

# UPDATE

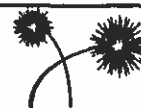
A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER FOR THE GREATER SEATTLE VIETNAM ASSOCIATION

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Editor, Tyler L. DuLam

## A Sister City At Last -- Let's All Celebrate!



On February 16, the Greater Seattle Vietnam Association will celebrate the new sister city relationship between Haiphong and Seattle. This fundraising event of Vietnamese entertainment, delicious food, and silent auction will be held at the Burke Museum on the University of Washington campus, from 5:50 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. Cost per person is \$25. See more details in January Update.

### News Briefs

#### IFC Putting Offices in Hanoi

The World Bank's affiliate for private financing, the International Finance Corporation (IFC), is opening an office in Hanoi, according to news reports.

The IFC is the largest multilateral source of equity and loan financing for private sector projects in developing countries.

At a signing ceremony in Hanoi, IFC executive vice president Jannik Lindbaek said the corporation already had backed 15 projects in Vietnam worth \$830 Million with \$156 million of its own funds.

As reported by Reuters news agency, Lindbaek said "It is . . . clear to me that Vietnam remains on a path of significant growth."

#### Vietnam Joins Rubber Countries

Reports from Kuala Lumpur say Vietnam has become the eighth member of the Association of Natural Rubber Producing Countries.

Other members are India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Papua New Guinea, Singapore, Sri Lanka, and Thailand. The Association accounts for 85.5 percent of the world's output of natural rubber.

Member countries have access to Association's technical cooperation programs and other development activities.

#### Phone Service Expands in Vietnam

A report from Reuters new agency in Vietnam surveys the country's growth in telephone service.

International telephone calls in Vietnam are expected to reach nearly 300 million "call-minutes" this year, up seven times from the number in 1992, according to Reuters.

Peter Allen, business manager of the Australian firm Telstra, spoke in Ho Chi Minh City about progress in telephone developments. The Australian company was hired in the late 1980's to establish the first reliable telephone link with a small satellite earth station that transmitted calls to Australia and then to the outside world. Allen said when his company first arrived in Vietnam "there was an argument over whether we should provide capacity for six or nine simultaneous international calls." Now, satellite connections and an undersea fiber optic capable can carry tens of thousands of international calls.

Dramatic growth has been seen as well in domestic services. Allen said "just a few years ago, the domestic network was so unreliable that companies in Ho Chi Minh City would call Hong Kong to get transferred to their Hanoi office." In 1992 there were only 120,000 customers nationwide. But last August the domestic network reached one million lines.

Reuters said that while Vietnam still trails other members of the Association of Southeast Asia Nations (ASEAN) in telephone penetration, the country was rated in 1994 by the Swiss-based International Telecommunications Union as the second fastest growing market in the world.

## GSVA Gets A New Home

The Greater Seattle Vietnam Association, including its Seattle Haiphong Sister City Committee, will move in January.

The Association, which has been based since April of 1995 in the home of President Norma Mohr, has been invited to share offices occupied by CARE in downtown Seattle. Mohr said "We're extremely grateful. We outgrew my dining room table a long time ago."

GSVA owes its existence to CARE, an international relief agency founded in 1945. In the fall of 1992, the Northwest Regional Office of CARE, under the director Peter Blomquist, gave a series of seminars called "Vietnam: Then and Now."

"Most of us who attended the programs already felt connected to Vietnam in small and big ways. After the CARE programs many of us felt more connected than ever," Mohr said. A group of them met in Blomquist's office and agreed to found the new organization.

## Teachers Going to Haiphong

The Greater Seattle Vietnam Association is seeking support for its program for teaching conversational English in Haiphong.

Many outsiders who have been working in Vietnam say no program can be as useful as English language training for helping the country develop and expand.

Seattle specialists in Teaching English as a Foreign Language have been leaders in spreading English fluency all over the world and also have been instrumental since 1975 in conducting classes for Vietnamese adults and children throughout our region.

(Conversational English taught in countries where English is not familiar is called English as a Foreign Language, or EFL. As taught in the U.S., the courses are called English as a Second Language, or ESL.)

When GSVA members first traveled to Haiphong in 1994 they were asked for help for the Foreign Languages Center there, an impressive institution founded in 1976. In the beginning, it taught mainly Russian, but now it mostly teaches English. It offers 156 classes in English to students aged 8 to 60 years and continues to expand.

When GSVA representatives were in Haiphong in October for the Sister City signing ceremony, Chairman of the Peoples Committee for the City of Haiphong Tran Huy Nang mentioned that he himself takes English lessons at the Languages Center.

The new GSVA program will select two certified, experienced teachers from the Seattle area to join the faculty of the Center for the school year beginning September 1, 1997.

The Seattle participants would also be certified as trainers of Teachers of English as a Second Language. Thus, they will be able to teach conversational English at all levels and in addition train Vietnamese teachers in the special skills of teaching EFL.

English fluency is particularly important in Haiphong. The city has been designated by the government of Vietnam for extensive expansion, creating new demands for an English speaking labor force for international projects.

GSVA's Teaching English program has been submitted by Governor Mike Lowry to the Government of Vietnam, along with eight other projects from the State of Washington, as examples of ways people here are collaborating with people in Vietnam for mutual good. Mr. Lowry said, "The important ties that the GSVA is establishing between Haiphong and Seattle will benefit all of us for generations to come."

## Social Workers Are Coming Here

The International Committee of the School of Social Work at the University of Washington is making plans for the next phase of its collaboration with the Institute of Sociology in Hanoi for establishing a department of social work there.

The new project will be a "summer institute" in Seattle next year for Vietnamese faculty, students, researchers, policy specialists and social work practitioners. As described by Professor Hy Resnick of the U.W. School of Social Work, the program will help specialists from Vietnam focus on curriculum development, fund raising, teaching methods and practical models for intern programs.

Resnick reported that the summer institute is phase three of plan he launched in Vietnam in 1995. Phase two was a series of workshops and presentations sponsored by U.W. in Hanoi last September.

That program, held at the Institute of Sociology, addressed topics suggested by Dr. Bui The Cuong, Director of the Institute. Sessions were provided on participatory management, group dynamics, social work education and the role of government in social work.

The leaders were six faculty members and social work practitioners with the U.W. School of Social Work. Participants included Vietnamese graduate students in sociology, physicians interested in social work in the U.S., social workers from Vietnamese NGO's, professors from Hanoi universities, government officials and party leaders.

Participants were enthusiastic, according to Resnick, and expressed interest in the new summer institute. Resnick now is seeking funding and help for that program. One of his goals is to locate people here who may offer home hospitality to Vietnamese visitors. Interested persons may contact Professor Hy Resnick at the U.W. School of Social Work, Box 354900 Seattle, WA, 98105, or e-mail [resnickh@u.washington.edu](mailto:resnickh@u.washington.edu) or fax (206) 543-1228.

### GSVA Needs Help

GSVA offers several opportunities for people here who want to help create links with the people of Vietnam. There are openings on three committees: Business, Health and Humanitarian Aid and Fund-Raising. Or you may want to suggest a new project for which you have a special interest. Call Norma Mohr at (206) 322-1178.

## Hunger in 40's Led to Mobilization

Fifty years ago, in the last weeks of 1946, a new war was ignited in Vietnam. World War II was over, and Japan's occupation forces had left. The French had returned to repossess their former prized colony, but they did not succeed. The French committed what has been called a "fatal blunder" on November 23, 1946, when they launched a massive naval bombardment and air strike against the northern port city of Haiphong.

The attack, ordered in response to protests over a new French customs edict, killed as many as 6,000 Vietnamese. One historian said, "The colonial clock was to be turned back to the situation and methods of 1930-31." Several weeks later, on December 19, the communist Viet Minh forces retaliated with an attack on a large French installation in Hanoi. After that, there seemed to be no turning back. Twenty nine years of war followed: Viet Minh against the French, against Vietnamese forces in the south and finally against the U.S. Peace came in 1975.

Books in many languages have examined and re-examined detail after detail of the extended war with its backdrop of power struggles in Saigon, U.S. politics, and cold war overtones. In spite of the facts and analyses for the armchair historian, one significant slice of history is often overlooked -- the preamble of the war in Vietnam -- that is the period in the mid-1940's between the disintegration of the Japanese forces and the reentry of new French forces.

Many explanations have been offered for the success of the country's communist forces against the greater resources and fire power of its enemies. One European historian specializing in Vietnam has offered an explanation or partial explanation.\* His theory involves the vagaries of weather and food production. Food supplies in northern and central Vietnam have been less abundant and reliable than in the south. Usually two or even three harvests of rice are produced each year. In times of shortages additional supplies are available from local storage facilities, from dry farms in the hills and from surpluses from harvests in the south. But in the mid 1940's everything seemed to fail.

A food emergency began when a typhoon struck the Red River Valley in October and November of 1944. Planting was late and the crops failed. The harvest in May 1945 was less than half of the normal supply. A severe drought the following fall destroyed the harvest of dry crops in the highlands. In addition, delivery of relief supplies from the south was disrupted because of administrative disarray and because speculators withheld supplies. Hunger in some central areas became severe. An estimated one half to two million people died.

When Ho Chi Minh declared independence on September 2, 1945, the famine was expected to be even more acute by the following February. A new Ministry of Agriculture was appointed and a Central Committee for Rapid and Intensive production was established. All unused land was turned over to anyone willing to till it. Unused draft animals and farm implements were distributed by village authorities. The countryside was organized as never before, according to reports. Urban people were encouraged to grow vegetables and dry crops in any space they could find. Supply lines from central and southern regions and from the hills were re-opened. Then came the record rice harvest of May 1946 -- one million tons, compared with the 1938-43 annual average of 680,000. Secondary dry crops reached records, as well. Maize yields were four times normal; soy bean, two and a half times the normal.

Historians say the mass mobilization by the communist government in the Red River Valley achieved more than food security. The typical social isolation of rural communities was disappearing, allowing social solidarity and cooperation. The new sense of interdependency created an atmosphere sympathetic to government programs for mass literacy, public health and mobilization of resistance forces. And, so the theory goes, people were better able to defend themselves and prepare for the 29 year struggle that lay ahead.

\*Revolution, Socialism and Nationalism in Viet Nam. Vol 1 (of 4) by Ken Post, Institute of Social Studies, the Hague. Published by Wadsworth Publishing Co., Belmont, CA.1989.

### Greater Seattle Vietnam Association

A grassroots, non-profit, duly incorporated and registered organization dedicated to helping the people of Seattle create and maintain links with the people of Vietnam.

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**This morning I found bones  
in the risen water of our paddy.  
Brother, after all these years, bones  
of the unmourned float back home yet.**

**Such small bones these were.  
The years have cleansed them.  
I am sorry to say we had nothing  
to burn respect for this late burial.**

**Though bury we did, in a grave  
that is not much - one measure of dirt  
next to the mangosteen tree we named  
after you. We did what you would.**

**Letter written to a brother in America  
Bao-Long Chu**