954 Viet was prominent, along with Truong Chinh and Politburo and Party Secretariat member Le Van Luong, who had worked with Viet in Saigon in 1930, in pushing for rigorous implementation of the land reform program. So much opposition did it encounter that Viet and Luong were compelled to resign from Politburo in 1956, when Chinh stepped down as Party secretary.

However, when Truong Chinh's rehabilitation, which had begun in 1958, culminated in 1960 with his becoming Chairman of the National Assembly Standing Committee, Viet emerged from the relative obscurity of his trade union duties. He became Chief Procurator of the People's Supreme Organ of Control a body, poorly defined in the 1959 DRV Constitution, which is responsible for policing the conduct of government agencies and their staffs. Viet has written numerous articles on the importance of the strict enforcement of economic decrees as well as of civil laws in a vain effort to correct laxity and corruption within the DRV bureaucracy.

Although he retains his trade union position and has travelled the communist world on trade union delegations, labor questions do not seem to preoccupy him. For example, despite Viet's Party eminence the little known Minister of Labor, an alternate member of the Central Committee, did not feel it necessary to involve him in the conference preceding the release in mid-1972 of a war-time compulsory work order. In early 1973, however, Viet put his union button on again to host, in Hanoi, a special meeting of the executive council of the WFTU where the North Vietnamese persuaded this international front group to commit itself to the VWP's propaganda themes.

Viet was reelected to the Central Committee of the Party in 1960, but not to the Politburo. He has frequently been the Party spokesman at Viet-Nam Fatherland Front public meetings when Truong Chinh himself was not present.

In mass meeting platform and airport "pecking order" lists Viet's name has appeared immediately after, and in one case ahead of, those members of the Party secretariat and Vice Premiers who are not Politburo members. If a Party congress is held in the next year or two it is not impossible that the nearly 70 years old "hard line" factionalist may contest with the younger economic management oriented Vice Premiers for a seat on the Politburo.

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