

UPDATE

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER FOR THE GREATER SEATTLE VIETNAM ASSOCIATION

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Editor, Dwight Davis

Seattle Visits Planned For Vietnamese Business Managers and Faculty

A large group of senior business managers and business faculty from Vietnam will be guests at a reception Tuesday, August 6, 5:30-7 p.m. at the headquarters of the Port of Seattle at Pier 69. The principal speaker will be Governor Mike Lowry. The reception is being given by the Washington Council on International Trade (WCIT) and co-sponsored by the Amos Tuck School at Dartmouth College, the Trade Development Alliance of Greater Seattle and the Greater Seattle Vietnam Association. This is part of the Tuck School's project to assist Vietnam National University in creating the first major market-economics graduate business school in Vietnam.

For more information, contact WCIT at TEL 206 -442 3826, or Fax 206-443-3828, or Email WCIT@Eskimo.com.

GSVA Annual Meeting

The Greater Seattle Vietnam Association has scheduled its annual meeting for September 12, 5:30 p.m., at the University Friends Meeting (Quakers) at 4001 9th Ave NE. The evening will include GSVA business, speakers and a Vietnamese buffet.

Travelers Forum

Jerilyn Brusseau, Director of Peace Trees Vietnam, and Beth Whitman, GSVA Education Chair, will be speakers at a meeting September 11, 7-9 p.m. at the Good Shepherd's Center, 4649 Sunnyside Ave N. That's in Wallingford. The topic will be travel in Vietnam. Wide World Books and Maps is the sponsor.

HISTORY SHELF

Commandos Get Back Pay / Open Memories

The story of those South Vietnamese commandos who finally won compensation from the country that gave them up for dead is a reminder of a perplexing episode in history called the Tonkin Gulf incident.

U.S. forces trained and sent South Vietnamese commandos on sabotage and espionage raids in the north starting in 1959. Later the U.S. claimed that all had died.

A large number were actually captured and imprisoned in the north. Many of them escaped or were released, made their way south and were granted visas to the U.S. As described in the U.S. press recently, lawyers here and U.S. officials helped the commandos win their back pay.

The dramatic story is linked to actions in August 32 years ago that led to the huge new escalation of the war in Vietnam.

Some of the secret commando forays were taking place in the Gulf of Tonkin, with U.S. warships patrolling in the region. On August 2, 1964, Vietnamese gunboats fired on one or them, the destroyer Maddox. One bullet hit the ship.

Two days later the destroyer Turner Joy joined the Maddox. In the middle of a severe nighttime electrical storm Turner Joy's radar reported that the ship was under continuous torpedo attack.

President Johnson immediately asked the U.S. Congress for broad war powers to retaliate militarily to protect American interests. Congress obliged with the "Tonkin Gulf Resolution." Johnson responded with B-52 raids on the north and the build-up of U.S. troops and materiel.

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Latest On Confirmation Hearings

According to Congressman Pete Peterson's staff, the confirmation hearings referred to in the June issue of UPDATE will be held by on July 30 1996. These hearings have been scheduled by Senator Craig Thomas before the Senate Foreign Relations subcommittee.

Foreign Capital Investment Increase

The Wall Street Journal says Vietnam expects the total amount of foreign capital invested in the country to rise to \$2.5 billion this year, up 25% from 1995. Citing government figures, the newspaper says ministries have licensed 150 foreign projects valued at \$3.26 billion in the first half of this year. In addition, \$1.2 billion in foreign capital investment was recorded from January to June, up from \$1 billion during the same period last year.

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Episode In History Revived

Documents and memoirs from the period show that the validity of the Tonkin Gulf incident was immediately challenged by individuals in the government. No confirmation was ever found that an enemy warship was in the area. No eye witness or evidence was produced to confirm the reports of a torpedo attack. Observers concluded that the Turner Joy radar operator was merely reacting to an electrical interference caused by the storm.

The incident, as well as the secret missions of the commandos, were left to history.

Book Drive Continues

The Greater Seattle Vietnam Association is continuing its drive to get books (through donations and purchases) to ship to Haiphong.

The books will be delivered to elementary schools as well as to the Haiphong Public Library and will include books requested from schools, libraries and local officials in Haiphong.

We see this as the first shipment of a continuing program that will help Vietnamese school children and adults in expanding their education and their knowledge of English.

We are now accepting money and books to help in this effort. Please remember that all donations are tax exempt, that no donation is too small and that you'll be directly helping the lives of our friends in Haiphong.

You may direct any questions or donations to either Beth Whitman, GSVA Education Chair or Judith Henchy, GSVA Culture Chair at 322-1178.

A POEM

*it has long been forgotten this practice of the mother
weaning a child she crushes the seeds of a green
chili rubs it to her nipple what the child feels
she too will share in this act of love
my own mother says it was not meant
to be cruel when cruelty she tells me
is a child's lips torn from breasts as proof
back home the women wear teeth marks*

Excerpt from "What Remains" by Truong Tran

As 8th Communist Party Congress Ends Economic Reforms Slowing Down?

"The Financial Times of London, in a July 3, 1996 editorial titled, "*Communists Still*", said: "Only a year ago Vietnam was the darling of the international investment community. It had resumed relations with the US, stood on the verge of joining the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and embarked on a path of rapid economic growth which promised to make it the next Asian miracle.

"This week's Vietnamese Communist party congress was a harsh reminder of how misplaced that optimism was. Vietnam's economy is still growing at nearly 10 percent a year, but its living standards are only around one tenth of those of Thailand and it has a worrying balance of payments deficit. Instead of pushing further down the road of economic reform, the congress emphasised the need for a strong state sector.

"The moral is that, despite the remarkable rollback of communism around the globe over the last decade, many societies change slowly. Vietnam may be a country of 74 million willing consumers, but obstacles to development are many. It is not just poor communications and infrastructure: above all, the party lacks a leadership able to promote reform."

Adam Schwarz writing from Hanoi for the *Far Eastern Economic Review* on July 11, 1996 made this comment about the results of the party Congress: "The party's first full congress in five years wrapped up on July 1 with many questions left unanswered. But on one subject there was little room for ambiguity. The party intends to reassert its authority over every facet of Vietnamese life: economic, political and social.

"After months of hints about rejuvenating the party's leadership and grooming a new generation of cadres, the 1,189 delegates to the 8th congress instead reelected the current ruling troika - General Secretary Do Muoi, 79; President Le Duc Anh, 75, and Prime Minister Vo Van Kiet, 73 - to another five-year term.

Schwarz quoted Carl Thayer, a Vietnam specialist at the Australian Defence Force Academy in Canberra who said: "The party looked at change and recoiled from it for the sake of unity. What we're left with is a holding operation."

"But far from creating a picture of stability and unity, the 8th congress more closely resembled a game of musical chairs, with the country's strongest institutions battling for places in the Politburo-the party's top body-and the new five-member Standing Board that will be the Politburo's inner circle. The underlying tensions and divisions over an appropriate development strategy for the country remain, and are likely to continue causing political uncertainty. "I see no indication that unity has been restored." Thayer says.

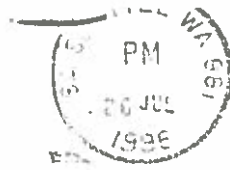
"Analysts argue that the changes ushered in by a decade-long experiment with a market economy and a gradual opening to the outside world have overwhelmed Vietnam's creaky institutions and, perhaps more importantly, its once isolated leadership.

"Even initial supporters of reform are toeing a new line," Thayer points out, referring to former General Secretary Nguyen Van Ling and Gen. Vo Nguyen Giap, the country's foremost war hero. At the congress, both men added their voices to the consensus for a more cautious approach to further reform.

"Unity has always been something of an obsession among Vietnamese Communists and has probably helped them survive into a post-Communist era. Nurturing the current economic boom will require something more. The issues avoided (at the 8th Party Congress) cannot be put off much longer." (NY Times)

The New York Times on July 5, 1996, in an editorial titled, "*Holding Action in Hanoi*": had the following comments: "Vietnam's Communist Party ducked all the hard questions about its country's future Instead of dealing with an aging leadership and the tensions produced by the development of a market economy in an authoritarian state, the Communists did some tinkering and left the difficult decisions for another day."

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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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