

UPDATE

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE GREATER SEATTLE VIETNAM ASSOCIATION
VOL. 7 ISSUE 3 1997

Debt Agreement Signals Steps Towards Closer Ties

An agreement has been reached in Hanoi for Vietnam to repay the U.S. for certain debts incurred by the old government of the south defeated 22 years ago.

A payment of US \$140 million would be reimbursed by Vietnam for the money spent by the U.S. during the war on the main railroad and water systems in the south, a major power plant, and grain shipments, according to a report from several sources. Vietnam will be given 20 years to repay the amount.

More details may emerge when the U.S. Treasury Secretary Robert E. Rubin visits Hanoi next month.

The debt issue was seen as a major obstacle to integration of Vietnam

into the world economy. One other major obstacle, the MIA issue, apparently has been solved to the satisfaction of the U.S. government.

The next step is to agree on terms and language of a trade accord between the U.S. and Vietnam. Then, President Clinton would initiate a waiver of the Jackson-Vanik amendment that concerns freedom of emigration.

Without any new unforeseen obstacles, the U.S. could be expected to give Vietnam the status of a most-favored-nation, a designation that opens the doors to lenient credit terms for international financing.

Haiphong Port Begins New Face Lifting

New details have been reported about the planned deep water port at Dinh Vu peninsula adjacent to Haiphong.

The project is a US \$1 billion shipping center approved for development by a consortium including Belgium's International Port Engineering Management (IPEM), Thailand's Asian Infrastructure Development, and the American International Group (AIG).

According to the Far Eastern Economic Review, the partners have agreed to allot US \$8.3 million to residents of the marshy 1,324 hectare site. Half would come from the partners and half from the Haiphong People's Committee. The partners also reportedly have agreed to give a location at the tip of the peninsula to the Ministry of Defense for establishment of a ferry service to Cat Ba Island to the east.

In addition, IPEM has agreed to undertake renovation and expansion of an old hotel and office building near the old port.

Air Travel Experts Experience Seattle

Three senior Vietnamese professionals in air travel – two from Vietnam Airlines and one from the Civil Aviation Administration of Vietnam – have been in Seattle for orientation, training, fact-finding and making new friends.

The group was invited here by Boeing for a three-week "Vietnam Fellowship Program" that began on Sunday, March 9.

Participants have been Nguyen Trinh Binh, Vietnam Airlines supply manager, who is involved with purchases and use of aircraft equipment; Nguyen Minh Tam, an aircraft engineer who has had technical training in several parts of the world including a course on the Airbus in Toulouse,

France; and Dinh Viet Thang, of the Planning and Investment Department of the Civil Aviation Administration of Vietnam.

Their schedule included a factory tour for the Boeing 777 and 747, a demonstration of the 767 simulator, and sessions on customer services, regulatory processes, management, financial analysis and current market outlook. Also, two days were devoted to reviewing facilities and programs at the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration at Auburn, where flights between Asia and the continental U.S. are monitored.

The visitors met Seattle City Council Member Sue Donaldson, the Spe-

**Free Tickets for
Children's Festival!**

See page 3 for details.

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BUSINESS BRIEF

A Boost for Rubber

Vietnam is planning to expand its rubber industry in the central highlands and southeastern provinces. The new plan proposed by the Agricultural Ministry would expand the area designated for rubber to 700,000 hectares by the year 2010. The plan calls for 18 new rubber planting and processing projects with a combined investment of US \$245.2 million.

Ventures in Oil

PetroVietnam reportedly intends to build its first oil refinery at Quang Ngai. The announcement followed the withdrawal of foreign partners from the project.

The state-owned company said the breakup came after disagreements with the seven foreign partners concerning requested preferential conditions.

Clean Water

A loan of US \$69 million for water supply and sanitation programs has been approved by the Asian Development Bank. Reports say the project will provide clean water to more than one million people.

At present, fewer than half of the urban population receive piped water, and most of that is of poor quality. Water-borne diseases are believed to cause up to a third of all deaths and a higher rate of infant mortality.

The Environment

Vietnam has taken steps to reduce risks to the country's ecosystem. A report in *Mekong Digest* says a national program has been developed to lower prevailing levels of ozone-depleting substances. In addition, 60 new projects are being implemented to preserve and develop biodiversity.

Official reports say the country has lost about half of its forest cover since the 1940's. During that period a reported 60 percent of the country was covered with forests. The total now is estimated at 28 percent.

HISTORY SHELF

Plantation Music: The Life of a Vietnamese Rubber Tapper

French planters brought Malayan rubber trees into Vietnam one hundred years ago. Thirteen years later, in 1910, the planters began to experiment in growing and producing techniques with about one million plantings. By 1931, 100,000 hectares were planted, and rubber was becoming the colony's second largest export, after rice.

Also, rubber -- particularly the plight of the tappers -- was becoming an ingredient in the making of a revolution. As one historian has written, life on a rubber plantation was like something by Edgar Allan Poe.

Disciplinary practices and living conditions on the plantations have been described in great detail and preserved in several histories. The books tell of long work days, insufficient food, inhumane living conditions and severe punishment for putative offenses.

A common punishment was beating. The tapper lay face down on the ground and was beaten or caned on the buttocks or the soles of the feet, often until blood was drawn. Women received the same punishment, with one difference: pregnant women were placed face down at special locations where holes were dug to accommodate the extra bulge in their bodies.

Miscarriage and premature deliveries were common. As were death and

sometimes suicide. Casualty rates among tappers was one in four. Besides that, "every second worker seemed to have escaped the labor regime by running away," said one writer.

People who lived nearby avoided the recruiters. As word spread about plantation conditions, the recruiters had to travel farther and farther to find people to enlist. Eventually French authorities had to send patrol boats to get people in the far north who were isolated enough or desperate enough to try out tapping.

Rubber tappers were not listed by name at the plantation, just by a number. This led to an episode related by the well known historian Ngo Vinh Long.

A popular tapper in Bien Hoa Province, "Number 70," was summoned to work in spite of the fact that he was near death with malaria. He collapsed, died and was buried, as was plantation custom, right there under the rubber trees.

Not long afterwards a new song was heard in the area. It was the "Ballad of Brother 70". It became so popular and worried the plantation managers so badly that they leveled Brother 70's burial mound, to help people forget. That didn't stop the music or the discontent.

Airline Delegation

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cial Trade representative for the State of Washington, and senior managers at the Trade Development Alliance and the Port of Seattle.

In addition, they were guests at a dinner with Gary Johnson, President of the Greater Seattle Vietnam Asso-

ciation, and several members of the GSA Board of Directors.

Apparently no one expressed a preference between Boeing or Europe's Airbus aircraft now flown on lease in Vietnam. The visitors said they wanted to know as much as possible about all of them.

Peter Blomquist Moving from Care to Starbucks

Peter Blomquist, after 14 years with the Northwest office of the CARE Foundation, has taken over management of the newly formed Starbucks Foundation. According to Starbucks, Blomquist will be responsible for establishing the focus of the Foundation and implementing its mission.

Blomquist has been described as a man with "passion to change the world." His work for CARE, an international humanitarian organization with projects all across the developing world, has taken Peter to ten countries. Most are in Latin America, with three in Africa.

Blomquist said he regretted he was never able to travel in Asia. One of his most gratifying accomplishments, he said, was creating corporate partnerships for CARE with Westin Hotels and Resorts, Microsoft, Boeing, REI, and, of course, Starbucks.

He said the most satisfying achievement was CARE's series of seminars about underdeveloped areas of the world. Some of the countries highlighted were Peru, China, India, the Philippines, Indonesia and Vietnam.

He said he believed the programs were successful in awakening people here about the conditions abroad. The CARE program about Indonesia stimulated folks about the possibilities of creating a Sister City link there. This led to the Seattle Surabaya Sister City Association. Then, the extremely popular series on Vietnam in 1992, led directly to the creation of the Greater Seattle Vietnam Association with its subsequent Sister City alliance signed last October with Haiphong.

Dwight Davis Leaves but Keeps on Helping Out

GSVA Board member Dwight Davis is retiring from his job as a community relations specialist for the Environmental Protection Agency and is moving to Bavaria. The reason, he says, is to play with three of his 10 grandchildren and "help my daughter and her German husband build a house."

Davis was a true helper. He was there when you needed somebody. During the last several months he was editor of UPDATE.

He also was on the Peace Trees team that worked in Vietnam last fall. His tree planting assignment was stopped short by an intestinal bug, and photos of the project show Dwight lying flat with a rehydration tube in his arm.

Davis was familiar with the satisfaction and obstacles in working overseas. He was in Korea in 1950-51 with the U.S. Air Force and in Japan as a medic. He went to Laos with Dr. Tom Dooley in 1958 and worked in a small hospital on the China border. In 1962 he was a civilian advisor to province chiefs in Kontum and Pleiku. He worked with Montagnards in refugee resettlement, self-help schools and agricultural projects.

Many years later, in 1992, after he became a member of the Bainbridge-Ometepe Sister Island Association, Davis led a medical team to Nicaragua.

Although his retirement will focus on family life, he also expects to become more involved in the banning of landmines.

Sister Status Brings Free Children's Festival Tickets

A delightful tangible benefit from our new status as sister city with Haiphong has emerged. The City of Seattle's International Children's Festival is providing each sister city association with 100 free tickets to festival events. This award winning annual festival offers dozens of outstanding performing arts groups from around the world. The event, which runs from May 12-17, is very popular and you will notice in the accompanying material that many shows are already sold out. Logistically, the only way we can offer tickets is on a first come, first served basis. Please choose performances, fill out the enclosed order form and send it to the festival office. The festival staff will keep count of Seattle/Haiphong member requests until 100 tickets have been distributed. You may call the festival office at 684-7338 for information on any of the acts or how you can get a festival brochure with program details. Any Friend of GSVA, who is on our mailing list, is eligible. Be sure to take advantage of this great opportunity.

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.

GSVA Officers

Gary Johnson President
Tyler DuLam Vice President
Judith Henchy Secretary
Khan Tran Treasurer

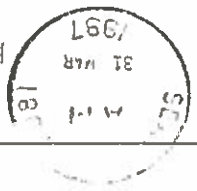
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