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Biography of Lt. Col. Le Xuan Chuyen, of "The People's Army of The Democratic Republic of North Vietnam".

Le Xuan Chuyen was born on Christmas Day 38 (1929) years ago in Le Thuy district of Quang Binh province, just north of the present border of North and South Vietnam. It was a relatively rich area in the valley of the Kien Giang river, and his father owned a small piece of land, enough to support nine children. In his youth he remembers fishing in the river and riding buffaloes and sometimes, together with his friends, fighting with the children of rich landowning families in the area.

Chuyen was the third child in the family. In 1944 there was a severe famine in which many people starved to death, and the situation was compounded by serious floods. Many people said it was the fault of the French, who had neglected the irrigation facilities, and Chuyen learned to hate the French because several members of his family died. The shortage of food was so bad that Chuyen and other youngsters formed what was known as "Suicide youth" to raid Japanese food stores.

At 16, Chuyen left school and joined the resistance movement, very much inspired by the examples of historic Vietnamese heroes who had fought against the Chinese invaders. About this time he also heard of communism and after a short time some of his friends persuaded him that he should join the Communist Party (the Party was first formed as the Communist Party of Indo-China in 1930).

His first weapon to fight the French was a machete, and later he killed a French paratrooper with a Japanese samurai sword. He quickly rose through the ranks. He was a platoon leader at 18 and by 1947 Chuyen was commander of a company that annihilated a French battalion on the Ben Hai river. It was this battle which inspired Bernard Fall's book, STREET WITHOUT JOY. Between 1946 and 1954 he was in some 200 military actions. At the time of Dien Bien Phu he commanded a battalion of the 66th regiment, 304th division, which marched in winter time across the mountains into Laos to prevent French reinforcements from arriving. For his feats during the resistance war he was decorated several times and carries scars from ten wounds.

After the Geneva Conference in 1954, Chuyen remained with the 304th division. He was chief of operations for some time, attended staff courses, and in 1960 became commander of the 66th regiment. In 1959 he married Kim Oanh, and they had a daughter and a son.

As a senior officer in the North Vietnamese Army, he was given a small but comfortable home at Nam Dinh, consisting of two rooms with a small yard where his children could play. But he noticed that

the junior officers and the ordinary soldiers had a very poor life, while the party cadres and high officials lived in luxury. He therefore began to ask himself whether the Hanoi government was really dedicated to the people.

He also saw that the Hanoi government was promoting the subversion in South Vietnam, and was training guerillas not only for South Vietnam but also for Laos, Cambodia and many other countries in Asia and Africa. As a soldier, he realised that war would result only in the destruction and dismemberment of his country. And as a professional officer he found himself frustrated by party cadres who were arrogant and gave orders and made decisions without understanding what they were doing. Once he argued with a General Tran Do because the party chose certain "heroes" to be emulated, but Chuyen knew that these "heroes" were not really respected by the ordinary people, and therefore the emulation campaign would fail.

In June 1964, Chuyen was ordered to go to South Vietnam. For several weeks he prepared for his mission, studying North Vietnamese plans for the war. Before leaving Hanoi he was received by several senior North Vietnamese military figures including Gen. Van Tien Dung and General Nguyen Chi Thanh, whom he was later to meet again in the South.

In July he left Haiphong aboard a steel-hulled ship carrying ammunition and weapons to the South. The ship's voyage lasted a week, and although they had some narrow escapes, they successfully eluded American and South Vietnamese navy patrols. The ship unloaded its cargo in Thanh Phu district of Kien Hoa province in the Mekong Delta, during the night. After a brief rest there, Chuyen and one companion commenced their overland trip to Tay Ninh. This took them 20 days, walking and by sampan. On the way, Chuyen was able to meet South Vietnamese living in "liberated" areas. He came to the conclusion quite quickly that the Viet Cong hold over the population in these areas was not very strong and that there were many faults in the Viet Cong program.

He arrived at the headquarters of the Liberation Front in August and was received by General Tran Van Tra, the North Vietnamese officer who was at that time commanding the Liberation forces. Chuyen was assigned to train new regiments being formed for large-scale attacks on ARVN and American troops.

He prepared two VC regiments for the battle of Binh Gia in December 1964, in which the communists overran a town and then ambushed ARVN troops which came to its relief, inflicting heavy casualties on the government forces. Later he formed other regimental-sized units with personnel drawn from VC guerilla units. He became very pessimistic because he felt that the VC guerillas were not well motivated. Many of them were either forcibly recruited or were "cowboys" from Saigon who had run away to escape being drafted by the ARVN.

Several times, Chuyen was recalled to the Liberation Front headquarters for new orders or for consultations. On one occasion he attended a meeting addressed by General Nguyen Chi Thanh, who had come from Hanoi to take command of the Liberation Forces. General Thanh said that the president of the Liberation Front, Mr Nguyen Huu Tho, should "just go to sleep" and should not do anything until the communist party gave him the orders. Chuyen was thus convinced that North Vietnam completely controlled the Liberation Front.

His last assignment was as deputy commander and chief of operations for Fifth Division, about 40 miles from Phan Thiet. Then he received orders to go back to Tay Ninh prior to a new assignment as commander of a division. But by this time he had decided to sever his connection with the NLF. The question was how to defect, since he was accompanied by a bodyguard. On his way back to Tay Ninh on foot, he became ill and persuaded his companions to proceed without him while he stayed at the village of Suoi Kiet to recover.

At Suoi Kiet he was cared for by the local Viet Cong authorities. He was nursed back to health by a Miss Hiep. During his stay at Suoi Kiet, lasting several weeks, the village was bombed and all the villagers took refuge in the jungle. Several times, VC cadres came to him and urged him to go back to a "secure" Viet Cong area. They were obviously worried because he was close to government-held territory. He refused.

After several weeks Chuyen and Miss Hiep planned to escape. Miss Hiep had a brother in Phan Thiet. She received permission to go there to purchase medical supplies to treat Chuyen, but instead she prepared the way for his escape. After she left, Chuyen succeeded in escaping from the village, and although he was still ill with a high fever he walked all night until he reached another village where a bicycle was waiting for him. Then he cycled to Phan Thiet. On his way, he was stopped by government troops, but when he showed them a safe-conduct pass which had been dropped by air, they let him proceed.

At Phan Thiet he succeeded in finding the house of Miss Hiep's brother, and quickly he went to the local authorities where he explained his identity and was well received by officials. This was on August 2, 1966.

Chuyen has given valuable information about the ultimate plans and intentions of Hanoi and the National Liberation Front based on his twenty-one years in the Lao Dong Party and has added interesting and important details about past events. He has told of North Vietnamese plans to "take over" Cambodia as soon as victory comes in South Vietnam and has given first-hand accounts of the two institutions near Hanoi where training for "wars of National Liberation" is being given

to high ranking cadre from many Asian, South American and African Nations.

On March 9, 1967 the Government of Vietnam Appointed Chuyen Manager of the National Chieu Hoi Center in Saigon.