

# Interchange

A Quarterly Newsletter for and about International Cooperation with Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam and Cuba

Volume 10, Issue 1-2

September 2000

## A Child Shall Lead Them US Cuba Policy After Elian

Bob Edgar, the new General Secretary of the National Council of Churches of Christ (NCC) is a former theology school president and prior to that was a highly regarded Member of Congress. He had barely taken office when the NCC became the focal point of the months long effort to reunite Elian Gonzales with his father.

Edgar argued eloquently during the controversy that not only would American values, common sense and law bring Elian back to his father in Cuba, but that the process would shake the foundations of the 40 year old embargo against the country.

The Elian case crystallized growing public sentiment for change in policy toward Cuba. Poll results (reported in the Summer 1999 issue of Interchange) showed that by May of 1999 71% of Americans already favored restoration of normal relations. Reflecting and encouraging the evolution of public opinion, President Clinton directed the State and Treasury Departments to foster greater people to people contact by liberalizing travel regulations.

At the same time a very broad coalition was formed to press Congress to modify the embargo to allow US sales of food and medicine. This unprecedented grouping of business, farmers, moderate Cuban American groups, faith based advocacy organizations, and political allies of Cuban socialism marshaled nationwide support which produced legislative success in Congress in 1999 only to see it stolen by the hard ball politics of Republican leaders in the House and Senate.

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## Twenty-Five Years Later: US and Indochina Nearly Normal

A quarter century after the end of the Second Indochina War, the undergrowth which impedes US relations with Vietnam is finally being cleared away. Cambodia enjoys fully normal diplomatic and trade relations and US Ambassador Kent Wiedeman has played a key role in moving forward prospects for a trial of former leaders of the Khmer Rouge. Unfortunately a partial resurgence of weeds is cluttering the ground with Laos (see page 52).

Despite predictions of journalists and academic experts, the US and Vietnam signed a trade agreement in July. After serious evaluation by the Vietnamese leadership led to acceptance of faster economic renovation, and following fine tuning of the lengthy document, accord was reached during a visit to Washington by Minister of Foreign Trade Vu Khoan. (Text available from Vietnam Media Watch <http://vnmw.vnn.vn>)

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Ho Chi Minh City April 30, 2000

On July 20, 2000 the House of Representatives voted 232-186 to prohibit the Treasury Department spending funds to restrict the travel of Americans to Cuba. One week later the Republican leadership removed this language in Conference.

## Cuba—Why Wait?

**Dear President Clinton,**

**After four decades of confrontation, mutual misunderstanding and needless human suffering, the US badly needs a new approach to Cuba.**

**It is in your power to restore to all Americans the freedom to travel to Cuba, in conformity with the expressed sentiments of Congress. Let Americans witness for themselves the good and bad aspects of life in a very close neighbor a decade after the end of the Cold War.**

**Demonstrate faith in our own values of freedom. Allow average Americans through interaction with average Cubans to decide for themselves whether it benefits either country to prolong forty years of economic blockade and political conflict. Our national debate must go beyond partisan special interests.**

**Mr. President, your final months in office provide a unique opportunity to bring to US-Cuba relations the same courageous vision you have asked of parties in conflict in Northern Ireland and the Middle East.**

Signers to date include Dr. Craig Calhoun, President, Social Science Research Council; Dr. John Coatsworth, Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies, Harvard University; Dr. Bernd Crasemann, Professor Emeritus of Physics, University of Oregon; Richard Erstad, Director, Latin America and Caribbean Region, American Friends Service Committee; Paul Hawken, author; Dr. Leon Lederman, Professor of Science, Illinois Institute of Technology, 1988 Nobel Laureate in Physics; Dr. Irving Lerch, Director of International Affairs, American Physical Society; Nancy Mikelsons; Raymond C. Offenheiser, President, Oxfam America; Wayne Smith, Director, Cuba Project, Center for International Policy (Organizations listed for identification purposes.)

### **Cooperating Organizations (list in formation):**

**American Civil Liberties Union, American Association for the Advancement of Science, Center for Constitutional Rights, Center for Cuban Studies, Cuban Committee for Democracy, Fund for Reconciliation and Development, Global Exchange, Operation USA**

Add my name to the letter to President Clinton.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Name (printed) \_\_\_\_\_

Title, organization or other identification \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ [Optional] e-mail or phone \_\_\_\_\_

- Send me \_\_\_\_\_ copies of this letter to share with possible signers.
- I am enclosing an address list of potential signers to whom you should mail the letter.
- Add \_\_\_\_\_ as a Cooperating Organization.
- Enclosed is a contribution of \$\_\_\_\_\_ to the "Fund for Reconciliation and Development" for publication of this ad (if donations permit in the New York Times or Washington Post).
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# Interchange

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### Fund for Reconciliation and Development

John McAuliff, Executive Director  
Susan Hammond, Deputy Director



### Mission Statement:

The Fund for Reconciliation and Development (FRD) began in 1985 as the US-Indochina Reconciliation Project. It devolved from a program of the American Friends Service Committee established in 1972. FRD was the first American non-governmental organization (NGO) devoted solely to normal diplomatic, economic and cultural relations with Indochina and expanded its work to include Cuba in 1999. FRD carries out its own programs of cultural and educational exchange and humanitarian assistance. It also facilitates communication and cooperation between private business, NGOs, foundations and educational institutions interested in the region by publishing the quarterly newsletter *Interchange* and by organizing national and international meetings. FRD funding comes from foundations, US and European government agencies, international organizations, and private donations.

In apology to our readers, and in appreciation of the many who have wondered where we were, this is the first publication of *Interchange* since the "Fall" issue which appeared in December 1999. Accordingly some news items are holdovers from earlier intended but unfinished issues and the Cuba pages were largely the product of former staff member Bela Walker before she left for study in Cuba and law school.

This copy is substantially larger than normal so "subscribers" might consider it a double if not triple issue. Our next publication date is planned to be December and thereafter we expect to be back to a quarterly schedule.

(*Twenty Five Years Later* from cover)

The Clinton Administration has left to its successor the task of shepherding the agreement through Congress but, along with most experts, is voicing optimism about passage. However, analogous to the Congressional debate over Permanent Normal Trade Relations with China, there will be opposition and efforts to impose legislative conditions by some Vietnamese-American, environmental, labor and human rights groups. Should their efforts succeed, that could require a new round of bilateral negotiations and further delay.

Thus the challenge now is for American businesses, NGOs and universities with experience in Vietnam to make common and effective cause on behalf of quick passage when the new Administration and Congress take office. However, as Andrew Wells-Dang argues persuasively (page 18), a trade agreement simply removes the last prejudicial war-generated measure against Vietnam. The US has barely begun to address its responsibility for the long-term impact of land mines, unexploded ordnance and Agent Orange.

The proposed visit of President Clinton to Vietnam in mid-November will be a fitting symbolic climax to the normalization process, one of his Administration's greatest (and by no means preordained) successes. His legacy will be further strengthened if during that time he announces a major new scholarship program, as advocated by leading US educators.

Under discussion is the allocation to educational exchange of \$7.5 to \$9 million Vietnam annually transfers to the US. Hanoi agreed several years ago to repay \$150 million in wartime loans made to its adversaries in Saigon as a prerequisite for international financial normalization. At the time, placing this obligation on Vietnam's seemed historically questionable and morally bizarre.

Reprogramming the debt payments into scholarships would be consistent with Vietnam's own sense of priority for human capital development. The country has already committed to use its own budget to send 400 students abroad for graduate and professional training. If this scholarship program is created, Vietnam will still be meeting its international fiscal obligations and the funds will still enter the US economy in the form of payments for tuition and fees, meals and housing, and transport on US air carriers.

The long term value to both countries is incalculable of such a substantial educational program which might be justly remembered as the "Clinton Scholarships". Even wider benefit would accrue if the US and Vietnam agreed to make an appropriate percentage of the scholarships available to students from Cambodia and Laos. Both countries were "sideshowes" to the American war in Vietnam, but bear as deep scars and have even greater foreign study needs than the locus of the "main event".

—John McAuliff

# NEWS FROM LAOS

## UXO LAO

The Lao National UXO Program was able in 1999 to clear significantly more hectares of unexploded ordnances and lead seminars in significantly more villages than targeted for the year. In addition, several hundred new deminers were trained in UXO removal, first aid and community awareness. Beginning in September 1999 UXO LAO replaced foreign trainers with Lao trainers in keeping with government policy. UXO LAO receives funding from UNDP, UNICEF, Australia, Belgium, Canada, Norway, Denmark, Finland, Japan, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Sweden, the European Union, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

## Decade of US-Lao Counter-Narcotics Cooperation

January 2000 marked a decade of cooperation between Laos and the US improving containment of the production, consumption and trafficking of illegal narcotics in Lao PDR. In that time the US has provided Laos with nearly \$20 million in aid to fund programs to persuade farmers in remote areas of the north to give up opium cultivation in exchange for new infrastructure, services and economic opportunities. New roads in Hua Muang and Vieng Thong give remote villages improved access to markets, public health, and education. Three new hydroelectric dams irrigate rice paddies now able to grow dry season rice for the first time, and new hospitals, schools, dispensaries and clean water systems improve living conditions in rural villages and provide once opium reliant rural regions with new resources to build an economy free of narcotics

Officials hope that projects in the Boun Tai and Samphan districts of Phongsaly provice will achieve similar success by working closely with district and province authorities to identify and address the most urgent needs of the villagers in the project area. Similar projects are also being undertaken in other regions on a smaller scale, some of them with additional support from the Japanese embassy.

These efforts compliment the joint US-Lao counter narcotics law enforcement program instituted in 1992 to help train Lao drug enforcement agents and establish special counter narcotics law enforcement offices in appropriate districts.

## Food for Work Project Funded

The World Food Program presented the Lao government with US\$4,224,000 in aid to establish a three year pilot project (2000-2003) whose main objective is to provide quality food for those who work on infrastructure development and reconstruction of weirs and roads and who extend new province rice fields. The project will provide training courses for local officials, and will

be implemented in six Lao provinces with cooperation from provincial authorities, CARE International, the German technical assistance agency GIZ, the Rural Development Project of the International Labor Organization (IRAE-ILO), and the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA).

## Camacrafts Exports Hmong Handicraft

The Lao branch of US-based Camacrafts provides textiles and cotton and silk thread to over 138 Hmong women in Saythany Vangvieng, Nonghat and Toulakhom districts, to make embroidered handicrafts for export.

The company offices are in Phontong village, Chanthaboury district, Vientiane municipality, where it has a showroom to display the results of Hmong sewing skills. A spokesperson said the company would buy whatever the women make subject to a quality inspection, exporting up to 80 percent of the embroidery to Japan, the US, Australia and Europe. The raw materials - textiles, cotton and silk threads - are imported by the company and sent out to the villages each month. The most productive source at present is Somsamai village, Saythany district.

The Traditional Hmong-style designs are sometimes modified and improved, especially when a different color is desired by a customer, the Managing Director, Fran Piercey, said. "The most beautiful designs and embroidery work command the best price from our company, encouraging and supporting producers," said Ms. Piercey.

*Preceding from the Vientiane Times. Additional stories can be found on the Vientiane Times web site, <<http://www.laoembassy.com>> For subscriptions contact the Vientiane Times, Pangkham Rd, Vientiane, Lao PDR; phone (856-21)216364 or 217593; fax (856-21)216365. There is a fraudulent site calling itself Vientianetimes.com which provides insight into the viewpoint of American opponents of the Lao government*

## Landmine Report

**T**he International Campaign to Ban Landmines released its second annual Landmine Monitor report on September 7, covering 95 countries worldwide. The entire report is now available on the Web at: <<http://www.icbl.org/lm/2000/report>>

Many of the Asian reports, including Cambodia, and Vietnam, contain substantial new information on landmine policy and use, demining and victim assistance. The Vietnam report was researched and written by Asia Pacific Center program director Andrew Wells-Dang. Andrew is currently working With the other Asian researchers to produce an ASEAN Landmine Report to be used for regional advocacy purposes.

# NEWS FROM CAMBODIA

## NGO Statement to the Consultative Group Meeting

NGOs in Cambodia prepared an informative and detailed statement to the Consultative Group Meeting on Cambodia held in Paris on 24-26 May 2000

The statement is available on the World Wide Web at <http://go.to/ngostatement>.

This statement represents a collaborative effort between three formal NGO membership organizations - the Cooperation Committee for Cambodia (CCC), the NGO Forum on Cambodia and the MEDiCAM association of NGOs working in health, along with the input of 17 sectoral working groups.

The NGO Statement contains NGO perspectives on Cambodia's progress and future needs in terms of good governance, human resource development, and reaching the poor.

Attached to the statement are sectoral papers in the following areas: agriculture, child rights, commune administration and decentralisation, commune elections, disability and rehabilitation, education, fisheries, forestry reform, gender and development, good governance, health, HIV/AIDS, human rights, landmines, land reform, microfinance and weapons reduction.

Also attached is a short section giving general information about NGOs in Cambodia.



US Ambassador to Cambodia Kent Wiedeman at the American community's Fourth of July celebration in Penom Penh.

The Consultative Group meeting is the annual consultation between the Cambodian Government and Cambodia's donors and is organised by the World Bank. NGOs have observer status at the meeting.

### Internet Version of Magazine: "Searching for the Truth"

The Documentation Center of Cambodia (DC-Cam), has announced the launching of a new Internet edition of DC-Cam's magazine, "Searching for the Truth." The magazine, currently published in a Khmer language print edition, will now be available on the World Wide Web in a Khmer-language edition. The website address or URL where the Internet version of "Searching for the Truth" can be accessed is <http://www.bigpond.com.kh/users/dccam.genocide>. This electronic edition of the magazine can be downloaded from the website free-of-charge.

The magazine is intended to inform Cambodians about the preparations for and conduct of a criminal tribunal to judge Khmer Rouge leaders for alleged genocide and crimes against humanity committed during the Democratic Kampuchea regime from 1975 to 1979. The magazine also aims to inform readers about life during the Khmer Rouge regime. Most of the material in the magazine is based on research carried out under the auspices of DC-Cam.

The print version of "Searching for the Truth" was launched in January of this year, and has since appeared in monthly editions. Early issues of "Searching for the Truth" have been featured in reports aired by CNN, BBC and other global media organizations. The magazine includes a variety of sections concentrating on different topics each month.

Each issue features articles describing Documentation activities at DC-Cam, articles reporting on historical research, legal analyses from international scholars, a public forum for debates on issues related to genocide justice in Cambodia, and a family tracing column describing the efforts of the DC-Cam to locate information about missing family members.

The monthly Khmer-language print version of "Searching for the Truth" is distributed free of charge at the district level throughout Cambodia, and has been distributed at national reconciliation forum events. The magazine is available for purchase at the Documentation Center at the price of 7,000 Riel per copy. Revenues generated through sales are used to print additional copies for free distribution to poor communities nationwide, especially including surviving victims of the Khmer Rouge genocide.

The publication is supported by generous grants

from the Norwegian Royal Ministry of Foreign Affairs and by the Canada Fund of the Canadian Embassy. DC-Cam is currently seeking additional funding to sustain the publication of the magazine, as well as to produce an English-language print edition alongside the current Khmer-language version.

For contribution and additional information or media inquiries, contact Mr. Youk CHHANG, Director, Documentation Center of Cambodia, in PhnomPenh at phone ( 855-23) 211-875, fax ( 855-23) 210-358, or email <dccam@bigpond.com.kh>.

### Joom Noon - A Gift

Vietnam Veterans of America Foundation (VVAFA) runs an income generation project in the remote northern province of Preah Vihear, Cambodia, producing silk products sold under the label *Joom Noon*, which means “gift” in Khmer. *Joom Noon* scarves and shawls are expertly fashioned by hand, from the harvesting and spinning of thread, to the dyeing and weaving of the silk.

Begun three years ago with five women, all of them landmine victims, the project now employs over 70 farmers, spinners, dyers, and weavers, just over half of whom are women and 75% of whom are disabled. All income from the sale of the scarves returns directly to the project, helping a remarkable micro-enterprise continue to thrive and grow. *Joom Noon* products are hand finished in a variety of sizes, ranging from 25 cm x 130 cm (10 in x 50 in) to 50 cm x 150 cm (20 in x 60 in) to 100 cm x 200 cm (40 in x 80 in). Because they are hand-woven, product sizes and colors may vary slightly.

For more information, call VVAFA at (202)483-9222, visit <www.vvaf.org> or e-mail <joomnoon@vi.org>.



Weaving at Joom Noon



“Fire and Spirit” by Soeung Vannara (oil on canvas) is on display at Reyum.

### New Arts Center in Phnom Penh

Cross the street from the National Museum towards the Art School and you will pass a newly opened storefront known as Reyum. The yellow building houses a gallery space on the ground floor and a number of office spaces and meeting rooms that are used for a variety of research, publishing and student training projects. Last fall, the gallery presented “Lakhaoun Khaol and Khmer Lacquer making,” a survey of Cambodian lacquer masks and their use in the theater of Vat Svay Andaet. A subsequent exhibition, “The Legacy of Absence: A Cambodian Story” assembled work by contemporary artists who were asked by Reyum to address the legacy of absence that follows genocide. Each of these exhibitions is accompanied by an illustrated catalogue in Khmer and English.

Reyum aims to address students and intellectuals drawn to the art school as well as international tourists visiting the National Museum and downtown Phnom Penh.

Reyum is beginning to publish children’s books, teaching manuals, and more general art books in Khmer. Through its series of ongoing exhibitions, lectures, concerts and publications, Reyum wishes to address both the students and intellectuals drawn to the only art university of Cambodia, and the diverse group of international tourists who come to the Museum and surrounding areas. Reyum thus hopes to provide a meeting ground where definitions of what is considered specifically Cambodian can join and be exchanged with the international community.

Reyum is located at #47 Street 178, across from the National Museum in downtown Phnom Penh. They can be reached via e-mail at <reyum@camnet.com.kh> or by telephone, (855-23) 217-149 or (855-12) 806-150.

Thank you to the Barbara and Victor Ulmer Fund of the Agape Foundation for their financial help in producing this issue of Interchange.

# NEWS FROM VIETNAM

## Consultative Group Pledges Funds and Vietnam Announces New Economic Reforms

Meeting in December, the World Bank Consultative Group for Vietnam pledged \$US 2.8 billion in aid, commending Hanoi for reducing poverty but urging the government to step up implementation of the three year economic reform agenda already drawn up by Vietnamese ministries. To support that effort, donors earmarked \$700 million to support costs of accelerated economic reform, such as retraining of laid off workers. \$500 million set aside last year as conditional on economic reforms was never distributed, and the Consultative Group this year noted that, while excellent work had been done in paving the way for reform, the reforms themselves needed to follow that newly paved way.

The World Bank has expressed concern that Vietnam's successes in cutting poverty are at risk if economic growth is allowed to drop off for want of quicker reforms. Today somewhere between 30 and 45% of Vietnam's 79 million people live below the poverty line, a figure that was closer to 70% in the mid eighties. Consultative Group donors warned that foreign investment inflows for 1999 may be at the lowest level since 1992 at only \$600 million, and that economic growth is liable to drop to 3.5 percent in 2000 and continue falling without a substantial improvement in the country's business climate.

Shortly after the Consultative Group meeting, Vietnam announced a plan to remove policies that favor state-owned enterprises (SOEs) over private enterprises and renew efforts to attract foreign investors to Vietnam. In conjunction with this plan, loans from the Asian Development Bank will be used to strengthen the institutional and policy framework of state-owned enterprises, improve labor mobility and provide private enterprises with improved access to foreign investment and credit.

A National Enterprise Reform Committee will act as a clearing house to steer progress towards more market-based and commercially oriented SOEs. The first task of the committee will be to draw up an integrated reform program to reform or divest failing SOEs. According to the ADB, past delays in implementing SOE reforms, along with the absence of a clear, consistent and economically tenable approach to the role of these enterprises in economic development, is in part to blame for the deteriorating financial position of many such enterprises. This in turn undermines both the financial sector and the Government's financial position.

In addition to SOE reform, the Government will establish a single office in Hanoi where foreign investments of over \$US 10 million can be approved and licensed on the national level, as well as provincial level "one-stop shopping" for smaller FDI. Other legal changes are included in the plan as well, all aimed at

attracting foreign investors and encouraging private ventures, primarily by removing old hurdles to investment. (VNA)

## Welfare for Agent Orange Victims

Prime Minister Khai announced a plan to provide subsidies to war veterans and their children affected by toxic chemicals sprayed by the US during the Vietnam war. Through the two point program, officers, soldiers, members of political and/or mass organizations and young volunteers who worked in areas subject to US spraying between 1961 and 1975 will receive VND 100,000 per month if they are totally disabled and not able to work, while those who have only partially lost their working capacity will receive VND 88,000 per month. These people have yet to receive any social welfare benefits reserved for war invalids.

In the second portion of the program, children who have suffered birth defects as a result of the spraying but are still alive will also receive monthly subsidies. Those children who are so critically disabled that they are not able to work or carry out their daily lives will receive VND 84,000 per month, while those who are able to carry out their daily lives, though not able to work, will receive VND 48,000 each month. Provisions have also been made to offer health insurance to victims as well. The decision, which came into effect January 1, 2000 calls for funding to come from local budgets and national employment promotion and poverty alleviation funds. (VNA)

## AIDS Education Project

The South China Morning Post reported in December that the Vietnamese National AIDS committee has opened an AIDS and sex education café in Hanoi that will be staffed by a female physician who specializes in reproductive health as well as an HIV/AIDS counselor available to customers of the café, called "Window of Love."

The Vietnamese Ministry of Health says that young adults are contracting HIV faster than any other group, and HIV infections in Vietnam are expected to reach 160,000 by the end of 2000.

## Agent Orange Victims Receive Ford Foundation Help

The Ford Foundation on July 26, 2000, granted \$150,000 to Vietnamese Agent Orange victims. Professor Nguyen Trong Nhan, Chairman of the Vietnam Red Cross, received the aid in Hanoi from Dr Lisa Messersmith, a representative of the Ford Foundation in Vietnam. The money will help 2000 families affected by Agent Orange buy wheelchairs and rehabilitation facilities and help generate jobs for those victims, with an aim to improving their living standards.



*Standing Alone Under Earth, Sky and Water* by Lam, age 16  
(see *Street Vision* page 11)

### Department of Press and Information Sets up Website

The Department of Press and Information (DPI) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) has set up DPI's webpage contained in the MOFA's website. It contains important speeches/statements as well as interview answers given by leaders of the Party, the Government, the National Assembly and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to foreign and national correspondents; statements of the MOFA and by MOFA's Spokesman; interview answers given by the MOFA's Spokesman to foreign and national correspondents; and some major information on foreign activities of the Party, the Government, the National Assembly and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The webpage is in both Vietnamese and English and is updated daily: <[www.mofa.gov.vn](http://www.mofa.gov.vn)>

### IBM Helps Develop Information Technology

The US computer company, IBM, pledged to continue investing in Vietnam's education sector and social work, said Radne Bryant, General Director of IBM Vietnam and Indochina at a seminar on information technology held in Nha Trang on July 24. At the seminar, IBM presented IT solutions to help Vietnam integrate into IT global development. IBM granted US \$500,000 to a child education assistance project in Vietnam over the past two years. IBM was the first information technology company to be granted a licence to establish a 100% foreign-invested company in Vietnam in 1996. The company has provided computer-related services and transferred technology and experiences to Vietnam's IT sector. (VNA)

### FPT to Open Second Office in US

Vietnam's Corporation for Financing and Promoting Technology (FPT) will open its second office in the United States in October

this year. The company has signed a contract worth US \$300,000 to develop web-based software and two other contracts worth US \$1 million on wireless communication and investment and insurance. FPT is a Vietnamese-State-run information technology business under the Ministry of Science, Technology and the Environment. (VNA)

### Joiner Center Announces Rockefeller Awards

The William Joiner Center and its collaborative institutions and programs at the University of Massachusetts Boston have announced the selection of the Rockefeller Fellows in the Humanities for the academic year 2000-2001 in the initiative "(Re)Constructing Identity and Place in the Vietnamese Diaspora".

Ms. Michel Janette, a professor of English at Kansas State University, will collect diasporic writings, conduct interviews and write literary essays for her forthcoming work - "Twentieth Century Vietnamese American Narratives in English". Ms. Caroline Kieu Linh Valverde, a graduate of the University of California, Berkeley, will use the residency to edit, expand and transform her dissertation on "Elemental Change and Continuity: Vietnamese American Transnational Identities in the New Millennium" into an alternative text that "offers a fresh look at the identity processes and transnational issues of culture, economics and politics in contemporary Vietnamese diasporic history". Mr. Hoang Ngoc Hien will study the styles, themes, and sources of overseas writings, with particular emphasis on the treatment of love and the attachment to the land. Mr. Nguyen Hue Chi will collect and analyze overseas critical writings on classical Vietnamese culture - its continuity, change, and transformation in the overseas environment.

Contact Kevin Bowen or Nguyen Ba Chung, William Joiner Center for the Study of War and Social Consequences, University of Massachusetts Boston, 100 Morrissey Blvd., Boston, MA 02125-3393. Phone 617-287-5850, Fax 617-287-5855, E-mail <[chung.nguyen@umb.edu](mailto:chung.nguyen@umb.edu)>. Website <<http://omega.cc.umb.edu/~diaspora>>.

### The Vietnam Red Cross has launched a Website

Constructed with the assistance of Vietnam Datacommunication Company, the site is at <http://www.vnrc.org.vn>

### Educational Exchanges with Vietnam Growing Rapidly

Open Doors, a publication of the Institute of International Education, reports for the academic year 1998/99 the following enrollment of students from Vietnam in US higher education institutions:

Total 1,587, up 31% from the prior year's 1,210. Almost 75% of these are undergraduates, with about 20% graduate students (308) and the rest in ESL or other non-degree programs.

Total number of Vietnamese enrolled in Intensive English programs totalled 246. This figure includes many studying in private ESL program not necessarily based on US campuses. (About 100 of those 246 are already counted in the 1,587 figure for US campus-based Vietnamese).

There were 120 Vietnamese scholars on US campuses in 1998/99 doing teaching or research, up 40% from the prior year's 86.

Students from the U.S. receiving credit for study in Vietnam in 1997/98 (the latest year for which data is available — i.e. they studied in 97/98 and received credit back home in 98/99) totalled 112, up 78% from the prior year's 63.

### **The Overseas Vietnamese Contribution to National Development**

Two billion dollars a year is sent back annually by the [two million] overseas Vietnamese to families left in their home country, according to the newly-formed private Overseas Vietnamese Business Association which held its first congress on March 25. The money pouring in has spawned thousands of small and hundreds of medium enterprises. "Forty percent of the Association members' investment is funnelled into industry, 40 percent into services and 20 percent into entertainment," says Duc Cominh, an overseas Vietnamese who holds a French passport and runs the Vietnam branch of AXA insurance. from a story published by AFP, April 6,2000

### **Al Gore on Vietnam with students at the Marie G. Davis Middle School in Charlotte, NC**

Most of his friends from high school and college found ways to avoid Vietnam, Gore said. "There were a lot of people my age who decided not to go and found different ways to get out of going most of them legal ways," he said. "That was one of the things that was unfair about the draft. Some people could figure out how to get out of it and some people couldn't." Poor men, he said, "were much more likely to be drafted and go to war." Another reason Gore joined the Army, friends have said, was his concern that dodging the

draft might hurt his senator-father's re-election chances. As it turned out, his father lost anyway. In Vietnam, as an Army journalist, Gore said he spent his time looking for good stories. "I carried an M-16 and a pencil," he said. The likely Democratic presidential nominee made it clear he would not have committed U.S. troops had he been president. "I thought the war was a big mistake," he said.

Associated Press, 4/13/2000

### **World Bank Loan to Hanoi for Electricity**

The World Bank announced on September first that it had signed a loan deal worth 150 million dollars to help finance a project to extend electricity distribution in Vietnam's countryside. The loan will finance most of the 201.3-million-dollar rural energy project which will extend the national electricity grid in 32 provinces and 671 communes, including 278 of the poorest communes in Vietnam. The loan agreement was signed on Friday morning between the World Bank resident representative Andrew Steer and the State Bank Governor Le Duc Thuy. "As a result, in the year 2000, 100 percent of the districts, 80 percent of the communes and 60 percent of the households in the rural areas will have access to electricity as a means of improving the social welfare and income and reducing poverty," Le Duc Thuy said. Agence France Presse 9/1/00

### **New Rules Mandate Service or Repayment by Government Funded Students**

State-financed Vietnamese students studying overseas who fail



Herb Allison speaks in Hanoi in April on behalf of a delegation of Vietnam veterans who became business leaders and are members of the Corporate Council of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Association. Allison was former president and chief operating officer of Merrill Lynch.

to come back to the country as planned must pay back all the grants they received during their time abroad. The decision comes from Circular 75/2000/TTLT/BTC-GDÑT, which was made public by the ministries of Finance and Education and Training recently and came into force as of August 4. It is applied to State officials, postgraduate and undergraduate students and vocational trainees from the 1999-2000 academic year.

The repayment must be made if a student does not return to the country three months after his training courses' conclusion, or if the student has to return to Vietnam ahead of time due to violations of academic rules or because he has chosen to drop out of his course.

Repayments will also be claimed from students who return to the country as planned but refuse to work for their former office, or who apply for residence in another country while studying abroad. This also extends to students who quit their offices or apply for residence in a foreign countries when their time of public service is less than three times the length of their study abroad.

Repayment would include overseas training fees paid by the Vietnamese Government, local institutions or foreign organizations under agreements signed with Vietnam. Also repayable would be training fees in Vietnam, airfares, monthly stipends, and other relevant expenses. The proportion of the student's grant that must be repayed will be determined by the specifics of each case, but must be at least 50 per cent of the total expenses. In another measure, State officials and postgraduate and undergraduate students who go abroad for further study and training as of this academic year will be required to either deposit US\$1,000 as a guarantee or present their family's warranty before leaving Vietnam. The money and its accrued interest will be returned to them after they complete their overseas study and return to the country as scheduled. (VNA)

### **Washington State U., N.E.U. in Hanoi Cooperate for MBA Program**

The Prime Minister of Vietnam recently approved the first cooperative MBA program between the National Economics University in Hanoi and Washington State University. The program includes recruitment and selection of outstanding Vietnamese students who will study in Vietnam for two semester and at WSU for the second half of their MBA courses. Students will also complete a research proposal. Upon completion of the program, successful students will receive a WSU MBA degree. A professor exchange has been going on between Vietnam and WSU for five years already. So far there are no American students traveling to Vietnam to study, but professors hope it will truly be a two-way student exchange someday.

*From the Daily Evergreen, Washington State University*

## **NGO Self-Profile: Work Camps in Vietnam**

A cooperative program between the Peacework Development Fund of Blacksburg, VA and the Viet Nam Youth Movement for Cooperative Activities (VN YMCA), formerly Viet Youth Services, provides opportunities for workcamps in Vietnam. Workcamps were held in 1998, 1999, 2000, and another is planned for January 2001. Participation is open to anyone with a spirit of cooperation and adventure. The work usually involves painting and preparing new elementary schools and hospital facilities for use. Peacework volunteers are joined by VN YMCA volunteers and local teachers or staffs, and work hard for several days at each of two work sites. Peacework provides funds in advance for the construction of the new facilities, which are ready for painting when workcampers arrive. No particular skills are required; there is always something for everyone to do. And there is a lot of singing, language learning, even some tourism, wonderful food, and, most of all, a lot of friendship building.

Workcamps typically start in Dong Thap province in the Mekong Delta to complete an elementary school building, and then make their way to Nhatrang to complete facilities at a provincial rehabilitation hospital. Visits are made to places like the College of Agriculture at Can Tho University, the mountain town of Dalat, the famous Cu Chi tunnels, ancient Cham remains, and beaches in Nha Trang bay.

The total cost of the two-week adventure is about \$2,200-\$2,300 plus air fare from Los Angeles or New York. Pictures of the 1999 workcamp are available on the web at: <<http://www.uark.edu/depts/hesweb/hdfsrs/vietnam/index.html>>.

*For Peacework contact Mr. Steve Darr at the Peacework Development Fund, 305 Washington St., S. W., Blacksburg, VA, 24060-4745, tel. 540-953-1376, [sdarr@CompuServe.com](mailto:sdarr@CompuServe.com), <http://www.peacework.org/>, and for the Viet Nam Youth Movement for Cooperative Activities contact Mr. Vu Trong Thuc at 114A Tran Dinh Xu St., District 1, HCMC, Viet Nam, Tel: (84.8) 8375217, Fax: (84.8) 8375201, <[vnymca@hcm.vnn.vn](mailto:vnymca@hcm.vnn.vn)>.*

*This information was provided by Donald E. Voth, Professor of Rural Sociology, University of Arkansas, leader of Vietnam workcamps, School of Human Environmental Science HOEC 118, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, AR 72701. (501)575-2409, (501)442-6017, <[dvoth@comp.uark.edu](mailto:dvoth@comp.uark.edu)>.*



*Pace By Pace* by Tam, age 16

## Children's Visions of Ho Chi Minh City Streets

Street Vision began in April 1998. Today two years later, Street Vision has trained 32 children in basic photographic theory with another 20 children now enrolled in a course in Ho Chi Minh City. To date nine students from the course have been given scholarships to continue studying photography in greater depth and a number of the first students earn part of their living through photography.

The children aged 14 to 20, who took part in the first phase of the project (April to September 1998) came from four centers for homeless children in the city. Through a series of afternoon workshops, the group of twenty young people set about a series of projects documenting their lives and the lives of other street and working children. Initially learning with point and shoot cameras, they later moved on, learning to use single lens reflex cameras through which they were able to have more creative control of their work. A number of children from the first course now instruct and help new students in the beginner

courses, the most recent of which opened in April 2000, working with both children from street shelters and children living on the streets.

PhotoVoice is currently publishing a photographic book on the Street Vision Project. This book will display 80 -100 images taken by Street Vision students in Vietnam and will be loosely based around the guidelines of the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child. The project will be placed in the historical context of Vietnam. PhotoVoice is currently seeking sponsorship and support for this publication.

*Contacts: Anna Blackman <anna@photovoice.org>, Marjorie Victor <streetvisionusa@hotmail.com> Tel: 617-868-1516 or visit: www.photovoice.org*

Photographs from the Street Vision project, in addition to those on this page, can be found throughout this and future issues of Interchange.



*What Are You Dreaming Of* by Thao, age 16

## Vietnam Names a New Foreign Minister

In January Nguyen Dy Nien became Vietnam's Minister for Foreign Affairs, succeeding Nguyen Manh Cam who retained this position as Deputy Prime Minister. Nien joined the Ministry at its founding in 1954 and has been Deputy Minister since 1987.

He was born on December 9, 1935, in Thanh Hao Province, and took part in the National Liberation Movement from 1951 at the age of 16. In 1991 Nien was elected to the Central Committee of the Communist Party. He is a graduate of Banaras Hindu University in India, having been the first North Vietnamese to study outside the Soviet Bloc as the result of an agreement between Ho Chi Minh and Prime Minister Nehru. He has served as President of the Vietnam National Committee of UNESCO and as President of the National Committee for Overseas Vietnamese.

Nien officially welcomed a delegation of former members of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) which we brought to Hanoi (with the support of the Ford Foundation) in 1995 for the first time since they trained and supplied Ho Chi Minh's forces in 1945. During America's war in Vietnam, the motives of the OSS team had come under attack so it was particularly moving when Nien greeted them warmly at the Ministry saying, "you are the foundation stone for Vietnam American friendship."

Prior to Nien's appointment, Western journalists speculated that the next Foreign Minister would be a hard liner from another ministry. It appears in fact that the main issue was whether Nien or Vu Khoan, also a highly respected Vice Minister at MFA, would replace Cam. Khoan moved over to the important position of Minister of Foreign Trade and saw to the successful final stages of the trade agreement with the US.



Logos of businesses which provided support for the American community's 4th of July party in Hanoi

## In Memorium

Admiral Elmo R. Zumwalt, Jr. lost a battle with cancer by asbestos exposure early in the year 2000. He had a long and very distinguished career in the Navy and in private service to veterans, including those in need of bone marrow transplants and those who suffered from Agent Orange or dioxins.

Admiral Zumwalt fought for compensation for Vietnamese suffering from landmines and from Agent Orange as well as for his beloved US veterans. He had ordered the spraying of Agent Orange by the Navy during the Vietnam war and believed his oldest son, Elmo R. Zumwalt, III, died from a cancer caused by exposure to Agent Orange. He also believed that Elmo III's son suffered brain damage from Agent Orange.

He brought his Agent Orange concern to the 7<sup>th</sup> conference of the Forum on Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam which took place in 1996 at American University.

Admiral Zumwalt modernized the US Navy in many ways, including desegregation of Asians and African-Americans, as well as permitting long hair. His stature was such that President Clinton gave the final oration at his funeral, held at the Navy Academy at Annapolis.

He was an outspoken and fearless warrior and then a fighter for those in America and in Vietnam whom he felt deserved but were not getting justice. His brilliant and efficient mind and his gracious personality will be sadly missed.

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## Japan Assists New ASEAN Members

Japan on July 28, 2000 established a fund, worth some \$2.5 million for the first year, to promote cooperative relations with the 10-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Japanese Foreign Minister Yohei Kono and Vietnamese Foreign Minister Nguyen Dy Nien signed a document in Bangkok to launch the Japan-ASEAN General Exchange Fund (JAGEF), which aims to help the less developed ASEAN members become more fully involved in the regional group.

## My Lai Peace Park Dedication Ceremony

The Madison Friends (Quakers) and the community of My Lai would like to invite all people of peace and goodwill to join them on March 16, 2001, to help usher in a new peaceful millenium by dedicating the My Lai Peace Park.

The two-storied gazebo has been finished and a site has been prepared to plant the trees, shrubs and flowers which will make the My Lai Peace Park a green, growing living monument to peace and a celebration of life. Other projects in My Lai sponsored by the Madison Friends include new schools, a loan fund for the poor women of My Lai, a dental clinic and art exchanges between the children of My Lai and Madison, Wisconsin.

For more information about the dedication ceremony for the My Lai Peace Park or about other projects in My Lai contact Mike Boehm, Chair, My Lai Peace Park Project 2312 E. Johnson St. Madison, WI 53704 608-244-9505 <[vapp@igc.org](mailto:vapp@igc.org)>.



*Bike Warden* in parking lot at National University in Ho Chi Minh City. Photo by Tran Thanh Sang. Sang recently won third prize in the Focus on the World UN Environmental Program International Photography Contest.

## US - Indochina Educational Foundation Established

During a 1999 trip to Cambodia for the Forum conference, Mark Ashwill, director of the World Languages Institute and Fulbright Program Advisor at the State University of New York at Buffalo, was struck by how little public or private money is available for promising students who want to attend college or graduate school overseas.

Ashwill's interest in Indochina has resulted in several language-culture exchange programs involving Vietnamese and American universities, businesses and other groups. Now he has decided to try, in what he calls "a modest but compelling way," to help meet an urgent educational need in one of the poorest regions on earth.

Ashwill recently announced the establishment of the US-Indochina Educational Foundation, Inc (USIEF) a 501c3 non-profit, non-governmental organization based in Buffalo, New York with representatives in Phnom Penh and Hanoi. The foundation will provide financial and other support to some of the best and brightest students from Cambodia, Vietnam and Laos who want to pursue advanced education and training in the United States.

The foundation will also fund remedial English language training, if necessary, and in exceptional cases, will consider both undergraduate and non-degree applicants. In addition, USIEF will arrange for orientation and mentoring of grantees who, as a condition of support, will be asked to fulfill a service requirement - visits to local schools, for instance, or participate in on-campus

events, and other meaningful and mutually beneficial activities.

Initial funding for USIEF was provided by a \$10,000 grant from the Paul J. Koessler Foundation. Additional funds will be solicited from individuals, corporations and other private foundations with an interest in and commitment to Southeast Asia. Ashwill said that wherever possible, the foundation will solicit support, including in-kind contributions, from host institutions throughout the US.

The first student to receive assistance from the new foundation is Sokna Heng of Cambodia. She holds a bachelor's degree from Cambodia's National Institute of Management, which has been staffed in part by instructors from Georgetown University and the University of San Francisco. A scholarship student in SUNY Buffalo's English Language Institute, Heng is preparing for admission to a graduate program in international trade.

Ashwill says, "We expect that Sokna and future USIEF alumni will become bilingual and bicultural bridges who will return home upon completion of their studies to put their education and training to good use for the benefit of themselves, their families and their countries.

From SUNY Buffalo press release. For more information on USIEF, see <http://www.usief.org>

## NGO Self-Profile

**Aid to Southeast Asia (ASA)** celebrated ten years of partnerships in Vietnam in 1999. It was founded by Steve Sherlock, a veteran of the Vietnam war, along with three other veterans, who shared a commitment to the reconstruction of Vietnam and reconciliation between the people of the US and Vietnam, at a time when Vietnam was devastated by an embargo and desperate for access to modern technology and equipment. In the ten years of ASA's work, the end of the embargo brought diplomatic relations and a rush of businesses hoping to reach Vietnam's nearly 80 million people. Economic development and modernization have increased access to goods and services as well as the disparity between those who are prospering and those left behind. Homelessness, prostitution and street crime are on the rise, and access to education and medical treatment are increasingly dependent upon one's ability to pay for services.

ASA aims to provide Vietnamese medical professionals with the tools to serve the needs of their people. Its philosophy, which has been critical to continued success, is one of respect for the ability of Vietnam's medical professionals to define and meet the people's needs when adequate equipment, supplies and access to information are made available. In keeping with this mission, ASA aggressively solicits and delivers medical supplies and equipment. In the coming year, it intends to focus more on rural areas of Vietnam which are not benefiting proportionately from urban-centered development. ASA is also exploring the possibility of offering AIDS prevention services in response to a dramatic increase in the spread of this disease which has accompanied the growth of foreign business and tourism.

In celebrating ten years of service and partnership, ASA wrote that "the last decade has been a journey of hope, of compassion, of giving and friendship. It has resulted in a strong foundation upon which ASA will continue its work. None of this would have been possible without the people who cared and who gave of themselves and their resources. We hope each of you will join us in celebrating your success and ours."

*For more information, contact ASA at 1316 4th St. S.E., Minneapolis, MN, 55414; phone (612)378-9491; fax (612)378-9479; <sherlockusa@uswest.net>*

## The Floods in Hue

by Bob Lesser <boblesser@hotmail.com>

[Editor's note: Floods in central Vietnam last year may have been the worst in a century. Following is an eyewitness account of the Vietnamese response by an American who was on the scene.]

During the fall of 1999, I was a Program Leader for Where There Be Dragons, an experiential education program for American high school students in Vietnam. My job was to introduce the history and culture of Vietnam based on what I'd learned the year and a half I lived, studied, and worked there beginning in 1994.

The program emphasized getting off the beaten path away from plush hotels and banana pancakes, traveling on local buses and trains, and trying as much as possible to experience life as Vietnamese do. The flooding that devastated central Vietnam this past November brought this experience closer than we ever imagined.

The rainy season in central Vietnam begins in October and during our three weeks in Hue it rained daily. It was just like any other night as I biked home in heavy rain drenched as usual. The next morning I awakened to ankle high water in the courtyard of our hotel just off the bank of the Perfume River. By the afternoon the water was waist high. It continued to rain as heavy winds downed power lines, knocked over billboard signs, and uprooted trees right outside the hotel.

By the time the sun had gone down electricity was out and we were given candles for light. Phones were dead. And running water was soon to follow. In order to flush the toilet we had to fill buckets with flood water which had risen halfway up the first floor. We were on the third floor and although most of our stuff was damp and moldy we were lucky to be in a dry place. For the three days that this storm continued the only time we ventured out was to get food.

Helicopters with lights flashing buzzed by overhead, a spectacle I'd never seen in Vietnam before. This was when I realized how urgent and far reaching this situation was. The rains ended by the fourth day and waters began to recede. It was at this point that we were able to get out and see the extent of the damage. People were saying that this was the worst flooding in over 100 years. Water marks stained the walls of every street level shop and home. Buses lined streets with Vietnamese passengers sleeping in them, stranded in Hue and unable to go anywhere for days. Refuse was piling up all along the river especially near the central market and foul smells emanated throughout the city.

The first visible signs of an international relief effort began with the Royal Thai Air Force flying in ten planes with supplies. When the roads were open, buses arrived carrying relief workers from

all over the country. And students from various colleges were enlisted to volunteer in the clean up effort.

Official news reported 90,000 houses destroyed, thousands of people missing and hundreds dead. Although there was significant damage in Hue city, the real disaster was in villages outside the city. We joined a group of local Buddhist monks, nuns, and lay followers to these areas.

We traveled in a boat stocked with rice sacks, instant noodles, and western medicine. After seeing three hours of bloated carcasses of pigs and dogs floating by, we arrived. People were sick and hurt, had not slept or eaten in days, had lost family members and friends, and were delirious. After taking the names of each family, supplies were distributed.

A few years ago a Buddhist monk was arrested and jailed for organizing an illegal flood relief mission in the Mekong Delta. I was worried this mission would have similar consequences, but was assured that things had changed since then. And in fact the



*It's hard to sell in this rain* by Lam age 17  
(see *Street Vision* page 11)

efforts of the Buddhist community were to continue every day. And there seemed to be a lot of money coming from the Vietnamese and foreign governments, NGOs, and individual donations.

Although it appeared that things were slowly getting back to normal, apparently the worst was not over. A local doctor expressed concern over the long term effects of contaminated food and water. Chicken, pork, beef, and vegetables were not safe to eat. And a large portion of the rice which was just harvested was lost, facing the local population with hunger in months to come.

Now that immediate danger was over talk shifted to why this flood was so severe. Some argued that deforestation during the Vietnam war and more recent problems of logging was the major cause. In the past dense foliage served to hold the water back and absorb it, but now heavy rains ran right on through.

On the day that we were to leave, the skies were blue and sunny, the streets were again busy with motorbikes, bicycles and cyclos, like nothing had ever happened. The roads were so dry and dusty that it was hard to see. Sections of Hai Van Pass were closed off due to landslides. At one point we traversed a temporary bridge whose bolts were tightened by hand after each vehicle crossed. As we got further and further away from Hue, what we had lived through became clear.

In an attempt to learn what Vietnam was really all about we met the US Ambassador, and talked to American and Vietnamese veterans. We visited hospitals and orphanages, and did volunteer work with victims of Agent Orange. We visited H'mong families in the mountains to see what life is like for minorities in Vietnam. We knew that war, poverty, and now natural disaster was part of life in Vietnam.

But the real Vietnam came forth in the way that people dealt with this disaster, gracefully and with a sense of humor. One guy walked around in a life preserver even though water was only knee deep. Even while people were worried about their well-being, I felt that we were being cared for like honored guests. At our hotel they made us food while standing on chairs in a flooded kitchen.

In ancient Vietnam, Lord Heaven was the master of the Universe, and even in the midst of modernization most people probably agree that this is still true today. Tradition serves to make sense out of that which cannot be explained but must be endured. A man from a ravaged village taught me a saying from Vietnam's Buddhist heritage. "Only from great suffering," he said, "can there be great wisdom." And this truly was my Vietnam experience.

*See page 24 for a report on new floods*

## NGO Self Profile: Sister School Arts Program

The Sister School Arts Program was begun by Indochina Arts Partnership (IAP) in 1998. The idea of Sister School Arts Program is to encourage and foster permanent ongoing relationships between the leading fine arts colleges and universities in Vietnam with those in United States.

IAP is a non-profit, non-governmental organization begun in 1987 to conduct programs of cultural development and artistic and educational exchange between the United States and the countries of South East Asia, with the primary focus on Vietnam.

IAP invites arts colleges and universities in United States and Vietnam to participate and develop the Sister School Arts Program in cooperation with IAP. The program enables students and faculty members to be involved in the program linking colleges and universities in the United States and Vietnam. The idea is that one student or one faculty member from one institution in the United States exchanges with one student or one faculty member from one institution in Vietnam. The two institutions evolve an ongoing relationship that will develop arts education and arts understanding aiming to the benefit the institutions cultural outlook and understanding in a changing world.

Between June 18th and June 23rd, 1999, meetings were held in Boston, Massachusetts, Portland, Maine, and Providence, Rhode Island, between the Presidents and other representatives of Emmanuel College, the Maine College of Art (MECA), the Rhode Island School of Design (RISD), the Massachusetts College of Art and the Directors of the Hanoi Fine Arts University (HanFAU), Hue Fine Arts University (HueFAU) and the Ho Chi Minh City Fine Arts College (HCMCFAC) for the purpose of forming sister school relationships between these schools (MECA-HanFAU, RISD-HueFAU, Mass Art-HCMCFAU, Emmanuel College and all three Vietnamese schools). All of the schools agreed in principle that this linking of schools could have wide ranging benefits for their institutions as well as for their broader communities. The following were among the many ideas, which were discussed as possible ways for the colleges to begin these relationships:

- \* Student exchanges. These exchanges could be for a semester or shorter period including winter sessions, special summer programs, or special intensive learning experiences,
- \* Faculty exchanges. These could also be for a semester or shorter periods. Sabbaticals could be a way for these exchanges to take place but this would take advanced planning.
- \* Administration and staff exchanges. Gallery or museum staff, development, admissions or other staff and administration could spend a period of time at each other's college.
- \* Exhibition exchanges. This seems to be the easiest and most fertile ground for early exchanges. Many exhibition possibilities were discussed including digital images used in printmaking or works on paper, fashion design and small metals and jewelry.

Emmanuel College began its relationship with the Hanoi Fine Arts College during the spring semester of 1998, by sending a student to study at the Hanoi Fine Arts University and continued in the fall of 1998, by having a faculty member from the Hue Fine Arts University in residence for the semester. This residency also included an installation at the Immig Gallery at Emmanuel College. Since 1988, Emmanuel College has also hosted many other artists and exhibitions from Vietnam.

The Maine College of Art and the Hanoi Fine Arts University successfully began their sister school relationship during the fall of 1998, with the exchange of two traditional arts students and continued in the spring with the exchange of a printmaking exhibition of work by faculty and students between the two schools.

In May/June Of 2000 the IAP led representatives from the four US colleges to Vietnam to tour the campuses of their "Sister Schools" and to hold discussions with administration, faculty and students there.

*Please contact IAP at 20 Webster Court, Boston, MA, phone (617) 527-5670, fax (617) 527-4934, <iap@tiac.net>, <www.indochinarts.org>*

# Vietnam After Twenty Eight Years

By Stewart Herman <herman@cord.edu>

[Ed. Note There have been many articles written by military veterans about returning to Vietnam, but little from those other American veterans, people who served in the country with religiously based humanitarian agencies.]

Since 1987 I have been teaching in the religion department at Concordia College, an (ELCA) Lutheran liberal-arts college. In March 2000 I returned to Vietnam for the first time in 28 years, to conduct research for a project on global business out of Concordia University in Montreal. I was apprehensive about the trip. From 1970 through 1972, I had worked in Quang Ngai with Vietnam Christian Service, an ecumenical relief and development agency; my task was to organize and sustain educational programs for refugees, a dispiriting task given the grinding destructiveness of the war. Often during the past three decades I have wondered about that war, and even written about its effects on Quang Ngai (see "Vietnam: Widening our Perspective", Christian Century, May 1, 1985).

So I wasn't expecting much as the jumbo jet touched down in a darkened Tan Son Nhut. Nor did the streets look much different on the way in. But as the days passed, I realized there *was* a difference. Let me report one overriding impression for those of

you who remember the war and still think you might want to return. I had heard all the yak-yak about how the Vietnamese people bear no grudges, love Americans, and so forth. And I found it hard to believe. But after a mere two and a half weeks there, my dominant, overriding impression was that Vietnam is a different country, psychologically speaking. The mood I remembered from the war was of tension and anxiety. The people I knew were preoccupied, worried, and sometimes clingy. Well, maybe more than sometimes. Now, It was a GREAT delight simply to travel around. After two weeks in Saigon, I took the train to Danang, then hired a honda to spend three days riding around Quang Nam and Quang Ngai. I talked with all kinds of people. They were remarkably relaxed, friendly, open, and best of all, dignified.

Never during the war could I conceive of Vietnam as a place simply to visit as a traveller. Now I wouldn't hesitate to go back in a more casual vein. This is not to suggest that the ghosts are gone. The official war cemeteries are ubiquitous, and open only to the politically correct; true reconciliation seems a long way off. I suspect there are many, many more people whose experiences I would want to sit down and listen to than I ever could engage in conversation, even if over half the population is too young to remember the war. But for shallower or deeper, I have shed my fear (yes, fear) of going back.

For the practical minded, note there are easy and cheap ways to get there; you needn't spend more than \$1100-1200 for airfare. You can ride around all day on a honda for \$25 or less, gas included. The taxis in Saigon are metered and the drivers are unfailingly polite. There are cyber cafes, even in Quang Ngai, where you keep in touch with home for a pittance.



A contingent in the 25th anniversary parade in Ho Chi Minh City on April 30th

# After Prolonged Suffering: A 21st-Century Agenda for US-Vietnam Reconciliation

by Andrew Wells-Dang

*[Editor's note: As Vietnam and the US marked the twenty-fifth anniversary of peace and the fifth anniversary of normal diplomatic relations, the final step has been taken towards normal economic ties. Following is a personal perspective on what has changed,, and what hasn't, by an activist and analyst from the new generation of NGO engagement.]*

The US-Vietnam trade agreement, signed on 13 July 2000 in Washington, represents a significant step forward in ties between the former enemies. Over three years in negotiation, the trade talks overcame Vietnamese hesitations, domestic US political opposition, and misunderstandings on both sides. Their successful conclusion opens the way for increased bilateral cooperation in a number of fields, as well as for President Clinton's planned visit to Hanoi in November.

Those of us in the nonprofit community who were divided or ambivalent over the recent China trade debate should have much less difficulty supporting the Vietnam agreement. First, the substance of the agreement is quite different. Vietnam is not yet being granted permanent normal trading relations (PNTR), let alone being admitted into the World Trade Organization. The agreement only sets very detailed timetables for removing discriminatory tariffs and other barriers—obstacles that the US applied to Vietnam for purely political reasons. Only four other countries—Afghanistan, Cuba, North Korea, and Serbia—lack an NTR agreement (Laos and the US negotiated a deal in 1997 that has yet to be submitted to Congress for ratification.) Second, Vietnam was given a double standard out of historical animosity and the die-hard opposition of the unreconstructed cold warriors, certain veterans groups, and an extreme section of the Vietnamese-American community. The trade agreement removes a critical Cold War-era roadblock to treating Vietnam as a country, not a war.

The ugly side of US-Vietnam relations was clearly visible during the media circus surrounding the 25th anniversary of the end of what Vietnamese call the "American War." During the weeks preceding 30 April 2000, much of the press attention focused on the past, not the present and future, sensationalizing the negative and underplaying the cooperation and growth that have been achieved since 1975. Meanwhile, Sen. John McCain's candidacy for the Republican Presidential nomination reopened old wounds and debates over civilian-targeted bombing and the treatment of prisoners of war.

For most of postwar history, the only issue Washington has taken seriously is one permeated with political myths and falsehood: the POW-MIA search. Initially an attempt to find live former

prisoners, the program, which still operates an office in Hanoi, has become a far-flung and expensive exercise in forensic anthropology. While a number of remains have been recovered from remote areas, many will of course never be found. No one appears much concerned, either, about the far greater number of missing Vietnamese, northern and southern, whose graves are completely unknown. Despite the clear discrimination—should one say racism?—inherent in the process, Vietnamese cooperation has been excellent, a fact acknowledged by President Clinton in a February 2000 review. It is a sign of the persistence of the "Vietnam syndrome" in the US that the MIA issue still forms, as William Cohen recently told the Los Angeles Times, America's "paramount" interest in Vietnam.

Despite the finalization of the trade agreement, therefore, it would be a mistake to consider US-Vietnam relations as reconciled or the legacy of the war put to rest. To begin with, the agreement must be ratified by Congress, as well as Vietnam's National Assembly, actions that are unlikely to happen before the November US election and the March 2001 Party Congress, respectively. Neither ratification appears to be at risk, but the agreement will face continued disagreement and debate, particularly on the US side. A Clinton visit, planned to follow the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit in Brunei, will also bring renewed attention to US-Vietnam ties.

For advocates of closer US-Vietnam ties, the next period offers an unparalleled opportunity to take the initiative and press for full reconciliation. In brief summary, our agenda should consist of, first, resolving the remaining war legacy issues that continue to plague the lives of both some Americans and many Vietnamese; and second, assisting Vietnam in its efforts to be a peaceful, open, and more equitable society. These goals are in broad agreement with the humanitarian and poverty reduction priorities of the Vietnamese government. Their realization depends in large part on responsible and compassionate American policies.

## The Hidden Legacies of War

Twenty-five years after troops from the north and from the National Liberation Front marched into Saigon and reunified the country, the effects of war persist under the surface—in some cases quite literally, in the form of soil contaminated with landmines, unexploded ordnance (UXO), and Agent Orange. In other cases, the effects are more subtle, stemming from unequal economic and power relationships. Normalization of relations and the trade agreement have had little direct effect on these issues, as the US has never accepted responsibility for the war and the devastation it caused. Humanitarian and economic assistance have

been shamefully inadequate. In the immediate post-war period, the Vietnamese government insisted on aid for "healing the wounds of war" as a condition for normalizing relations with the American aggressors. The text of the Paris Peace Agreement called for such assistance, and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger had made a verbal promise during negotiations to contribute to reconstruction after peace was achieved.

This Vietnamese position possessed a clear moral legitimacy. As no funds appeared, however, it became clear to the Vietnamese negotiators that the US had no real intention of ever paying for the damage it had inflicted. US policy has consistently viewed improved relations, trade agreements and the like as a gift, visible proof of America's generosity. And yet the gift is not free, but carries numerous conditions attached: improved market access for American goods, so-called "intellectual property rights," better treatment of refugees, freedom to search for remains of Americans missing in action, improvements in human rights and religious freedom. All of these are doubtless good things for Vietnam to consider, but to have them imposed as conditions rankles, given the historical background.

Since 1990, the State Department has provided limited funding to nonprofit organizations in Vietnam through USAID's War Victims Fund and Displaced Children and Orphans Fund. This approximately \$10 million in total grants should be applauded, but despite what many NGOs have achieved in Vietnam, USAID's efforts have still been pitifully small relative to the scope of Vietnam's postwar problems. The figure pales in comparison to the \$146 million in wartime debts contracted by the former South Vietnam, now being repaid to the US under a

1997 debt agreement. As US-Vietnam relations improve and Vietnamese policies towards NGOs become more open and transparent, the US should remove existing restrictions on foreign assistance to Vietnam and expand its existing programs, particularly in areas where the US bears a direct responsibility for the legacies of war.

In a small but significant step forward, a delegation from the State Department's Humanitarian Demining Office visited Vietnam in June and agreed to provide \$1.7 million in mine clearance equipment and technical support. Secretary of Defense William Cohen's landmark visit to Hanoi in March also has contributed to shifting US policy in more constructive directions. While not making any specific proposals or accepting US responsibility, Cohen did agree to discuss, for the first time, cooperation on landmines and Agent Orange. Progress in these related, yet distinct, areas is essential to a new reconciliation agenda.

### The Ongoing Scourge of Landmines and UXO

Vietnam remains one of the most heavily mined countries in the world, though it has received comparatively little attention in the international landmine campaign. The Ministry of Labor, War Invalids and Social Affairs (MOLISA) reported in September 1999 that 38,248 people have been killed and 64,064 injured by mines and unexploded ordnance (UXO) from the end of the war through 1998. These figures, while staggering, are probably significantly under-reported. Many victims, particularly in remote areas, do not receive medical or rehabilitative care. According to one survey conducted by Handicap International, 14% of all mine-caused amputees had not yet been born when the war ended.

Sources from the Ministry of Defense, published in *Landmine Monitor 2000*, estimate that 350,000 tons of mines and UXO (bom-min in Vietnamese) lay hidden in the soil, or more than 2% of a total of over 15 million tons used during the war. While precise data is hard to come by, the vast majority of this explosive material came from the US, either dropped from aircraft, scattered, or laid around border areas. The area of central Vietnam stretching from Quang Tri to Quang Ngai is generally considered to be the most seriously affected, though no



From left: Chief Negotiator for the US Trade Representative on the Bilateral Trade Agreement Joe Damond, Ambassador Pete Peterson, Minister of Foreign Trade Vu Khoan, and Vietnam's Chief Negotiator Nguyen Dinh Luong. at a celebration in Washington organized by the US Vietnam Trade Council.

comprehensive survey has been conducted to confirm this. While mine use was confined to military areas of the former South Vietnam, UXO can be found anywhere and at any time. The severe flooding in central Vietnam last November and December caused erosion in many areas, leading to mines and UXO being washed downstream. In two separate accidents following the floods in Quang Tri, three children were killed and three wounded by UXO in heavily traveled areas.

Mines also have an insidious economic effect: in some districts at least 10-15% of land is unusable for agriculture or other purposes, and has remained that way since 1975. People who once lived on this mined land eke out a living as shopkeepers and scrap dealers. Adults living in mine-affected areas are forced to accept this situation as normal and continue living permanently around mines and UXO. Children, without the experience of the war behind them, lack this background and are thus disproportionately at risk.

Vietnam has not acceded to the 1997 Mine Ban Treaty. However, the past several years have seen a significant thawing in Vietnam's policy and attitudes towards land mines, to the point where one official could tell the Forum on Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam in January 1999 that Vietnam's acceptance of the treaty is "a matter of time, not of principle." Until the US itself signs the Ottawa mine ban treaty and takes responsibility for the mines and UXO laid and dropped by the US military, however, the core problems remain unsolved.

Removing all the mines and UXO in Vietnam would take 10 to 30 years and cost a minimum of \$4 billion, according to the Ministry of Defense; care of mine survivors will cost millions in addition. Among three international organizations currently carrying out demining and resettlement programs in Quang Tri and Thua Thien-Hue provinces, PeaceTrees Vietnam is the sole American NGO. Several US-based organizations are engaged in assistance to land mines victims, including Vietnam Veterans of America Foundation and Vietnam Assistance to the Handicapped, supported by USAID. And a project of James Madison University's Humanitarian Demining Information Center, funded by the US State Department, carried out mine awareness outreach in Quang Tri from April 1999 to March 2000. The JMU project will be supplemented by a provincial mine education program with the participation of a number of NGOs.

### The Debate Over Agent Orange

In contrast to the landmine problem, the extent of which remains comparatively unknown outside Vietnam, the question of Agent Orange (dioxin) contamination has received much greater international press and scientific attention. Part of this difference results from the ongoing effects of toxic contamination over generations: as dioxin has a half-life measured in decades, children and grandchildren of those exposed during the war can still have extremely high concentrations of the poison in their systems. And

Agent Orange affects not only Vietnamese, but also US veterans and their families. Seventy-six million liters of the defoliant chemical were sprayed over more than 10% of the former South Vietnam from 1965 to 1971. Research by the Vancouver-based Hatfield Consultants, Ltd., uncovered high levels of contamination in remote areas of Vietnam untouched by other environmental factors.

The Hatfield Group, in cooperation with the official National Committee For the Investigation of the Consequences of the Chemicals Used During the Viet Nam War (10-80 Committee), released its preliminary results in October 1998. The study concluded that "[h]igh levels [of Agent Orange dioxin] were recorded in pooled blood from males and females over 25 years of age, and males and females 12 to 25 years of age. The detection of dioxin in the younger generation provides evidence that the [A Luoi] valley environment remains contaminated and dioxin is presently moving through the food chain into humans." Soil in the vicinity of former military bases and other military installations is likely to be most contaminated, since Agent Orange spraying was highest in these areas.

The Hatfield report also confirmed earlier studies linking dioxin exposure with birth defects in children. Vietnamese health studies have found significantly higher rates of early cancer and deformities in heavily-sprayed areas than in North Vietnam, where no spraying occurred (only bombing). The circumstantial evidence of children affected by Agent Orange is undeniably strong. These effects are nationwide, as soldiers and others exposed to spraying during the war returned to their home villages. Vietnam's Vice President, Nguyen Thi Binh, claimed in early March that the total number of victims, including veterans, civilians, and their offspring, is around one million.

These findings have sparked belated interest in Vietnam to assist victims of toxic contamination. The government now spends over \$2 million per year to support dioxin-affected children, says Nguyen Kien Cuong of the Ministry of Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs (MOLISA), "but the results are still far from expected." A Fund for Agent Orange Victims launched by the Vietnam Red Cross has raised \$780,000, slightly over half from foreign sources. And in late February 2000, the Prime Minister's office issued a declaration offering "special assistance to wartime victims of toxic chemicals," albeit only those who fought for the winning side.

The US policy response has so far been deafening silence. Dr. Michael Linnan, medical attache at the US Embassy in Hanoi, denies any causal link and downplays the correlation between Agent Orange spraying and birth defects. Linnan told a meeting of the American Chamber of Commerce in March that he prefers to view Agent Orange from "a scientific perspective," not involve it in politics. "Looking for truth in environmental exposure is an extremely ambiguous business...I can't say for sure" if people exposed to dioxin experience higher rates of birth defects. The US and other international donors, in Linnan's view, should emphasize general health of every child, rather than place any

special emphasis on Agent Orange or other war-related causes. During his Hanoi visit, Secretary Cohen promised to further investigate claims of Agent Orange damage, but resisted accepting any responsibility.

contamination “would have worldwide applications.” As Madame Binh recently told a group of visiting French journalists, “the US should take responsibility for resolving this issue.”

From an epidemiological standpoint, it is indeed very difficult to pinpoint the exact cause of a disorder. Until all other possible causes have been eliminated, one can never claim with 100% certainty that one discrete exposure was responsible. There could well be children labeled as “Agent Orange victims” who suffered their disabilities from other sources. However, it is misleading and evasive to claim that the truth of Agent Orange is therefore unknowable. Whether a particular individual was affected by dioxin or not, the aggregate data points clearly to the fact that many, many Vietnamese, and a significant but far smaller number of Americans, have been.

The US’s denial of responsibility for Agent Orange victims corresponds to similar dissembling in other cases of known toxic contamination around current and former US military facilities, including those in the Philippines, Okinawa and Puerto Rico. State Department and Pentagon officials have first tried to deny the existence or scope of a problem, then pointed to convenient legal technicalities as grounds for dodging any action. The logic behind this policy is clear: as officials state in private, accepting these costs worldwide would be extremely expensive. The US currently has no budget for overseas military base cleanup, while at least some regulations and funding exist for closed bases in America, many of which are also affected. More research is urgently needed, and as the Hatfield Group report concludes, comprehensive findings of Agent Orange and other chemical

**Highlights of the US-Vietnam Trade Agreement**

- Normal Trade Relations (formerly known as MFN), meaning neither country can treat goods from the other differently than goods from a third country. Vietnam already has NTR with almost all of its trading partners other than the US, and the US already grants it to all but four of its trading partners. NTR will still be subject to annual review by Congress (as, for example, China has been), thus it is not yet permanent (PNTR).
- National Treatment: As per the provisions of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), each country should treat foreign companies and imported goods the same as domestic ones under the law. Exceptions include television, banking, mining, telecommunications, transportation and fishing. Vietnam reportedly won concessions on the list of exceptions in late negotiations.
- Tariff reductions, from an average of 40% phased down to an average of 3% over a period of 3-10 years, depending on the item. For instance, Vietnamese clothing exports will fall from an average 68.9% to 13.4%; footwear from 33% to 5.6%.
- Elimination of most import and export quotas over periods ranging from 3-7 years for most items. Over 300 separate classifications of goods are listed in the agreement.
- US corporations and individuals can enter into joint ventures in Vietnam within three years, 100% ownership within seven.
- Agreement to follow existing conventions on intellectual property rights, including copyrights, trademarks and patents, superseding the copyright agreement signed in Hanoi in June 1997.
- Improved market access and other provisions for trade in services, following the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS).

*Sources: USTR, Vietnam Investment Review. The complete trade agreement text (nearly 200 pages) is online at <http://www.ustr.gov/new/text.html>.*

**Trade and Development:  
Building a Common  
Future?**

For the Vietnamese government, resolving differences with the US forms part of the national priority of economic development. Deputy Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung recently summarized this agenda as “poverty reduction, accelerating the market economy and boosting international integration.” But postwar political pressure in Washington has combined with debates in the Communist Party leadership to result in extremely slow accelerations and boosts. The US, on its part, has waffled back and forth between looking backwards to isolation and an emphasis on trade above all else.

The 1997 appointment and confirmation of Ambassador Douglas P. “Pete” Peterson has helped to clear the air. A former prisoner of war himself, Peterson, like other prominent veterans such as John McCain, brought undeniable credentials in the MIA and Viet Kieu communities. Ambassador

Peterson came to Hanoi with an explicitly trade-centered agenda. Rather than provide large amounts of direct assistance, which would be difficult to clear through vocal domestic constituencies, the US would invest its way out of history and bring prosperity to Vietnam. The Vietnamese would then possess the resources to resolve their own problems, including the lingering effects of war.

This new approach appeared to resonate well with the Hanoi government's own priorities. Nevertheless, the path to normal trade relations laid out by the US involved a series of steps and obstacles to be overcome, all on the Vietnamese side. The bilateral debt agreement signed by former Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin in 1997 was particularly hard for Hanoi to swallow, as it involved payback of war debts incurred by their former adversaries in Saigon. Rubin told his Vietnamese counterparts that debt repayment removed one of the most significant barriers to normal relations, explicitly linking it to wartime issues. "The signal sent by this agreement," he said, "will be important to the rest of the world in building confidence in Vietnam in a way that will benefit its economy. With Vietnam's continued cooperation in accounting for American POWs and MIAs, we look forward to working with Vietnam as it continues to make progress toward structural reforms, a market-based economy and regional and global economic integration." Cooperation could therefore only exist on a limited agenda predetermined by the US, towards goals outlined in advance: structural adjustment and globalization on US terms.

Even with favorable terms on debt and Vietnam's cooperation with the POW-MIA program, it still took a year of careful bargaining in the US before the Jackson-Vanik Amendment, tying normal trade relations to free immigration policies, could be waived for Vietnam. Another year elapsed before the ill-fated July 1999 "agreement in principle" on bilateral trade. The US and Vietnamese negotiators had, in fact, agreed, under heavy pressure from the US Trade Representative's office (USTR). When the document was translated into Vietnamese, however, certain sections became the focus of intense controversy, leading to a demand for re-negotiations. National Assembly Chairman Nong Duc Manh told a visiting Congressional delegation in February that "Vietnam always wanted to accelerate ongoing negotiations for [the] trade agreement," but the "more significant" problem still lay in "how to make the future agreement work properly."

Manh's hesitancy points to what may be a fundamental reorientation on Vietnamese foreign policy. While the trade agreement has sat on leaders' desks, the past few months have quickened a trend towards rapprochement with China. A border treaty was signed in December 1999 after years of negotiation. The Vietnamese press has been full of articles on high-level Chinese-Vietnamese meetings, traditional Lunar New Year greetings, and the historical "friendship" between the two Communist Parties. In the past, of course, the Chinese and Vietnamese have often been much less than friendly. But now the party leaders are coming together, for obvious reasons. They control similar "market-Leninist" systems, with comparable pressures of economic and social change and a common desire to preserve some measure of social stability which is seen to require maintaining a single party state. Just as importantly, both feel threatened by what they perceive as US "hegemony."

Kissingerian power politics would call for the US to play China and Vietnam off against each other, as in the 1970s. But even

these geopolitical calculations, void of humanitarian concern, have eluded present-day Washington policymakers. The US should view an emerging alliance between Vietnam and China as a significant foreign policy failure.

Vietnam, of course, has not lost its caution of China's millennia long regional ambitions, and conflicting territorial claims in the East or South China Sea remain volatile. Growing rapprochement with Beijing will be carefully balanced by ties with ASEAN and particularly with the bordering countries of Cambodia and Laos. Closer relations with Europe, Japan and especially with the US are an important counterweight to China, but not at the cost of acceding to the social and political paradigms proclaimed by countries which have sought to control Vietnam in the more recent past.

Vietnamese leaders' concerns over the bilateral trade agreement should not be explained away as obstructionism. Communist Party leaders wish to keep state-owned enterprises afloat as the leading sector in the economy in part to avoid the mass social dislocation and unemployment evident in the former Soviet Union. Some of the questions they are posing are the same as those asked by demonstrators at the World Trade Organization in Seattle, and at UNCTAD in Bangkok this February. Will national sovereignty be undermined by multinational interests? Is open access for corporate capitalism the only alternative? Can a nation that fought against the odds for its own independence and unity also succeed in resisting the worst features of global capitalist excess?

These questions have few easy answers. Advocates for peace and reconciliation with Vietnam should welcome the trade agreement on the whole, as it eliminates a portion of the double standard Vietnam has suffered, and since both the government and the majority of Vietnamese desire closer ties to the US. But just as normal relations did not automatically solve political disputes between the two countries, neither will increased trade solve the economic inequality which has arisen in part from the war and embargo. A trade agreement must also be complemented by a fairer trading system.

Normalization of relations with Vietnam has presented a golden opportunity to resolve the outstanding war-related issues of landmines, Agent Orange, trade and debt. Yet progress has been slow. True reconciliation takes time, and perhaps a new generation without the habits and memories of past policy mistakes. For reconciliation and full understanding between people to be achieved, the obstacles must first be cleared away. US policy often places the blame on Vietnam, but in fact many of the obstacles persist primarily on the American side. Removing these "landmines of the heart" forms our task for the next 25 years of peace.

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## TWENTY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY OF PEACE OBSERVED IN WASHINGTON AND NEW YORK

Key US and Vietnamese officials and representatives of American not-for-profit organizations working in Vietnam discussed current and future relationships between the two countries at briefings in Washington, DC on Wednesday, April 12<sup>th</sup> and in New York City one week later.

Both programs focused on the theme “after twenty-five years of peace, what has been accomplished, what does the future offer.”

Speaking in Washington at the historic headquarters of the National Woman’s Party, the Sewall Belmont House were

- Le Van Bang, Vietnam’s first post-war Ambassador to the United States
- Stanley O. Roth, Assistant Secretary of State, East Asian and Pacific Affairs

In addition panelists with substantial experience in Vietnam reflected on the current and future role of more than 100 U.S. institutions such as their own which are working in the country:

- Education: Allan Goodman, President, Institute of International Education
- Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs): David Elder, Director, Asia Programs, American Friends Service Committee; Convener, Forum on Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam
- Veterans: Ed Miles, Associate Director, Vietnam Veterans of America Foundation
- Vietnamese-Americans: Khoa Xuan Le, President Emeritus, South East Asia Resource Action Center
- Business: Virginia Foote, Director, US-Vietnam Trade Council

The meeting in New York on April 19<sup>th</sup> at the Institute of International Education included remarks by

- Ambassador Nguyen Thanh Chau, Permanent Representative of Vietnam to the United Nations.
- Marshall Bouton, Executive Vice President of the Asia

Society

- Frances FitzGerald, Pulitzer Prize winning author of *Fire in the Lake*

Speaking on their sector were:

- Business: Bradley LaLonde, Vice President, Financial Institutions, Citibank and its former Vietnam Country Manager
- Education: Peggy Blumenthal, Vice President, Institute of International Education
- Foundations: Geraldine Kunstadter, Chairman, Albert Kunstadter Family Foundation
- Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs): Ngan Nguyen, South East Asia Program Officer, Oxfam America
- Veterans: Steven Sherlock, Director, Aid to Southeast Asia
- Vietnamese-Americans: Dao Spencer, Vietnamese American Young Professionals Exchange

Both programs were moderated by John McAuliff, Executive Director, Fund for Reconciliation & Development, a member of an American NGO delegation which arrived in Hanoi on April 30, 1975, just as the last U.S. military and civilian officials were being evacuated from Saigon.

Representatives of additional not-for-profit organizations active with Vietnam briefly described their work at the end of each program.

The 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary events were organized by the Fund for Reconciliation and Development on behalf of the Forum on Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam and in cooperation with the Asia Society, the Institute of International Education and Vietnam Veterans of America Foundation.. Support was provided by the Albert Kunstadter Family Foundation. The Forum is an informal network of US and Canadian not-for-profit organizations working in Indochina. Descriptions of many of their programs can be found on the web at <[www.usirp.org](http://www.usirp.org)>



From Left: Ambassador Le Van Bang, Assistant Secretary of State Stanley Roth.  
To Rear: Ed Miles, VVAF

The Washington program was broadcast nationally on C-SPAN. A videotape copy is available for \$10 (see order form on inside back cover). The tape also includes portions of the New York program. The text of remarks by Ambassadors Bang and Chau and by Assistant Secretary Roth are also available on request, at no cost via internet and for \$1 by mail.

# A Perspective on the Development of US-Vietnam Relations

Remarks by Le Van Bang, Ambassador of Vietnam to the United States  
at the Twenty-Fifth Anniversary Program in Washington, D.C.

From 1979 to 1985 nothing happened in our relations but during that time we were still hopeful that the U.S. would see to some of the humanitarian issues and come to Vietnam.

By 1991 the road map was worked out. We had withdrawn from Cambodia already. The road map was not necessary but the U.S. State Department wanted to carry out the road map and I understand that at that time President Bush worked hard to improve our relations but he could not overcome those obstacles. And in 1992 before going out of office, President Bush allowed U.S. companies to set up offices in Vietnam hoping that later on they could do business.

When President Clinton took office we know that he took a very courageous decision to lift the embargo against Vietnam in 1994. And in 1995 he announced the establishment of relations.

The relations between our countries still have some issues at the moment but we now have an annual consultation between the State Department and the Foreign Ministry of Vietnam now going on. We have a dialogue on human rights between our two countries and we work very well on narcotic issues to prevent drug smuggling as well as other areas between our two countries. I think that diplomatic relations are going well, but we do not yet have state visits.

We have a military to military relationship, this we consider to be a modest relationship between our two countries. We should go step by step as these are very difficult and sometimes sensitive relations.

The United States has one billion dollars invested in Vietnam already and one billion in trade both ways for the last three years. About two hundred companies are using offices and

businesses in Vietnam, and we have the trade agreement ahead. I think that the potential for economic trade is not realized yet, but there will be better trade and investment in Vietnam for U.S. companies ahead.

I would like to say that relations between our two countries depend on many factors, but first I must say that Vietnam always wanted to be friendly with the United States. In 1945 we worked with the United States against the Japanese. In 1978 we wanted very much to have normalized relations with the United States and we missed it. And from 1986 up until now we are working very hard and we got it. So Vietnam sees that in the future we will have to work with the United States because we look to the U.S. for economic relations, for technological help, for management skill, and for funding for our economy. In the future, for a country like Vietnam it is not going to be easy to develop without the U.S.. I also think that it would always be better for the U.S. to have a relationship with Vietnam, because the United States thinks that better relations can help with peace and stability in the region, and can help business in the region that would be a benefit for American citizens.

Relations between our two countries are always influenced by outside factors, by relations between the United States and Russia, Japan, France, China, and many others, and I hope that this time around relations between our two countries will not be influenced by outside events and this will merit a result. And I think that the statements made by President Clinton, by Senator John Kerry, by Senator McCain, and Secretary Albright that the United States wants Vietnam to be stable and prosperous is a statement that all the Vietnamese people desire and want to be implemented.

*(transcribed by Tim O'Loughlin)*

## Late Breaking News

### Monsoon Floods Smash Indochina

Just as this issue went to the printer Associated Press on September 14th reported that unprecedented floods had left about 600,000 people homeless in Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos. At least 88 people had died in Cambodia and eight in Vietnam in floods and tropical storms since July, when seasonal rains came. The level of the Mekong River where it runs through the capital, Phnom Penh, was higher than at any time in the past 70 years.

In Geneva, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red

Crescent Societies appealed for \$1.13 million in international aid to help some 600,000 people left without homes or land by the floods. In a statement, the group said unusually widespread monsoon floods also are affecting major rice-producing areas of central and southern Laos, where at least four provinces have been badly affected and face food shortages.

To provide, or to obtain, updated information on the destruction and about the response by private and governmental organizations, send an e-mail to [usindo@igc.org](mailto:usindo@igc.org) or write to the

Following are three reports from panels at the Forum Conference held in Phnom Penh in January of 1999. Additional reports can be found in previous issues of Interchange.

## Water Resource Development: Economic, Environment and Resettlement Issues

**Moderator:** Jacquelyn Chagnon, Indochina Development Consultant,

**Panelists:** H.E. Mok Mareth, Minister, Cambodia Ministry of Environment

Soukata Vichit, Director General for Environmental Quality at STENO – Laos (Science and Technology Environmental Organization)

Chau Ba Loc, Vice Dean, Rural Development Department, Can Tho University

Nicolaas van Zalinge, Chief Technical Advisor, Mekong River Commission

### Mok Mareth, Cambodian Ministry for Environment

In 1996, the Cambodian Assembly ratified the Law of Environmental Protection with the support and assistance of a number of international organizations. The National Environmental Action Plan, called for in that law, addresses forest policy, fishery and agriculture in the Tonle Sap region, coastal fisheries, waste management, energy development and the environment, and biodiversity and protected areas. In addition, Cambodia participates in a number of international agreements, including the UNESCO Bio Reserves program and the ASEAN Agreement on Conservation of Natural Resources.

Environmental aspects with a potential major adverse impact on Cambodia's water resources include:

- “ Denigration of water quality in inland and fresh water sources as a result of excess human activity and its impact on aquatic ecosystems and biodiversity;
- “ Damning and diversion of the Tonle Sap as it effects aquatic ecosystems;
- “ Increases in water borne diseases,
- “ Increased pollution from poor disposal of hazardous wastes and increased pesticide use

“ Dry season water scarcity

In the Mekong and her tributaries, water quality has degraded, in part due to livestock farming which produces polluted waste waters. Deforestation poses another threat as communities encroach on the forest and land is cleared for farming.

Cambodia has laws and regulations designed to mitigate the effects of the above circumstances and threats to the water supply, but enforcement of these laws is hindered by the country's limited institutional capacity and insufficient political will to enforce regulations. The task of overcoming these barriers is more than Cambodia can undertake without international support. The Ministry of the Environment needs coordination and substantial nation wide education to pursue its goals. They also need more international support for the Mekong River Agreement to help maintain responsible use and protect Mekong water resources. The Ministry also needs help with training and capacity building on smaller, regional levels, and they need experienced support on assessment and implementation strategies.

The Ministry's specific objectives are as follows:

- “ Develop the capacity of States to develop and implement environmental policy.
- “ Formulate and implement environmental impact assessment
- “ Identify existing environmental deterioration in the Mekong River Basin and advise on and implement mitigation measures.
- “ Monitor environmental impacts of long term changes in terrestrial ecosystems
- “ Focus on environmental concerns in regional development plans
- “ Establish guidelines for the use of water and related resources and integrate social and economic considerations into use guidelines
- Develop and exchange environmental information systems
- “ Respond to unforeseen developments concerning environmental planning and management

“ Prioritize environmental issues and advise on solutions through environmental management plans

“ Develop a clear understanding between donors and the Ministry on how to implement funded programs, with particular attention to the associated ministerial capacity that makes projects viable and sustainable.

These goals are intended to compliment the Agreement on Cooperation for Sustainable Development of the Mekong River region signed by lower Mekong countries in April, 1995. In the context of further cooperation on environmental protection, points that warrant further consideration include: plans for the removal of pollutants, soil erosion and sedimentation issues, fisheries, biodiversity conservation and coastal management.

Cambodia’s sustainable development plan attempts to incorporate these issues and integrate cooperation to protect the Mekong River water and related resources, promote and support the fullest sustainable development while preventing wasteful use of Mekong resources. The plan aims to protect natural resources and preserve the ecological balance of the Mekong region from pollution and the effects of development plans and water use. The sustainable development plan also aims to improve management and interpretation of information about the region.

The Cambodian government supports sustainable use and protection of Mekong resources and water quality, and they encourage other governments to consider sustainable solutions as well. Ultimately dialog, understanding, sharing of experience, close examination and intentional cooperation is vital to sustainable use of the country’s water resources.

### **Soukata Vichit, Lao PDR**

Water is abundant in Laos. Rainfall, along with the Mekong River and her tributaries provide most of Laos’ water. Eight to ten percent of Laos is arable land, but because it is a mountainous country, only 39% of that is irrigable and only 20% is actually irrigated. The country also has an 18,000 megawatt hydropower capacity, 3% of which is currently being harnessed. Two new hydropower plants in the works will increase the harnessed capacity significantly.

Currently identified water sector priorities for Laos are fourfold. The country aims to export 3000 megawatts to Thailand by 2006, to increased irrigated land, and increase fishery production. A fourth priority is to increase access to safe drinking water, as only 70% of the urban population and 63% of the rural population has access to clean water.

Current legislation to address these priorities include the Water and Water Resource Law which will establish a Water Resource

Coordinating Committee. The law also aims to improve cooperation with the Lao environmental protection law. Organizations who are involved in water resource management include STENO, the Mekong River Commission, the Ministry of Agriculture and Fishery, the Ministry of Construction, the Ministry of Communication, and the Ministry of Industry, in addition to other agencies that are less directly involved. Under the new law, these groups would be coordinated by the proposed coordinating committee.

In the environmental sector, the Environmental Law and Supporting Decree are in draft form, so current projects are evaluated using international (ADB and WB) standards. In addition, a draft Environmental Management and Assessment Plan for Lao PDR is being reviewed by independent experts for social and environmental impacts. Environmental management and resettlement will cost the hydropower project \$100,000,000, a fraction of the total cost of the project. The Government has approved a policy for resettlement of those living in the area where the dam is to be constructed. Four thousand people in 800 households will be resettled at a cost of \$28 million. Resettlement was employed in an earlier project, so current plans are building on that knowledge.

Water is a vital resource, so the Water Resources Coordinating Committee was established to provide oversight of water resource management. Laos has also received ADB support for revision of its national water sector profiles that guide strategies and action plans. Water is plentiful, but effective management is still critical to development of Lao PDR.

### **Chau Ba Loc, Vice Dean, Rural Development. Department, Can Tho University**

Agriculture, rural development and water resources in the Mekong delta are very closely related. The Mekong delta supplies 50% of the country’s food production as well as fisheries production and export rice. It is a vital part of Vietnam’s agricultural capacity. During the August to October, the height of the wet season, flow can be five times higher than during the dry season, and low lying areas are subject to flooding throughout the rainy season.

Damage from flooding includes human loss, as people die every year in the floods. In addition, severe agricultural loss is experienced, with rice crops in low lying areas vulnerable, as well as fruit trees and garden crops in downstream areas, upland crops such as sugar cane, mung beans and soy beans, and farm animals potentially destroyed by the flooding. Property damage to housing, furniture and fishnets, as well as impacts on income generating activities contribute to the estimated 178 million Dong in household income lost to flooding.

The government has established national and local committees for prevention and relief as well as for prevention and mitigation of flood damage. People of Vietnam also have experience with floods that should be incorporated into planning. Some of the solutions to damages include better adaptation to flooding and flood prevention. Adaptation means cultivating flooding rice and appropriate varieties of rice that can survive flooding. Preventative measures can include canal and dyke systems, arrangements to pump water out, and elevated housing. Some problems and proposed solutions are that even with high development potential, the Mekong River Delta remains one of the poorest regions of the country, especially in remote areas. GDP of some delta areas is only half of the national average.

Human resources and education are an issue as well for the delta area. In the Mekong region, 45% of the labor force is illiterate and has only primary school education. The area has 47 vocational schools but only one university to serve 16 million people. There is a very urgent need to provide more education and vocational training in the delta.

Improving the sustainability of agriculture is a concern for this region as well. Natural resources management is directly related to the skills of a community as they effect locally appropriate technology use. Lack of skills and understanding contributes to pressure on environmental resources, including water resources. Environmental degradation in the region is caused primarily by pollution from bio-production and by excess use of chemical fertilizers.

The Mekong River Delta can no longer be described as a “natural system”. It is better described as a “production system,” and the elements of this system include forestry, rainfall rice, flooding rice, irrigated rice and gardens.

Ultimately water resources in Vietnam are deeply intertwined with a variety of environmental and human resource issues in the Mekong River Delta. Water resources in Vietnam are also closely tied to water resources in Laos, which shares the Mekong River.

**Nicolaas van Zalinge, Chief Technical Advisor, Mekong River Commission**

Mr. Van Zalange, spoke briefly to make the point that fisheries in Cambodia are vital to food security, employment and the national economy. Household surveys in Cambodia show that fish consumption is very high and that production on the order of 500,000 tons of fish per year is a significant source of income and sustenance for Khmers. Dams built since the 1950s have depleted water levels to a degree that cannot be mitigated through management, flood control and further dam building. In areas of Laos, too, fish provides 70-80% of protein intake, so water levels and potential effects of dams are relevant there as well.

One of the first queries from the audience observed that fish catches declined dramatically in 1998 and 1999, and wondered whether that decline was primarily due to expanded dam building and lowered water levels, rampant habitat destruction, or destructive use of illegal fishing methods that cause long term damage to the reproductive systems of surviving fish (i.e. electricity). Van Zalange declined to choose one as the most destructive, but argued that dams and irrigation have a long term effect on catches, while habitat destruction amplifies these effects and over fishing hurts population stocks. These factors combine to threaten fisheries.



H.E. Mok Mareth, Jacquelyn Chagnon, Chau Ba Loc and Soukata Vichit

Mok Mareth added that Land ownership is a significant issue in habitat destruction because for many years a nuance in Cambodian property law encouraged habitat destruction through incentives to farm public lands even if it meant destroying forests or open space in the process. Farmers who used land for farming were able to claim the formerly "unused" land as their own. The law was meant to allow farmers to utilize publicly held farmland, but it did not make a distinction between farmland and open space that was necessary to the ecosystem. A temporary elimination of the law means that no new deeds are being issued while the Ministry evaluates more sustainable policies.

### Questions

Questions from the audience addressed media education and the UNDP's environmental education program, as well as the level of community participation expected in environmental impact assessment processes.

Mok Mareth observed that all measures of the Mekong River Agreement welcome the participation of the public and hope to use the participatory process not only to seek input, but also as a vehicle for improved environmental awareness.

Another audience member raised the issue of dispute resolution within the Mekong River Commission on up vs. down river disputes and asked for an explanation of the adjudication process (which affects the three countries represented as well as Burma, Thailand and China). The four principles of adjudication were outlined as follows:

1. Ensure that there is sufficient clean water for the entire Mekong River population
2. Cooperation to prevent flooding
3. Recognition that pollution affects those down river and should never interfere with livelihoods of those living down river
4. Mekong Commission countries should cooperate to encourage sustainable development in the region.

Other discussion addressed the impacts of logging, and cooperation to address down river impacts of dams and pollution.

The final questioner observed that Laos is constructing a massive hydro plant primarily for export when there is a chance that there will not be a market in Thailand for that power because Thailand is in negotiation with other countries who are also interested in supplying power to Thailand. To this Mr. Vichit responded that it was indeed an open and valid question that Laos was continuing to negotiate with Thailand.

## Tapes available of the 9<sup>th</sup> annual conference of the Forum on Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam

Videotapes of the conference proceedings are available. The tapes are 6 hours each and cost \$20 (including US shipping). Tapes of only one of the plenary or panel discussions (2 hours each) listed below are also available for \$10 each.

### Tape One: Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam Country Plenaries

#### Tape Two: Non Country Plenaries

Opening Plenary, Lessons for transitional economies from the Asian economic crisis,

Plenary: Cooperation between international nonprofit organizations and host government.

Closing plenary: Headlines from sectoral groups and closing comments by the H.E. Lu Lay Sreng Minister of Information - Cambodia and H.E. Sok An Minister Council of Ministers - Cambodia, Executive Vice President Vu Xuan Hong - Vietnam and Vice Minister Khempheng Pholsena - Laos.

#### Tape Three: Day One Panel Discussions

a) Integrating multilateral and bilateral development agencies, foundations, nonprofit organizations and grass roots organizations into national plans.

b) International private business as a motor for development, source of philanthropic funds, and setter or subverter of labor standards

c) Grassroots organizations and their role in meeting development needs.

#### Tape Four: Day Two Panel Discussions

a) Addressing social evils at the grassroots: prostitution, trafficking of women and children, and drug addiction

b) Water resources development: economic, environmental and resettlement issues

c) The challenge of maintaining a system of primary and preventative health care in the provinces

#### Tape Five: Day Three Panel Discussions

a) Developing curriculum to meet new national needs

b) Food security and growth, modernizing agriculture and overcoming poverty

c) Grass roots efforts to address legacies of the war: landmines, UXO, birth defects and weapons proliferation.

# The Challenge of Maintaining a System of Primary and Preventative Health Care in Rural Areas.

**Moderator:** Nina McCoy, Country Director, Australian Red Cross – Vietnam

**Panelists:** Dr. Mam Bun Heng, Secretary of State, Cambodia Ministry of Health

Dr. Southsavienne Vilay, Chief of Administration and Secretary Hygiene Department, Lao Ministry of Public Health

Dr. Tran Trong Hai, Deputy Director, International Relations Department, Vietnam Ministry of Health

Barbara Lewis, War Victims Assistance Program, Consortium Laos

Stephane Rousseau, Executive Director, MediCam

## **Mam Bun Hong, Cambodia**

Cambodia remains one of the poorest countries, per capita income estimated at around \$300 US dollars, 39% of the population under poverty line. Right now, health care is in a period of relative stability and donor support, but the government has substantial health care challenges ahead. They want to reduce the infant mortality rate through maternal and child health care, but that priority is secondary to controlling communicable diseases (malaria, TB, others), controlling STDs, especially AIDS.

Demographic indicators lay out the demands of Cambodia's health care system. 52% of the population is male, and the country has a young population with an unusually high fatality rate. The rural population makes up 82% of the country and the mortality rate is one of the highest in the region. GDP growth is 6.5%, and the government spends per capita just a few dollars in US currency on health care.

The key aim of the HCP is to work towards:

.. equity in access to and utilization of basic quality health services by disadvantaged groups and those living in remote areas.

.. efficacy and cost effectiveness of healthcare system delivery

.. financial and functional sustainability of health care system delivery

Progress of Health Care in Cambodia:

- Coordinating Committee established
- Financial and budget reform
- Human Resource Development, ranging from formal education to management training
- Infrastructure—construction and renovation
- Services

Lessons from the Cambodian process:

The primary strengths of the process were political support from the government and intersectoral collaboration. The most notable constraints in the Cambodian process have been the difficulty of maintaining qualified staff in remote areas and the limitations of collaboration. The real challenges for the future of Cambodia's health care system will be improving the technical capacity of staff and continued monitoring and assessment.

The process must be dynamic and effective providers must be qualified and motivated and working in a well organized financial system.

## **Southsavienne Vilay, Chief of Administration and Secretary Hygiene Department, Lao Ministry of Public Health**

Health Policy of Laos:

- health and well being is a primary interest of the government.
- People should receive health care in their own community
- the Delivery system must be effectively implemented.

In Laos, health care providers are plentiful per capita, but they are concentrated in cities and scarce in rural areas. The main problems faced by the Lao health care system are organization and planning, financing and resources (2-3% of GDP goes to health), and integration and coordination of outside resources. In addition, to increase capacity, Laos needs to educate health personnel both in Laos and abroad, and study abroad requires foreign language fluency, usually English, so English proficiency is the first step health care training.

The first priority of the health system is to bring health care to the villages—right now only 17% have reliable access to a health

care center. There is also a move afoot to reform the education curriculum of Health Care workers nation wide and, more generally to address the nationwide shortage of health care workers. Finally, he observed that the most significant sources of outside funding are UNICEF and INGOs.

**Tran Truong Hai, Deputy Director, International Relations Department, Vietnam Ministry of Health**

Vietnam's health care system is organized on four levels: at the central level there are the government departments and ministries, including the International Cooperation Department; at the provincial level there are provincial health services; primary health care is provided at the district level and commune health stations provide local assistance.

The primary objectives of the ministry of health for 1999 and 2000 include reducing morbidity and mortality by improving community health, as well as making primary health care and referrals more accessible to poor people in Vietnam. The third primary objective is to enhance preventative and corrective care management.

To fulfill these objectives, some measures have been identified thus far. Control of epidemics, particularly a nationwide project for the control of dengue, as well as of tuberculosis, and HIV which are on the rise in and out of Vietnam. TB, in particular, was thought to be under control and it is very disturbing to see it on the rise and clearly not controlled. Disease eradication through vaccinations is another measure that has been identified, to decrease new cases of polio and other disease for which vaccines are available. To reduce goiter, a national iodized salt program is in the works.

In addition to disease reduction and eradication, measures will be taken or are being taken to increase available community health stations, as 10% of communes have no stations on priority is to establish stations in those regions. User fees and health insurance will also have to be better addressed in the long run, to efficiently fund the system with special attention paid to making health resources equally available to poor people. Other approaches to improving efficiency within the system include appropriate management to maximize use of doctor's skills as well as community programs to get doctors in to community health stations.

Some of the major challenges to implementing the above outlined measures are that income is very low in Vietnam, and social divisions

mean that poor people have much less access to services. Lack of technicians and equipment prevents efficient service provision, and the national budget allocation is too low. Presently the government spends 3% of the budget on health care—the health ministry would like at least 5%. The ministry would also like to improve the living conditions of health care workers to attract more providers.

Despite these challenges, the health ministry does enjoy substantial political support from the government of Vietnam, and past experiences have taught them much about what does work well. Also, some indicators are improving in Vietnam—infant mortality and low birth weights are on the decline.

Vietnam needs or can best utilize outside NGO support in training providers to treat the severely disabled, nutrition assistance, reproductive health and HIV/AIDS prevention, and health care equipment.

**Barbara Lewis, Laos Consortium**

The Laos Consortium is engaged primarily in tertiary health care within the hospital system in rural areas of Laos. Ms. Lewis works with the War Victim's Assistance Project, which works in a single region in Laos, but UXO impacts that health care system nationwide, so their experiences apply to the whole country to some degree. Lack of resources, compounded by the damage caused by bombing have left the health care system without an infrastructure, and the system is further strained by the demands of treating UXO injuries.

Other Laos Consortium projects include primary care in the form



*Showing teeth by I hang, age 21 (see Street Vision page 11)*

**CONFERENCE REPORT IV**

of opium detox in Luang Prabang and other projects in other regions of the country. The challenge for any project that the Consortium undertakes is to make that project sustainable into the future, beyond Consortium involvement. Programs, including the War Victim's Assistance Project proceed in phases. The first phase includes mapping a plan and identifying true needs as well as responding to issues like how to best use donations or incorporate donated technology. In the second phase ownership is shifted closer to the community, and staff participation at all levels is increased. Capacity building, to prepare local staff to be more involved in project management. A Project Management Committee follows up on the year's work plan and oversees working groups including training, equipment, which addresses equipment needs by assessing use and gaps in use, hospital rehabilitation, which attends to construction of emergency rooms and surgery rooms, and a pharmacy committee which works on cost recovery and management training. A fifth group works on issues specific to war victims. In developing this system, the consortium worked closely with its government counterpart, the National Rehabilitation Center and with the Ministry of Health and the Department of Curative Medicine and the Department of Public Health. The goal of this cooperation was ensuring that inputs are sustainable and that the project will continue to serve war victims beyond the NGOs involvement.

### Stephane Rousseau

Cambodia's health coverage plan was completely restructured and is now based on operational health districts. The Ministry of Rural Development works at the village level, while the Ministry of Health works at the operational health district level. In Cambodia, "maintaining," as used in the title of this panel, is hardly accurate, as a system has to be totally developed, almost from scratch. Laos and Vietnam had similar experiences emerging from war, but Cambodia has the added experience of Khmer Rouge genocide that left the country without doctors.

#### Challenges to Reform and Restructuring

The major bottlenecks to national health reform are the skills of health professionals and the salary or lack thereof available to health care providers.

The concept of quality care can differ between health professionals and the community. The difference is a place that the private sector has a hold on, so it is important to work on rural communities' conceptions of quality and understanding of quality health care. Community participation, thus, plays a significant role in approaching reforms. Community participation, though, is jeopardized by the basic demands of poverty—housing, food, etc. Sustainability of the system is another challenge—it must be well established, but this requires constant and consistent funding.

Another challenge is incorporating NGOs into the national health policy. NGOs usually try to maintain and defend their independence, but the Ministry of Health is open to input from NGOs, and when they are invited to participate in policy planning, it is easier to incorporate them into the national health plan.

A final important challenge to address is the difficulty of law enforcement. The Ministry of Health works hard to prepare a system, but it then has to implement it and enforce laws.

### Questions

The first question was on what the three countries are doing to control mosquitoes and mosquito borne diseases such as dengue and malaria.

Speakers from Laos and Cambodia responded. In Cambodia, people living in areas once controlled by the Khmer Rouge had been out of reach of the government for many years, and malaria is most endemic in these areas. The government is undertaking programs to reach out to these areas with education on causes and prevention of malaria, but better research on drugs is also vital to controlling these diseases. Outreach, though, is the most essential component of control, especially to border regions where people historically have not taken precautions.

In Laos, 80% of people are in remote areas and forest covers more than a third of the country. Because people dislike nets, they do not sleep under them. Outreach and education are necessary to helping people understand the importance of nets, but Laos needs external financial assistance to establish better health education. As a side note, Mr. Vilay added that AIDS control and health education are difficult in Laos because people are embarrassed about sex and won't talk openly about it. So health education needs in Laos are broad and should address a variety of diseases and health care issues that are presently problematic in Laos.

Another question addressed involvement of the private sector and how the governments can and should preserve access to health care for poor people while they are doing business with the private sector. Dr. Mam Bun Hong responded that Cambodia's user fees guarantee care for the poor because the government cannot maintain services without money, so those who can pay must subsidize care for the poor. In Laos, it is a budgeting issue. User fees and cost recovery mechanisms cannot be the objective of the system because it will not solve the ultimate problem, and poverty is complex and in many regions, seasonal.

# Grass Roots Efforts to Address the Legacies of War: land mines, unexploded ordnance, birth defects, weapons proliferation

Moderator: **Richard Walden, Operation USA**

Panelists: **Sam Sotha, Director, Cambodia Mine Action Center**

Janet Ashby, STAR Kampuchea facilitator working on small arms issues in Cambodia

Bounpong Sayasenh, National Program Director for UXO Lao

Marc Bonnet, Director, Handicap International - Cambodia

Luc Delneuveille, Coordinator, Handicap International - Laos

Dr. Le Cao Dai, Director, Agent Orange Victims Fund, Vietnam Red Cross,

support from ministries across the administration, from Women to Finance, as well as from the military.

Mines in Cambodia are centered in the western regions, but scattered everywhere. The ultimate goal of CMAC is to reach a point where people can go about their lives without fear of mines. To reach that final goal, the Cambodian Mine Action Center employs 3000 people on mine clearance, UXO clearance, mine mapping, and mine awareness teams that travel and present information in areas where casualties are high. CMAC uses both manual demining and aerial reduction, and mapping teams work with villagers to identify mine sites and keep people out of mine fields. While mines are concentrated in the west, UXO is a problem in the eastern regions where millions remain from bombing in the 70s.

## **Richard Walden, Operation USA**

Humanitarian groups and the military have a complex relationship in meeting the needs left by the wars. 1998 was an amazing year in terms of funding and attention, but where do we go from that peak?

Some of the international and US agencies who are doing under addressed work on mines include the National Laboratories of the DOE (US) and NASA, who are exploring the possible use of radar in mine detection. In addition, UNESCO operating out of Paris, who were primarily an environmental group during the cold war when Russia and China used UNESCO as a vehicle for scientific exchange with the west, is now using its experience with scientific exchanges to explore a number of technologies with potential for mine detection.

One of the issues faced by all groups working on the legacies of war, is keeping research budgets separate from mine awareness and prosthetics needs.

## **Sam Sotha, CMAC**

Cambodia is one of the most highly mined countries in the world and the mines are a major obstacle to development. Injuries and deaths from UXO and mines are down substantially from the early 90s, but they remain far too high. CMAC began in 1993 with international support, and a 1995 Royal Decree established the Center within the government. CMAC receives

## **Janet Ashby, STAR Kampuchea**

Light weapons are a legacy of war like UXO and mines, but unlike these, light weapons are mobile instruments of future oppression. The work stage for small arms is very different as well, as they get much less attention. In the UN the focus has historically been on missiles and large arms, but in 1995 Boutros Boutros Ghali tried to assess the impact of small arms around the world and turned some heads towards the legacy of light weapons after a conflict. Small arms are also a relatively new issue. During WWII, arms were heavy enough that they were returned at the close of the conflict, but new technology has made them infinitely more durable and portable and they get passed out and saved by various sides and can survive conflicts again and again.

Some statistics on light weapons: 90% of war fatalities are civilian, guns are easily trafficked and quickly incorporated into drug and prostitution trafficking rings. Governments are encouraged to sell small arms by the promise of quick cash. We know that international trafficking is a problem because weapons that can be traced to Cambodia are appearing in Sri Lanka. There are an estimated 500,000 weapons in Cambodia, and registration and licensing laws are not enforced. Within Phnom Penh, some efforts have been made to collect weapons but these are new and centered in the capital. An AK-47 can run as cheap as \$5 or 6 and ammunition is plentiful. Where guns are readily accessible, they become the first line of negotiation or dispute resolution. The endemic use of firearms affects society, effects the valuation of life and the meaning of justice.



uses a similar strategy as mine detection. Detectors make a decision about whether they can diffuse the ordinance or they call in a team with special training capable of safely removing UXO.

### Le Cao Dai

During the second independence war, from 1961 to 1971, Agent Orange was sprayed over Vietnam by the millions of liters. Spraying was primarily confined to South Vietnam, but Laos and Cambodia were also exposed. People living in South Vietnam during the war, as well North Vietnamese who were fighting in the south were effected by dioxin in Agent Orange. Blood samples show evidence of the effect in dioxin levels that are as much as four times higher in northern soldiers who fought in the south than in the general population in Hanoi. Exposure is evident throughout the South Vietnamese population as well. Birth defect rates are significantly higher in the exposed population, and the defects are seen being passed on through several generations. Grandchildren of the exposed population are starting to be born and defects continue to be significantly higher in children born as late as 1997 and later.

Malformations as a result of dioxins take a range of appearances, from critical malformations such as cleft palates, cleft lips or club feet to severe malformations such as mental retardation.



Sunway Hotel in Phnom Penh site of 9th Forum Conference

Dr. Dai showed several videos on the effects of Agent Orange, one of which discussed the American soldiers who left the war unharmed and are beginning to experience effects of the dioxins they were exposed to. Americans who spent a year or two spraying dioxins have slightly higher levels of dioxins, but Vietnamese have had substantially longer exposure to Agent Orange. About 100,000 children have disabilities linked to exposure, and the Vietnamese government set up a fund to research the effects of Agent Orange and aid families suffering from exposure. The fund provides treatment and education to children experiencing the effects of the dioxins.

### Observations

As a closing thought, the common thread in all presentations is that nearly 25 years after the war, the victims are still there and there are continually new victims.

Marc Bonnet, working in Cambodia, added that victims of all these effects are victims for life and cooperation between agencies and the government is vital to see issues a global way and to identify and effectively address all issues. In Cambodia, the Visibility Action Council takes a global view of issues faced by all victims.

### Questions

One participant observed, as an addendum to Dr. Dai's presentation, that from early 1960 through 1973, Laos also experienced heavy defoliation but there are no records. Laos and Cambodia both need dioxin research desperately. A number of other questions emerged from the presentation on Agent Orange, as to whether lingering dioxins are sufficient to affect new people (they are not) and how Vietnam has benefited from research in the US on Agent Orange. Dr. Dai observed that scientific exchange has been limited primarily by lack of support from the US. Another participant observed that Dow Chemical settled years ago in the US and vets who worked with dioxins received compensation from Dow, and wondered if Vietnam had addressed such a possibility. The Red Cross, however, as Dr. Dai observed, is a humanitarian organization that has not been involved in such negotiation.

As a final point, one participant stressed the importance of finding balance between meeting humanitarian needs and finding justice and preventing recurrence of the problem.

# 10<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Forum to be Held in Vientiane June 2001

Representatives of the governments, oversight organizations, and international and domestic NGOs from Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam met this past June in Vientiane, Lao PDR to prepare for the next international conference of the Forum on Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam.

At the planning meeting the theme was selected of "Improving Partnership for Poverty Alleviation and Sustainable Development." The draft agenda was approved. In response to comments after the previous conference in Phnom Penh, this agenda allows for more substantial discussion time after panels as well as longer sectoral group working meetings.

Over the next several months the draft agenda will be reviewed for further comment and fine-tuning by the international development and academic exchange community and their host country counterparts. The Forum coordinators also welcome suggestions of possible speakers and facilitators for the panels as well as coordinators for the sectoral groups. Lao authorities have confirmed that the conference will be held in Vientiane in June of 2001, but the exact dates probably will not be set until early in the new year.

The conference is designed to be a working meeting of international NGOs, foundations, universities, and businesses that have already recognized programs with their counterparts and government officials from Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam. Similar institutions with a serious interest in beginning programs of humanitarian aid, development, exchange and investment are invited to apply for observer status at the conference.

The Forum is a loose network of international not-for-profit and business institutions having programs of cooperation with Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam. After holding eight conferences in the US beginning in 1989, the Forum met in the region for the first time in January of 1999 in Phnom Penh, bringing together 450 representatives of international and host country organizations and institutions. The Fund for Reconciliation and Development provides administrative support for the Forum.

The initial planning stage of the 10th Forum Conference has been made possible by a generous grant from Oxfam America.

*Please forward comments and suggestions to Susan Hammond, Conference Coordinator. Email <frdev@msn.com>, Fax 212-367-4366, Phone 212-367-4220, or mail to Forum on Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam, c/o Fund for Reconciliation and Development, 475 Riverside Drive, Suite 727, New York, NY 10115*

## *Draft Agenda*

Proposed Theme: Improving Partnership for Poverty Alleviation and Sustainable Development

### **Sunday**

12:00 p.m. Registration [Conference Hall]  
[optional] Sight seeing

Set-up of displays of development projects, handicrafts, and information tables in Conference Hall

### **Monday**

a.m. and p.m. [optional] Site visits (NGO and mass organization projects, government offices, universities))

9:00 a.m. Displays open to non-conference participants (until 11:30 a.m.)

12:00 p.m. Registration

12:00 Display opens

5:30 p.m. Reception

7:00 p.m. Dinner

### **Tuesday**

8:30 a.m. Welcome by organizers

9:00 a.m. Lao Country Plenary

10:30 a.m. Coffee break

11:00 a.m. Sectoral Groups I (introductions, agenda setting)

12:30 p.m. Lunch



Lao Cultural Center, proposed site of the upcoming 10th Conference

2:00 p.m. Panels I

Panel A: Implementation of the International Convention on the Rights of the Child at provincial and local level.

Panel B: Building effective cooperation between humanitarian and development organizations and government structures.

Panel C: The role of women and their challenges in social and economic development

Panel D: Social Responsibility of Business in poverty alleviation and sustainable development

3:30 p.m. Coffee break

4:00 p.m. Panel questions and discussion

5:00 p.m. Free time

Dinner on own

7:30 p.m. Cultural Program (open to family members or additional staff of organizations attending the Forum)

### Wednesday

8:30 a.m. Vietnam Country Plenary

10:00 a.m. Coffee break

10:30 a.m. Sectoral groups II (main working session)

1:00 p.m. Lunch

2:30 p.m. Panels II

Panel A: Cooperative assistance to communities affected by landmines, UXOs and Agent Orange

Panel B: Patterns of development at the local level: strengthening traditional rural economic life while connecting to the new market economy

Panel C: Addressing the social and economic impact of HIV/AIDS

Panel D: Innovative agricultural techniques

4:00 p.m. Coffee break

4:30 p.m. Panel questions and discussion

5:30 p.m. Free time

6:30 p.m. Reception with embassies and multilateral organizations

7:30 p.m. Dinner

### Thursday

8:30 a.m. Cambodia Country Plenary

10:00 a.m. Coffee break

10:30 a.m. Sectoral Group III (conclusions, recommendations)

12:30 p.m. Lunch

2:00 p.m. Panels III

Panel A: Best practices in building the capacities of partners

Panel B: Addressing the emerging youth problem

Panel C: Roles of community in environment protection

Panel D: Strengthening higher education and vocational training to address the social and economic development.

3:30 p.m. Coffee break

4:00 p.m. Panel questions and discussion

5:00 p.m. Free time

7:00 p.m. Banquet with wrap-up speeches by heads of delegations and organizers [Mekong restaurant?]

9:00 p.m. Social/cultural event (with Lam Vong instruction)

### Friday

Distribution of Sectoral Group Reports and Recommendations

[Optional] Field trips to development projects, UXO sites and Teachers Training colleges in provinces; tourism to Luang Prabang



Fashion show put on by the Sinxay Cultural Club, a Vientiane youth organization, for participants in the planning meeting for the 10th Conference of the Forum.

## Sectoral Groups

The working core of the conference are three daily meetings of people who are involved in the same sector in the three countries, whether they represent a government agency, mass organization, local NGO, professional association, foundation, university, multilateral development agency, bilateral donor, business or international NGO. Sectoral meetings offer an opportunity to profit from each other's experience, develop means of ongoing communication and consider cooperative projects and exchanges. The list of groups will be expanded or contracted according to interest. Groups may merge with those having overlapping interests or divide for discussion of more specialized needs. Discussions may continue informally during the lunch break.

The following sectoral groups are expected to be offered. Participants must choose one (and only one) of the following for all three days.

1. Agriculture, Fisheries and Irrigation
2. AIDS/HIV/STD
3. Community Development (sub-divided into groups as needed)
4. Disaster Preparedness and Relief
5. Education: Pre-School, Primary
6. Education: Secondary, Vocational
7. Education: University, Graduate Work, Research, Exchanges, Distance
8. Education: Foreign Language Teaching
9. Environment, Ecology Restoration
10. Fostering Entrepreneurship
11. Health: Primary Health Care and Reproductive Health
12. Integrated Rural Development
13. Labor, working conditions
14. Land: pressures of population and legal issues
15. Legacies: land mines, UXO, Agent Orange
16. Micro-credit, Economic Development
17. Nutrition and Child Survival
18. Private Investment, Trade and Tourism
19. Process of developing funding proposals by national, provincial and district government and private



Agricultural workers march for the 25th anniversary in Ho Chi Minh

- institutions to international donors (including international NGOs).
20. Services for and with people with disabilities
  21. Social and Economic Development in Remote Areas
  22. Trafficking of women and children
  23. Women's Organizations and Priorities
  24. Other \_\_\_\_\_

*To receive special mailings about the conference, please return this form to the Forum c/o FRD*

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Organization \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Postal code \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Fax \_\_\_\_\_ e-mail \_\_\_\_\_

We currently have recognized programs in

\_\_\_ Cambodia \_\_\_ Laos \_\_\_ Vietnam

We are interested in beginning to work with

\_\_\_ Cambodia \_\_\_ Laos \_\_\_ Vietnam

in the field of \_\_\_\_\_

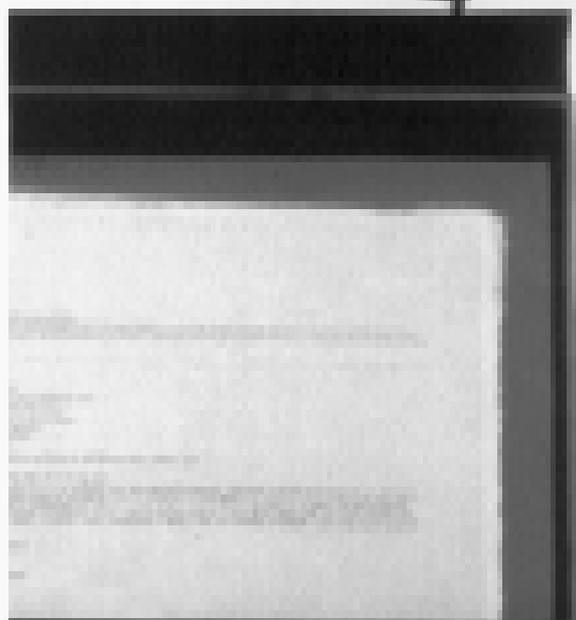
Circled are the most convenient meeting dates and crossed out dates are impossible for our organization:

June 5-7      June 12-14      June 19-21      June 26-28

\_\_\_ Attached are suggestions for panel speakers, facilitators and/or sectoral group coordinators (please be specific re role and topic).

# AN ARTIST'S PORTRAIT OF HO CHI MINH

by C. David Thomas and Charles Fenn



In spite of the fact that Ho Chi Minh is an easily accessible name for many of the more important leaders of the twentieth century, the first book published in the United States on Ho Chi Minh was Charles Fenn's 1971 biography titled *Ho Chi Minh: Before and After*, the only other biographical work on Ho Chi Minh by an American author was David Halberstam's 1971 book titled *Ho Chi Minh*.

After more than twenty five years this book by biographer Charles Fenn and artist C. David Thomas is a result of the collaboration of these two people, a highly qualified to undertake this important project.

This book includes passages from a fictional "diary." As far as we know, Ho never kept a journal diary. The passages included in this work of imaginative reconstruction do not create a record of his personal engagement with the events of his time. The "diary" is based on historical documents but should not be taken literally. Although fictional, the "diary" is based on factual information found in the history of each page. Also included are passages from *From Quang*, a collection of poems written by Ho Chi Minh while he was in prison in China in 1942-43 as well as two stories told by Mr. Vu Ho and Mr. Trinh Duong Binh, one of Ho's closest associates, and poems by several of Vietnam's leading poets.

This book contains 118 pages (59 text pages and 59 image pages) and is printed in a limited edition of one hundred with two artist's proofs. Each book is numbered and signed by C. David Thomas and Charles Fenn. The books are printed on Vietnamese (or Cambodian) paper hand made in Dong Xa Village in northern Vietnam. The text pages have been translated. The images are printed from a Hoeberl Packer Dinkler 7000. The text is printed by Interspace in Phnompenh, Cambodia. While Halberstam is Portland, Maine. Each book is presented in a handmade lacquer box made by craftsmen in the Hanoi area. The lacquer box is contained in a handmade cloth cover also printed made in Vietnam. The current price for this collector's edition is \$2400. Thirty percent of the sale price will be used to continue the work of the Indochina Arts Partnership.

A limited number of spiral bound digital copies of the book are available at \$2500 (plus \$5.00 shipping and handling). These copies are signed by Charles Fenn and C. David Thomas and contain all 118 pages with five color and 54 black and white images.

For information on both the collector's edition and digital copy, please contact the Indochina Arts Partnership, 20 Wilbur Court, Newenham, MA 02458, Tel. (417) 527-9076, Fax. (417) 527-4494, E-mail: [info@iaa.net](mailto:info@iaa.net).

The entire book can also be seen on the web at [www.hochiminh.org](http://www.hochiminh.org).

# The Cuba Pages

(*A Child Shall Lead Them* from cover)

A similar pattern developed this year during legislative battles before the summer recess. Senate sentiment was displayed in the 79-13 margin to pass the current Agricultural Appropriations Bill with a food and medicine amendment sponsored by Byron Dorgan.

However, in the House, George Nethercutt, the leader of proponents of trade in food and medicine, was forced by the Republican leadership to accede to a “compromise” cheered by Miami’s Cuban American ultras. Never the less, the true sentiment of the House was dramatically demonstrated on July 20th when a hotly debated amendment to the Treasury Department Appropriations Bill to prevent enforcement of embargo provisions affecting sales of food and medicine was adopted by a rare 3 to 1 margin (301-116).

Perhaps more surprising, and ultimately of greater significance, the House also voted by a respectable margin (232-186) to bar use of Treasury Department funds to enforce travel restrictions. Should all Americans be allowed to travel freely to Cuba, either by legislative act or Presidential decree (see page 2), the empty shell of the embargo policy will soon collapse.

Within hours of these votes, the House and Senate Republican leadership had stripped both amendments from the Conference Report. However, the legislative battle will continue during the brief session before the election recess. It is certain to emerge again when the new Congress is seated in January. Should the Democrats win the House or Senate, the inclination to thwart the will of the Members will presumably change. (The House debate and vote record can be found in the July 20<sup>th</sup> Congressional Record, available on line at <http://Thomas.loc.gov>. For timely advisories on the legislative front, contact Mavis Anderson of the Latin America Working Group [manderson@lawg.org](mailto:manderson@lawg.org))

Offsetting too great a sense of optimism is the record on Cuba of the major party Presidential candidates. Both Vice President Al

Gore and Governor George W. Bush ignored national public opinion to line up with extremist Cuban American attitudes in Florida, a key voting bloc in a swing state—and the source of substantial campaign contributions. Vice Presidential candidate Joe Lieberman has a long history of closeness to (and funds from) Cuban American hard liners. Only Dick Cheney’s business orientation has produced glimmers of public skepticism about the counterproductive character of a unilateral embargo. The Party platforms, however, approach Cuba in fundamentally different ways (see page 40).

Certainly the unanimous vote to end the embargo on September 7<sup>th</sup> in Milwaukee by the annual convention of the “staunchly conservative and patriotic” American Legion, the largest US veterans organization, is another indication that national political leaders are out of step with the American people. The Legionnaires did put in an unrealistic but non-specific condition, that “the Cuban government takes positive action towards a more open and free society”, but their fundamental logic was that Cuba should not be treated differently than China or Vietnam.



At least theoretically President Clinton could change the parameters of the national Cuba debate during his last months in office by using his authority to end all travel restrictions. His successor theoretically could restore travel restrictions after January 20<sup>th</sup> (and the holiday travel season), but he would have to make the case about why in 2001 that was in the national interest. And by then tens if not hundreds of thousands more Americans will have taken the opportunity to see for themselves. The next President may also welcome the de facto space to move on given by his predecessor’s willingness to take the heat from Miami.

—John McAuliff



# A LOOK AT NGO WORK IN CUBA

The following summaries describe some of the organizations that Executive Director John McAuliff, and Bela August Walker, then Program Associate for the US-Cuba Reconciliation Initiative, met during their January trip to Cuba. The information was gathered from the meetings in Cuba, as well as taken from various descriptive materials received there, both from the organizations themselves and produced by the Centro de Estudios Europeos.

## Federación de Mujeres Cubanas

Founded in 1960, the Federation of Cuban Women (FMC) is a mass organization, with a membership consisting of 82% of all Cuban women over the age of fourteen, or over 3.6 million. In 1996, they received consultative status in the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the United Nations. FMC works to promote the participation of women in all realms and levels of society, and to raise the standard of living for Cuban women and their families. Functioning out of 14 provincial offices with 76,000 grassroots organizations, FMC is active in all parts of Cuban life, from increasing representation of women in the National Assembly to promoting breast-feeding and sex education. Their neighborhood Casas de Orientación a la Mujer y la Familia, or Orientation House for Women and Family provide a variety of services, including AIDS education, psychiatric assistance, domestic violence services, self-esteem workshops, as well as various training programs designed to facilitate economic independence for women, classes which range from hairdressing and French to computing and marketing. FMC also has an investigation center, that conducts academic studies of the position of women in Cuban society. FMC continues to look for additional support from international NGOs, for program assistance. They have worked primarily with European organizations and UN departments.

Contact Information: Tamera Columbié Matos, International Cooperation, Federación de Mujeres Cubanas, Calle Paseo #260, Vedado; telephone: 53.7.66.2245, 55.3540; fax: 53.7.33.3019; <fmccu@ceniai.inf.cu>.



## Centro Memorial Martin Luther King

The Martin Luther King Memorial Center (CMMLK) was founded in 1987 as a macro-ecumenical organization of Christian origin to promote socio-theological reflection, popular education, service to the community and the promotion of international solidarity. The Center organizes around the areas of social justice, peace, solidarity, and natural rights. Their community service projects center on housing, the elderly, popular communication and community development. The program of popular education seminars, workshops, and classes emphasize community organizing and development. In the religious community, the Center's activities strengthen cooperation within Cuban and with the greater international community, and encourage a greater commitment to the social responsibility of the bible. CMMLK has worked with international organizations since its founding,, advancing relations with other centers, religious groups and NGOs from Latin America and the rest of the world, encouraging cooperation for development and ecumenical aid for the people and churches of Cuba. The Center also promotes international solidarity, collaborating with IFCO/Pastors for Peace against the US embargo, and hosting solidarity delegations from the US.

Contact Information: Daisy Rojas, Centro Memorial Martin Luther King, Ave. 53 No. 9609 e/ 96 y 98 Marianao, Ciudad de Havana, Código Postal 11400; telephone: 53.7.20.3940, 20.9741; fax: 53.7.27.2959, <rinternac@mlking.sld.cu>.

## Centro Félix Varela

The Félix Varela Center (CFV) was founded in 1990 to educate about the necessity of responsible ethics for a model of sustainable development and promote the development of a society with participatory politics, inclusive economy, cultural solidarity, and sustainable technology. They also have consultative status in the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the United Nations. CFV organizes workshops, courses, competitions, and seminars, around issues of human rights, development rights, conflict resolution, health, sustainable development and the environment, as well as producing publications and videos. Its researchers work with collaborators and other volunteers from fields such as journalism, philosophy, sociology, psychology, and medicine. Some previous



publications included *The Ecology of Commerce*, *Bioethics from a Cuban Perspective*, and the videos, *Looking for Happiness* and *Gay Cuba*. They have also hosted delegations of foreign students and professionals. CFV is financed by their own fundraising efforts and support from international NGOs, primarily OXFAM, Arquitectos sin Fronteras and ACSUR (Spain).

*Contact Information: Marlén Moleón Borodowsky, General Director, Centro Félix Varela, Calle 5 #720, esq. a 10, El Vedado, Ciudad de Habana; telephone: 53.7.33.7731; fax: 53.7.33.3328; <cfv@ceniai.inf.cu>.*

## Centro de Estudios Sobre Asia y Oceanía

The Center of Asian and Oceanic Studies (CEAO) is an academic institution promoting the study of Asia and Oceania, as well as exploring the interconnections between Cuba and this region. CEAO also has consult status in the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the United Nations. The investigations undertaken by CEAO focus on four areas: globalization and integration; governance; military and economic security; and sustainable development. CEAO does academic research along with facilitating the flow of information between Cuba and the Asia-Pacific, in order to educate both the Cuban public about Asia and Oceania and increase knowledge of Cuba in the Asia-Pacific region. The Center pays particular attention to exploring the effects of capitalism, socialism, and globalization on this third world region, to discover what lessons can be learned for the Cuban situation. CEAO has relations with non-governmental and governmental organizations in Asia, as well as with research institutions worldwide.

*Contact Information: Freya Matos Martínez, Director of International Relations, Centro de Estudios Sobre Asia y Oceanía, Calle 20 #512, e/ 5 y 7, Miramar, Playa, Ciudad de Habana, Código Postal 10300; telephone: 53.7.22.6038, 22.8392, 22.8393; fax: 53.7.24.0591; <asia@infomed.sld.cu>.*

## Grupo para el Desarrollo Integral de la Capital

Founded in 1988, the Group for the Integral Development of the Capital (GDIC) addresses foremost issues of urbanity, working to preserve the historic patrimony of the city, address urban

problems and promote responsible community and urban development. Their work centers on the economic, cultural, and social development of the Cuban capital, Havana. La Maqueta de la Habana, created and maintained by GDIC, is a city model with a surface area of 144 m<sup>2</sup> representing 144 k m<sup>2</sup> and took 12 years to produce. The model includes every building in Havana and serves as a reference tool, available to tours of students and senior citizens as well as to commercial and state urban developers. GDIC also conducts investigations on housing and urban development and plays an integral part in advising on new construction and urban projects within the city. Their upcoming International Seminar Toward A Sustainable Habitat: Challenges for the New Millennium, held in May, will address experiences in sustainable habitat around the world, their successes and failures as well as ways to facilitate implementation and possible alternatives for the future, focusing on built environment & social housing, community development, and local development.

*Contact Information: Migul Coyula, Grupo para el Desarrollo Integral de la Capital, Calle 28 #113 entre 1 y 3, Miramar, Playa, Ciudad de la Habana; telephone: 53.7.22.7303, 22.2621; fax: 53.7.24.2661; <gdic@ceniai.inf.cu>.*

## Centro de Estudios Europeos

The Center for European Studies (CEE) was founded in 1974 as an academic institution designed to strength relations between Cuba and Europe in both academic and political arenas. In 1996, they received consultative status in the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the United Nations. CEE's studies are focused in five program areas: European integration and European-Latin American relations; Eastern Europe; post-soviet studies; political forces and alternatives; and relations with European NGOs. CEE works with over 200 institutions worldwide, while maintaining a library of 14,500 books and 400 publications. While CEE began as an academic center, it has grown to play an important role in facilitating relations between European and Cuban NGOs. Their bilingual monthly journal, *Mensaje de Cuba*, or *Message from Cuba*, documents programs of European NGOs and their work in Cuba. The 2<sup>nd</sup> International Meeting on Cooperation with Cuba, facilitated by CEE in association with other groups, held in December 1999 was attended by 145 organizations. This October, CEE will convoke their 8<sup>th</sup> International Conference on European Studies on "Europe facing the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century."

*Contact Information: Marla Muñoz, NGO Program Coordinator, Centro de Estudios Europeos, Ave 3 #1805, e/ 18 y 20, Miramar; telephone: 53.7.22.5793, 22.6767; fax: 53.7.24.1435; <cee@ceniai.inf.cu>.*



## Asociación Cubana de Producción Animal

Founded in 1974, the Cuban Association of Animal Production, (ACPA), services the producers, researchers, teachers and technicians dealing with animal science and husbandry. ACPA encourages sustainable development programs in animal production and industrial processing, working to improve community living standards, strengthen food security, and environmental protection. To further these goals, their activities include both technological and academic research on improving animal production, and practical programs to develop animal production. ACPA's 400 grassroots organizations disseminate technological research, run training programs and other projects such as breeding centers which provide start-up materials for families to become small animal producers for family consumption, as well as on a cooperative and collective level. Their events include agricultural and livestock fairs and rodeos as well as scientific and technological conferences such as the combined International Commercial Agropastoral Fair and Pan-American Milk Congress held this March, which focused on feeding, reproduction and handling of calves, buffaloes, rabbits, birds, and pigs. ACPA's projects go beyond animal production, as it strives to address the problems in food production brought about by the US embargo and the Special Period on various fronts: urban gardening, organic agriculture, soil management, reforestation, water supply, and even housing construction. In the past ten years, ACPA has developed over 42 projects with NGOs from Europe and Canada.

*Contact Information: Teresita Lambrana Alvarez, Secretary of Projects and International Relations, Asociación Cubana de Producción Animal, Calle 10 #351, e/ 15 y 17 Plaza, Vedado, Ciudad de Habana, Código Postal 12300; telephone: 53.7.37.802, 38.159, 30.2375, 30.1482; fax: 53.7.33.5366;*



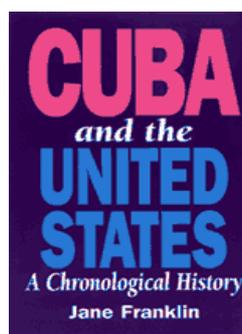
<dwhhacpa@ip.etecsa.cu>.

## Instituto Cubano de Amistad con Los Pueblos

The Cuban Institute for Friendship Between People (ICAP) was founded in 1960 to strengthen the bonds of friendship and solidarity between the peoples of the world. From the beginning, ICAP helped coordinate the International Brigades which came from around the world to support Cuba through aid in agriculture, construction and other parts of the economy. Now they continue to facilitate visits and exchanges between friendship organizations. The Institute organizes delegations for international groups to visit Cuba. The Casa de la Amistad, or Friendship House, run by ICAP, organizes social and cultural events and exchanges. ICAP also receives and distributes humanitarian aid from international solidarity groups.

*Contact Information: Javier Domínguez Martínez, Head of United States Desk, Instituto Cubano de Amistad con Los Pueblos, Calle 17 #301, e/H y I, El Vedado, Ciudad de Habana; telephone: 53.7.55.2420, 55.2421; fax: 53.7.33.3185; <icap@ceniai.inf.cu>; <http://www3.cuba.cu/ICAP>.*

## Cuba and the United



*Whether one reads it as a history or keeps it handy as a ready reference,...this is a book that no serious student of U.S.-Cuba relations can afford to be without."*

—Philip Brenner,  
American University

This chronological history is an invaluable resource for scholars, teachers, journalists, legislators, and anyone interested in international relations, offering an unprecedented vision of US-Cuba relations. Using exceptionally wide research, historian Jane Franklin relates, month by month, the developments involving the two neighboring countries from the 1959 Cuban revolution through 1995. An introductory section chronicles the history of Cuba from the time of the arrival of Christopher Columbus.

Designed to be used in many ways, this book may be read



7 #701, esq. a 41 Miramar, Playa; telephone: 53.7.22.7349, 24.0105; fax: 53.7.24.0105; <selma@habitat.get.cma.net>.

## Hábitat Cuba

Founded in 1974, Habitat-Cuba works on issues of self-help housing, urbanity, the environment, and other problem associated with the habitat. Currently 800,000 to 1,000,000 Cubans lack adequate housing, living either with family or in substandard construction. Habitat looks for alternative, sustainable, participatory solutions with equitable criteria though demonstrative practices of research development, training, documentation, communication, and technical advisory services. Habitat works with communities to create new housing while eradicating preexisting hazardous conditions and neighborhoods. While Cuba has sufficient labor resources, the embargo has resulted in a lack of building materials and other resources. Habitat-Cuba has relations with 50 international NGOs and not-for-profit organizations, which have provided financial and material aid. Habitat looks to these outside resources for assistance, but focuses its efforts on the production and use of local materials and adequate technologies. One recent initiative explored bamboo as an alternative to wood – a material in scarce supply, but needed in housing construction for windows and doors – developing the appropriate technology and planting bamboo groves for harvesting.

Contact Information: Selma Díaz, President, Hábitat-Cuba, Ave.

## States: A Chronological

as narrative history or consulted as a reference guide to a wide range of topics. The chronological method establishes historical context, organizes a maximum amount of information, and conveys the interconnectedness of lesser-known occurrences with major developments. Widely-discussed episodes such as the Bay of Pigs invasion or the Missile Crisis are shown to be part of a continuum of events.

Historian Jane Franklin has been a contributing editor to *Cuba Update*, the journal of the Center for Cuban Studies, since 1979 and was co-editor from 1984 to 1990. In addition to *Cuba and the United States*, she is author of *Cuban Foreign Relations 1959-1982*, and co-author of *Vietnam and America: A Documented History*. She has published numerous articles, poems and film reviews and has lectured extensively about Cuba, Vietnam, Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Panama, and is a frequent commentator about Cuba on radio and television.

420 pages, index, glossary. ISBN 1-875284-92-3. US \$21.95/ A\$29.95/£12.95. (Ocean Press 1997. Order from LPC/InBook, 1436 West Randolph St., Chicago, IL 60607; telephone: 1-800-243-0138; fax: 1-800-334 3892; or through the internet at Amazon.com.)

## Asociación Nacional de Agricultores Pequeños

The National Association of Small Farmers (ANAP) was founded in 1961 as a mass organization to represent the interests of small agriculturists. ANAP works in cooperation with numerous government ministries, including sugar, education, foreign trade, and culture, but has not received any government funding for over ten years. The organization has 232,000 members, of which 162,000 are private property owners who use its collective services and credit programs. The rest are small producers who work on agropastoral cooperatives. In addition to lobbying assembly and other government offices to obtain policies that benefit their constituencies, ANAP provides numerous resources to its farmers, from social security and retirement funds to various forms of technological assistance and equipment. Since its initiation, ANAP has worked in cooperation with international NGOs, mainly from Canada and Europe. In 1995, they began the Cuban Organic Agriculture Exchange Program with the US organization, the Institute for Food and Development Policy.

Contact Information: Mavis Alvarez, Director of International Cooperation, Asociación Nacional de Agricultores Pequeños, Calle 13, esq. 1 No. 206 Vedado; telephone/fax 32 8586; telephone: 53.7.33.4244; fax: 53.7.24.0591;



Dr. Jesus Aise Sotolongo, director of the Center for Studies on Asia and Oceania in Havana with books presented by FRD thanks to a grant from the Christopher Reynolds Foundation





## Bush and Gore speak on Elián

In the Presidential primaries, only Republican hopeful Pat Buchanan voiced objections to the US embargo on Cuba. As November approaches, the two remaining candidates have continued to defer to special interests in the Cuban-American community. Both have received funds from hardline representatives of the Cuban American community, and continue to let this domestic constituency dominate their foreign policy. The following quotes taken in late March regarding the case of Elián Gonzalez demonstrate how the presidential candidates view Cuba.

*“Elián’s mother gave her life in the hopes that her son would have a better life in freedom. We still do not know what Elián’s father really wants, and we will not until he and his family are allowed to come to America to freely express their will. I urge Attorney General Janet Reno to reconsider her plans to send Elián back to Cuba, back to the place his mother died trying to escape. This case should be decided by a Florida family court, which will protect the best interests of Elián, not by a Clinton-Gore Justice Department whose record of putting politics ahead of the law does not inspire confidence.”*

George W. Bush

*“The father is not free to speak his true mind. What is his true feeling? We know what the mother’s true feeling was. She lost her life in trying to get freedom for her son. This child should never have been put in the position where the choice was freedom or his father. The real fault here lies with Fidel Castro, and I think we need due process according to laws of the United States of America. I think what we still need is a full and fair hearing based on due process, where all the parties can present the facts — not based on politics, not based on diplomacy — [but] based on due process of what is in the best interest of the child.”*

Al Gore

## Party Platform Planks on Cuba

### Republican

“In Cuba, Fidel Castro continues to impose communist economic controls and absolute political repression of 11 million Cubans. His regime harasses and jails dissidents, restricts economic activity, and forces Cubans into the sea in a desperate bid for freedom. He gives refuge to fugitives from American justice, hosts a sophisticated Russian espionage facility that intercepts U.S. government and private communications, and has ordered his air force to shoot down two unarmed U.S. civilian airplanes thereby killing American citizens.

“U.S. policy toward Cuba should be based upon sound, clear principles. Our economic and political relations will change when the Cuban regime frees all prisoners of conscience, legalizes peaceful protest, allows opposition political activity, permits free expression and commits to democratic elections. This policy will be strengthened by active American support for Cuban dissidents. Under no circumstances should Republicans support any subsidy of Castro’s Cuba or any other terrorist state.

“Republicans also support a continued effort to promote freedom and democracy by communicating objective and uncensored news and information to the Cuban people via U.S. broadcasts to the captive island. Finally, Republicans believe that the United States should adhere to the principles established by the 1966 Cuban Adjustment Act, which recognizes the rights of Cuban refugees fleeing communist tyranny.”

### Democratic

“We aim to rededicate ourselves to the defense of democracy in the Americas at a moment when it is being brought into question in Peru and absent on the island of Cuba. We will continue to work with Haiti to deepen the roots of democracy that we helped replant. We will continue to press for human rights, the rule of law and political freedom.

“To accomplish this, we need the right tools. Al Gore and the Democratic Party support continued funding for the National Endowment for Democracy, Radio Liberty, Radio Europe, Radio Free Asia, Radio Marti, and other efforts to promote democracy and the free flow of ideas.”



# Letter from NGOs to the Secretary of State

Dear Secretary Albright,

March 30, 2000

We the undersigned are humanitarian and development non-governmental organizations concerned about the hardship on the Cuban people arising out of their prolonged economic crisis. While each of us may differ in our views on U.S. policy towards Cuba and developments within Cuba, we are united in our deeply held concerns about the health, educational, and nutritional conditions of the people of Cuba.

Many of us are directly involved in humanitarian activities in Cuba and others of us are looking to initiate activities based on our organizational mission and capabilities. A continued concern of our organizations has been the delays and limitations imposed upon our activities due to the restrictions of the Office of Foreign Assets Control. While we do commend the Administration for taking steps to ease those procedures following the President's announcement on January 5, 1999, we believe that the Administration has not gone far enough in permitting U.S. NGOs to support humanitarian activities in Cuba.

We are deeply concerned, therefore, by the long delays and considerable frustrations experienced by organizations such as Oxfam America, American Friends Service Committee, Unitarian Universalist Service Committee and others in the licensing process to support humanitarian work in Cuba. A more expeditious, more open and more permissive licensing protocol is absolutely necessary for U.S. organizations to actively engage with Cuban counterparts.

We urge the State Department to adopt measures that will facilitate and expedite U.S. NGO support to Cuban counterparts. The Council for Foreign Relation's Independent Task Force in their report *U.S.-Cuban Relations in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* expressed:

"The United States should eliminate the need for licenses for humanitarian donations and shipments, including material aid and cash, and should grant a general license for related travel. We recommend that the United States impose no limit on the amount of material donations under such programs, while requiring a license for cash donations above \$10,000 per year by any one American institution to its Cuban counterpart—with the exception of private foundations, for which we recommend waiving that limit and permitting the grant-making bodies to use their own institutional criteria to determine in-country funding limits."

We appreciate your consideration of our concerns and would be happy to discuss with you or others these issues in greater detail.

Sincerely,

**Martin Garate, Associate General Secretary, Int'l Regions  
American Friends Service Committee**

**Rev. Dr. Rodney Page, Executive Director Church World Service**

**Delvis Fernandez Levy, President Cuban American Alliance  
Education Fund**

**Peter Rosset, Executive Director Food First**

**John McAuliff, Executive Director Fund for Reconciliation and  
Development**

**Caryn Mandelbaum, Program Associate Global Exchange**

**Brenda L. Smith, Member, Board of Directors Global Links**

**Ralph Plumb, Director/CEO International Aid**

**David Jehnsen, Chair The Institute for Human Rights and  
Responsibilities**

**Linda Shelly, Director, Latin America/Caribbean Program  
Mennonite Central Committee**

**Rev. Dr. Robert Edgar, General Secretary  
National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA**

**Richard M. Walden, President Operation USA**

**Raymond C. Offenheiser, President, Oxfam America**

**Louis L. Mitchell, President and CEO PACT, Inc.**

**Dr. Valora Washington, Executive Director, Unitarian  
Universalist Service Committee**

**Ron Burkard, Executive Director World Neighbors**

The above letter produced some results, though how far reaching is yet to be seen.

Oxfam America, which had seven license requests to support Cuban NGOs pending since November 1999, ultimately was granted licenses for six of the seven projects. The activities in Oxfam's approved projects include support for Cuban farmers, urban growers and tornado victims. The U.S. government denied Oxfam's request to provide management training to UBPC cooperatives, which were considered insufficiently independent of the Cuban government. The Counsel to the Secretary, Ms. Wendy Sherman, told Oxfam America that future license requests would be considered in a more timely manner.

Officials from the State Department and the U.S. Interest Section in Havana gave little indication that new protocols specifically requested in the letter would be forthcoming. The U.S. NGOs had asked that the need for licenses for humanitarian donations be eliminated and that licenses for cash donations on the part of private foundations be waived and replaced with the institutional criteria of each foundation.

--Minor Sinclair, Cuba Program Officer, Oxfam America <[msinclair@oxfamamerica.org](mailto:msinclair@oxfamamerica.org)>

# Upcoming Conferences in Cuba

*The following are conferences to be held in Cuba September through December 2000, which US citizens may be able to legally attend.*

*In concern for space, descriptions are only given here for conferences with the most general appeal.*

- Cerebral-Vascular Diseases Sep 17, 2000 to Sep 21, 2000
- Neurology 2000 Sep 18, 2000 to Sep 22, 2000
- Railway Congress Sep 18, 2000 to Sep 22, 2000
- Legal Protection of Children's Rights Sep 27, 2000 to Sep 29, 2000
- Havana Festival of Contemporary Music Oct 1, 2000 to Oct 9, 2000
- Cardiology Update 2000 Oct 9, 2000 to Oct 12, 2000
- Forensic Sciences Oct 9, 2000 to Oct 14, 2000
- The Arab and Islamic Presence in America Oct 10, 2000 to Oct 14, 2000
- Democratic Jurists Oct 16, 2000 to Oct 20, 2000
- Iberian-American Women Architects and Engineers Oct 18, 2000 to Oct 20, 2000
- Gender and Health Oct 22, 2000 to Oct 29, 2000

The First International Symposium on Gender and Health will take place in Havana and Santiago. As the name indicates, it will focus on "A Gender Perspective, Vital for Human Development." In conjunction with this Symposium, the Medical Education Cooperation with Cuba (MEDICC) will coordinate a special program of visits to Cuban healthcare facilities.

- University Libraries Oct 30, 2000 to Nov 3, 2000
- Women's Studies Nov 1, 2000 to Nov 30, 2000

Sponsored by the Cuban Women's Federation (FMC), this workshop will bring together academics specializing in women's studies. Its main objective is the discussion of centers, departments, and programs on women's studies, specifically their historical background, methodological focus, development and prospects. The workshop will also address the problematic of women and families in the new century, and women as objects and subjects of development.

- Anesthesiology 2000 Nov 1, 2000 to Nov 3, 2000
- Cultural Expression in Contemporary Cities Nov 2, 2000 to Nov 4, 2000
- Urban Planning Nov 6, 2000 to Nov 9, 2000

- War Correspondents Nov 10, 2000 to Nov 14, 2000
- Spanish-as-a-Second Language Nov 14, 2000 to Nov 18, 2000

Sponsored by the University of Havana's School of Foreign Languages, the 2nd International Meeting of Teachers of Spanish-as-a-Second Language will convene at this institution November 14-18.

- Architecture and Engineering at the Service of the Environment Nov 14, 2000 to Nov 17, 2000
- Havana: Design, Culture, City Nov 15, 2000 to Nov 17, 2000
- Architecture and Engineering at the Service of the Environment Nov 15, 2000 to Nov 17, 2000
- Ecology and Society Nov 15, 2000 to Nov 17, 2000

Sponsored by the Cuban Society for Philosophical Research (SCIF), the International Scientific Workshop on the Ecology and Society will take place in Cienfuegos. The Workshop will focus on neoliberalism and biodiversity; and technological revolution and the environment.

- Dentistry and Oral Health Nov 16, 2000 to Nov 19, 2000
- 12th Cuban Congress on Orthopedics and Traumatology Nov 20, 2000 to Nov 24, 2000
- Bio-Energetic and Natural Medicine Nov 20, 2000 to Nov 24, 2000
- STD's, AIDS and Other Communicable Diseases Nov 20, 2000 to Nov 24, 2000
- Nation, Identity, and Culture in Cuba Nov 20, 2000 to Nov 23, 2000

Sponsored by the Cuban Writers and Artists Union (UNEAC), this symposium will deal with the presence of the principles of nation and identity in Cuban culture throughout the 20th century. Discussions will center on Jose Marti's life and work, the nation's transculturation process, the new look at history, the Republic, the renovation of fine arts, literature and music, and the launching of magazines and cultural associations. The Symposium will be directed by Carlos Marti Brenes, the president of UNEAC.

- Surgery Nov 21, 2000 to Nov 24, 2000
- Political Science and the Challenges of the 21st Century Nov 22, 2000 to Nov 24, 2000
- 5th International Workshop on Orchids Nov 22, 2000



to Nov 28, 2000

- Event on the Beatles Nov 26, 2000 to Nov 28, 2000

Sponsored by the Cuban Writers and Artists Union (UNEAC), the Event on the Beatles will take place at the International Press Center in Havana. The main topics of discussion will be the Beatles as a musical event, the Beatles and Cuban music, and the Beatles and youth.

- Psychology of Health Nov 27, 2000 to Dec 1, 2000
- Identity and Subjectivity Dec 1, 2000 to Dec 31, 2000
- Marine Sciences Dec 4, 2000 to Dec 8, 2000
- Communication and Information Dec 6, 2000 to Dec 10, 2000
- Biochemistry and Molecular Biology Dec 11, 2000 to Dec 15, 2000
- International Jazz Festival Dec 13, 2000 to Dec 17, 2000

Hosted by the internationally renowned Cuban jazz musician Chucho Valdes, the Festival will offer the opportunity to hear many Cuban and foreign jazz musicians at several locations in Havana, such as the Plaza Casa de la Cultura, the National Theater, the Amadeo Roldan, the Riviera, and others. Among the musicians who have been invited to participate are Roy Hardgroove, Steve Coleman, David Sanchez, the Habana Ensemble, Bobby Carcassas, Maraca y Otra Vision, and Ernen Lopez-Nusse.

- Hispanics in the US Dec 13, 2000 to Dec 16, 2000

*For further information, including descriptions and prices for the above programs and flights to Cuba, contact Marazul Tours at <<http://www.marazultours.com>>, <[info@marazultours.com](mailto:info@marazultours.com)>*

## Fidel Offers 3000 Medical Workers for AIDS in Africa

Speaking in front of the UN at the second Roundtable meeting of the Millenium Summit on Sep 7, 2000 in New York, Fidel Castro lambasted first world nations as being trapped in arguments concerning the US\$1000 per person necessary to provide adequate medicines for AIDS sufferers in Africa. African representatives at the UN, he reported, have declared that even if they had the medicines, the haven't the infrastructure to distribute them. Since Cuba has more educated medical professionals than it needs, Castro offered to spare one thousand doctors and two to three thousand health workers to help Africa in ways medicines alone could not.

Thanks to the intensive educational programs that have been developed over many years, Cuba now has a significant human capital, and human capital is decisive; I would say that it is even more important than financial capital. And our country has sufficient medical personnel to cooperate-if the United Nations agrees-with the World Health Organization and with the peoples of sub-Saharan Africa, who are suffering from this destructive scourge to the greatest degree, in order to organize the infrastructure needed to administer those medications in Africa on an emergency basis... Africa needs thousands of doctors in order to provide one doctor per 5,000 inhabitants; our country has one doctor per 168 inhabitants.

Castro pointed out that Cuban doctors have been fulfilling missions abroad for years with respect and acknowledgement from local populations, and without talking about religion, politics or philosophy.

*The full transcript of his speech is available in English translation at <<http://www.granma.cu/ingles/sept1/38fdplan-i.html>>*

## American Legion: Lift Cuban Embargo

The American Legion wrapped up its 82nd annual convention by urging Congress to lift the U.S. economic embargo on Cuba with a caveat that the island nation move "towards a more open and free society."

The veterans group unanimously approved the resolution Thursday. "The embargo has basically hurt the people of the country of Cuba and has made a martyr out of Fidel Castro," said the Legion's national commander, Al Lance.

"If we're going to forgive Vietnam and trade with them and we're going to forgive China and start trading with them, why shouldn't we do the same with the people of Cuba?" Legionnaires also approved a separate item calling on the United States to maintain control of Guantanamo Bay Naval Base on Cuba, continue intelligence flights over the island and remain "firm in opposition to export of revolution by Cuba." The organization also voted to reject "permanent normal trade relations" with China until that country cooperates with efforts to account for missing U.S. servicemen from the Korean and Cold Wars. (AP)



### **New Laos Directory Available**

The directory of NGOs working in Lao PDR, the last to arrive in year 2000, is smaller than its counterparts from Cambodia and Vietnam, but is the best designed of the three. The first update since 1967 is the product of international NGOs working in partnership with the NGO Section in the International Organizations Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Fifty-six international NGOs are described in 114 pages in a consistent style and clear layout. Each organization's description is accompanied by a map of Laos showing the provinces in which its programs are carried out. Fifty-eight pages are devoted to provincial summaries, which not only list the NGOs working there by district, but also provide basic demographic data about the province and graphs which illustrate the sectoral and district distribution among NGOs working there. Thirty-four pages offer an analysis by sector and subsector in each province and indicate what percentage of external assistance comes from INGOs in that sector.

A final section includes useful phone numbers and addresses of Ministries, Embassies, public services and UN agencies, as well as a copy of the NGO decree of the government which provides the legal framework and registration procedures for international groups.

A regrettable absence are international educational institutions which are working with Lao universities. Also missing are organizations which have programs in Laos but no resident staff.

232 pp.; \$30 plus 10% for priority shipping within the US (order form inside back cover)

### **New Annotated List of North American Not-For-Profit Organizations Working in Indochina.**

The annotated list is intentionally more skeletal about each organization than those published in the region, but seeks to provide a description of the whole not for profit sector from the US and Canada which is working in Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam. It is available at the FRD website: <[www.usirp.org](http://www.usirp.org)> and from FRD as a printed resource. Organizations are invited to check the accuracy of their listing. Those which are not included are asked to complete and return the accompanying form to insure their addition to the directory and the site.

91 pp.; \$10 plus 10% for 1st class shipping with the US (order form

### **Migration, Markets and Social Change in the Highlands of Vietnam**

Published as a special issue by Asia-Pacific Viewpoint, (2000, vol.41, no.1) edited by Sarah Turner (Otago, NZ), Andrew Hardy (NUS, Singapore) and Jean Michaud. This publication stems from the last NWRCEAS-CCSEAS conference in Vancouver (Oct. 1999) where all papers were initially presented, before being re-worked for this refereed publication. All papers are based on original research conducted recently in Vietnam and can be of interest to researchers and academics working on highland social change, migration and development in Vietnam, both in the north and in the central highlands. The disciplinary focus is on Human Geography and Social Anthropology.

This issue can be ordered from the department of Geography, Victoria University of Wellington, PO Box 600, Wellington, New Zealand, or directly from Blackwell Publishers, 108 Cowley Road, Oxford, UK.

### **French and Japanese Economic Relations with Vietnam since 1975**

*Henrich Dahm*

This study compares the strategies of France and Japan in trying to win economic and political influence in the newly emerging Vietnam.

162pp. 1992 University of Hawaii Press

### **Women's Bodies, Women's Worries: Health and Family Planning in a Vietnamese Rural Commune**

*Tine Gammeltoft*

The first ethnography on health-related issues to come out of contemporary Vietnam, this volume is a study of women's lives in a rural commune in Vietnam's Red River delta.

288 pp. 1999 University of Hawaii Press

### **Profit and Poverty in Rural Vietnam: Winners and Losers of a Dismantled Revolution**

*Rita Liljestrom, Eva Lindskog, Nguyen Van Ang, and Vuong Xuan Tinh*

This work examines at the household level the construction and dismantling of Vietnam's socialist economy and its impact on the agricultural sector. Following since 1987 the change in four areas of the mountains of northern Vietnam, it shows the impact of the agricultural revolution following the land laws of 1988 and 1993 and the Doi Moi policy.

288 pp. 1999 University of Hawaii Press

## **The Vietnamese Family in Change: The Case of the Red River Delta**

*Pam Van Bich*

This monograph locates specifically two of the fundamental family relationships — husband-wife and parent-child — within their wider social and historical contexts.

270 pp. 1999 University of Hawaii Press

## **Vietnam Assessment: Creating a Sound Investment Climate**

*Edited by Suiwah Leung*

A sound investment climate is critical to Vietnam in order for it to catch up to Indonesia and other investment-friendly Asia-Pacific nations after Doi Moi, or renovation of its economy in 1986.

148 pp. 1997 University of Hawaii Press

## **International Publications Catalogue**

Pact Publications has a catalogue of various resources aimed at the international community in the areas of microenterprise and finance, training and evaluation, organizational development, civil society, community development, health, gender, and environment. They can be reached at 274 Madison Ave, Suite 1304, NY, NY 10016; phone (212) 532-8516; fax (212) 532-4554; <www.pactpub.com>, <books@pactpub.org>.

## **The Spitting Image**

*Jerry Lembcke*

One of the most resilient images of the Vietnam era is that of the anti-war protester—often a woman—spitting on the uniformed veteran just off the plane. Jerry Lembcke demonstrates that not a single incident of this sort has been convincingly documented. Rather, it is an urban myth which reflects the lingering national confusion over the war.

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272 pp. NYU Press

## **When Broken Glass Floats**

*Chanrithy Him*

In the Cambodian proverb, “when broken glass floats” is the time when evil triumphs against good. In 1969 Chanrithy and her family were forced from their homes by the chaos of the war in Vietnam to Penom Phen. When the Khmer Rouge took power in 1975 the Him family was forced violently from their home once again.

## **C O N F E R E N C E S**

### **NCSSH/VNU Conference in Hanoi**

The National Center for Social Sciences and Humanities and Vietnam National University organized in Hanoi September 19-21, 2000, an international conference on “Vietnam in the 20th Century”.

The Conference had three objectives:

- To provide an opportunity for Vietnamese and foreign researchers, politicians and social activists to exchange views and opinions on the evolution and achievements of the Vietnam Revolution in the 20th century, analyse the historical significance of the achievements to the development of the country, and identify the roles of Vietnam in the world.
- To synthesize the lessons drawn from the experience of Vietnam's Revolution in the last century and perspectives for Vietnam in the 21st century.
- To increase mutual understanding between Vietnam and friends in the world, and enhance international cooperation for the development of Vietnamese studies.

*For more information contact Mr. Nguyen Chien Thang or Ms. Dang Anh Phuong <[nccssh@hn.vnn.vn](mailto:nccssh@hn.vnn.vn)>.*

### **California and the Vietnam Conflict**

October 6 & 7, 2000 at the Oakland Museum of California

Panel discussions and speaker topics will include: the veteran's experience and history of the Vietnam Veteran's Movement, the build-up of California's military industrial complex, the protest response to the war, California's national influence on war-related film, literature and music, the impact of the media on the national perception of war, postwar immigration of Southeast Asian immigrants, and the political and cultural aftermath of the war.

## I N T E R N E T

### NGO Resource Center Web-Site

The internet site for the NGO Resource Center (at La Thanh Hotel) is <<http://203.162.7.85/ngocentre>>. The site features the ability to be viewed either in Vietnamese or English language and is capable of searches of the NGO Resource Center library on line.

The Center has an extensive library on agriculture, credit, health, and rural development, including both Vietnamese and English language documents. In your search, you can specify subjects, language, or type of publication. You can check the bulletin boards of upcoming activities and job announcements. Anyone is welcome to visit the internet site and read the information, but to post new information on the site, including announcements about upcoming activities, you must have a password. To obtain one, telephone the Resource Center (8328570) or send them a request by e-mail to <[director@ngocentre.netnam.vn](mailto:director@ngocentre.netnam.vn)>

Many Vietnamese institutions do not use the internet extensively because the telephone connection charges are too expensive. To help solve this problem, the Sustainable Agriculture Working Group has considered the possibility of the NGO Resource Center copying their internet site onto a compact disk.

## E D U C A T I O N

### Elementary Vietnamese

Elementary Vietnamese by Ngo Nhu Binh (Boston: Tuttle, 1999 ISBN 0-8048-3207-2) draws on the author's experience teaching Vietnamese in Russia and in the US. Binh has been teaching at Harvard since 1992, at VASSI and is a member of GUAVA. The book's price is \$34.95. A set of audio CDs is available separately for \$129 plus shipping and handling.

## E V E N T S

### The Center for Cuban Studies presents a special benefit

Harry Belafonte live at Carnegie Hall, with invited guests, October 31, 2000 at 8pm. Tickets from \$25 to \$250. Contact the Center for Cuban Studies at 124 West 23rd Street, New York, NY, 10011; (212)242-0559; <[www.cubaupdate.org](http://www.cubaupdate.org)>; <[www.cubanartspace.net](http://www.cubanartspace.net)>.

## V I D E O

### New Video Documentaries Bring Home Cost of War

The Viet Nam Documentary & Scientific Film Studio in Hanoi have produced two short videos which are a necessary but painful reminder that there continue to be civilian victims twenty-five years after the end of the war in Vietnam. These videos are not easy to watch, should not be shown to primary school children and ought to be accompanied by a knowledgeable speaker able to inform audiences of ways they can help. Clear narration in English.

"Deadly Debris: The Aftermath of the War in Vietnam" 26 minutes Covers both land mines and unexploded ordnance. A good resource for anti-land mine educational meetings.

"Where the War Has Passed: The legacy of Agent Orange" 20 minutes Includes sympathetic footage of Admiral Elmo Zumwalt and his son.

Available on the same NTSC VHS tape for \$10, from FRD (see order form, inside back cover).



## POSITIONS

### Asia Society Assistant Director

The Asia Society is looking for an assistant director for its New York and US business programs located in its New York headquarters. Charged with organizing programs for the Asia Society's corporate constituency, the assistant director creates and oversees the development of between 25 and 30 Asia-focused business programs each year, ranging from breakfasts and luncheon speeches to day-long conferences. Applicants should have: knowledge of current business issues throughout Asia, but especially with knowledge or experience in Southeast Asia; an MBA or other Master's level degree with focus on Asian economic or business issues; and 5-7 years experience in business, journalism or business-focused NGO.

*Fax resumes to: Robert W. Radtke, Vice President of Policy and Business Programs, Asia Society (212)517-8315.*

### Kellogg Institute Visiting Residential Fellowships

The Kellogg Institute is an interdisciplinary research institute for international studies at the University of Notre Dame. Regionally, the Institute has focused mostly on Latin America, but it is committed to advancing research on important thematic issues in comparative international studies regardless of region. The Institute's research reflects commitments to democracy, development, and social justice, and focuses on five priority themes: democratization and the quality of democracy; paths to development; religion and the Catholic Church; social movements and organized civil society; and public policies for social justice.

For the 2001 - 02 academic year (August - May), the Institute will offer up to eight residential fellowships of one or two semesters at the University of Notre Dame. Normally the awards are for one semester, but exceptions will be considered. Visiting Fellows work on individual or joint research projects related to the Institute's themes, are expected to be in residence at the Institute, and are expected to take part in Institute seminars and other meetings. Visiting Fellows have faculty status within the University. They may hold joint appointments in academic departments for which they may be invited to teach a course.

The Institute seeks scholars whose work and presence will contribute creatively to its major research themes. It welcomes applications from candidates of any country who hold a Ph.D. or equivalent degree in any discipline of the social sciences or history. A complete application, including references and all documentation, must be received by November 3, 2000. Awards will be announced by February 1, 2001.

*For application forms or more information, visit <<http://www.nd.edu/~kellogg>><http://www.nd.edu/~kellogg> or contact Sharon Schierling, Program Coordinator, University of Notre Dame, The Kellogg Institute for International Studies, Notre Dame, Indiana USA 46556-5677 <[Schierling.1@nd.edu](mailto:Schierling.1@nd.edu)>*

### Vietnamese Semester Program Leaders

Over the last eight years, Where There Be Dragons has run a semester program in Vietnam for young adults. They are currently looking for qualified on-site leaders and one US administrator. Those interested should have a substantial knowledge of Vietnamese culture and language as well as a love of teaching and working with young people to introduce them to Vietnam in a culturally appropriate way. More information including an itinerary can be found at <[www.WhereThereBeDragons.com](http://www.WhereThereBeDragons.com)> or by calling Brad Choyt, Program Developer and Semester Coordinator at (800)982-9203.

### Consultancy with Local Governance/ Commune Councils in Cambodia

A group of NGOs wishes to hire a consultant, initially for a period of 6 months:

1. To raise awareness among NGOs and civil society organizations on the issues related to decentralization and the formation of Commune Councils.
2. To identify and map existing coalitions, networks, organizations and other relevant civil society stakeholders who are interested in Commune Council development.
3. To establish further channels of communication and dialogue as appropriate, between NGOs and UNDP, RCG and other key stakeholders over the drafting of laws and sub-decrees governing the establishment and functioning of Commune Councils.
4. To identify capacity building needs of Commune Councils not being addressed through planned government programs.
5. To determine what role, if any, NGOs can legitimately take in addressing the future capacity building needs of Commune Councils.

The consultant will need to have:

1. Post graduate qualifications in political science, international development or related fields of study.
2. Extensive knowledge and at least 5 years experience working on issues of decentralization and local governance, preferably in the Asian context.
3. Experience in advocacy work, particularly working in a non-confrontational manner with senior government advisors and legislators.
4. A sound reputation internationally in the area of local governance or related field, supported by publications on the topic.
5. Knowledge of Cambodia, the NGO sector in Cambodia and the mechanisms of the Royal Cambodian Government is a distinct advantage.

The position will be based in Phnom Penh, with occasional travel to the provinces. A competitive fee will be offered and an extension of contract

## SA8000 -The Global Humane Workplace Standard

In 1997, Social Accountability International (SAI) introduced Social Accountability 8000 (SA8000), a global humane workplace standard that combines core labor rights with independent monitoring by accredited certification bodies. The standard was developed and is overseen by an advisory board with members from business, trade unions, government and human rights organizations. Facilities seeking certification to the standard must undergo an independent audit by an organization accredited by SAI, which requires an extensive background in systems auditing, training in SA8000, and the institutional capacity to assure quality auditing. Companies can implement SA8000 by seeking to certify individual facilities or through Signatory Membership, which involves issuing a plan to move facilities to SA8000 certification over time and publicly reporting on progress. SA8000 incorporates worker, trade union and NGO participation through the auditing process, free training, a complaint and appeals process, and workshops.

For more information about SA8000, visit SAI's website [www.sa-intl.org](http://www.sa-intl.org) or contact SAI by phone at 212-358-7697, ext 238 or by e-mail at [info@cepaa.org](mailto:info@cepaa.org).



Singer at the Snack Bar night club of the Lane Xang Hotel in Vientiane. One bomb which did only minor property damage exploded in the Lane Xang's parking lot.

## PS From the Editor...

### Laos Comes Under Attack

The Lao Peoples Democratic Republic has achieved the dubious honor of becoming the latest focal point for attack by those who wish to roll back the political transformation of Indochina twenty-five years ago.

Laos is committed to economic liberalization and institutional renovation, but their efforts have been damaged by the economic impact of the Thai financial crisis and *baht* devaluation. With memories fresh of a long destructive war, stability remains the paramount goal. Official mechanisms to maintain a single-party state are in place, but the country is vulnerable to outside penetration because of a long uncontrollable border with Thailand, a country with a similar language and culture, a population ten times larger, and much greater economic power.

Most of the population of Laos has not been affected greatly by the economic decline, since the lives of 80% are tied to subsistence agriculture. However, employees of the government and of state enterprises saw their real income decline precipitously when the *kip* tumbled, particularly in terms of purchasing power of imported goods. Presumably, opponents of the government outside of the country imagined that economic hardship would translate into political dissatisfaction.

The first sign of a new effort to destabilize the government was increased activity among Hmong insurgents, members of clans which Vang Pao led into war-time partnership with the CIA. The still unexplained disappearance of two Hmong Americans in April 1999 in a particularly lawless area of the Thai-Lao border became more intriguing when it was revealed that one of them was a nephew of Vang Pao and the other had a history of war time assistance to US forces. Accusations have been published in Thailand that they were carrying weapons and money for insurgents.

(US officials feel Laos still has not been sufficiently cooperative in determining their fate. Other sources doubt that the government knows or can find out much about events in a region which is notorious for the illegal production of amphetamines.)

The second sign that something was amiss was an aborted demonstration in front of the Presidential palace in October 1999. Authorities detained a small group of people but have not yet brought them to trial. Accounts in Thai papers and among overseas Lao portrayed the event as far larger with participation by students from the National University but that account is not sustained by my conversations in Vientiane.

## From Bombs to a Border Raid

Then between March 30 and September 10 there were six bomb and grenade explosions in Vientiane as well as several other failed attempts and faxed threats. Motives are cloudy because no one has claimed “credit”. At least some of the early incidents appear to have been private or business affairs, which may have inspired “copy-cat” terrorism for political purposes.

The choice of targets suggests one goal was to undermine the government’s successful campaign to substantially increase tourism. Another likely motive is in response to the symbolism of December 2d, the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of the Lao PDR. The run-up to that date is a rallying cry and fund raising vehicle among overseas Lao militants, just as April 30th was for their Vietnamese counterparts. Whether sincerely, in their own terms, or opportunistically, heated rhetoric can escalate into action, no matter how quixotic.

Lao authorities downplay the significance of the bombs, noting that such things are not uncommon in other Southeast Asian countries. Thai and international publications based in the region, most notably the Far Eastern Economic Review, have exaggerated their significance. Whether due to sheer speculation and rumor mongering or to an organized campaign of disinformation, stories have sought to convey an aura of national instability and to shift the blame to conflict within the Lao Communist Party based on generation, region and pro-Chinese vs. pro-Vietnamese factional divisions.

News reports have also appeared quoting conveniently anonymous diplomatic sources to the effect that Vietnamese military forces have been sent to Laos to battle Hmong insurgents, and even that truckloads of Vietnamese soldiers were seen on the streets of Vientiane. (Had they taken a wrong turn on their way to Xieng Khoang?) Two bomb targets were Vietnamese-linked locations in Vientiane, although there is little anti-Vietnamese ethnic tension in Laos compared to Cambodia.

The international press has paid little attention to the issue of possible Thai complicity, but Thai-Lao relations are being affected by the situation. Lao authorities suspect that Hmong refugees still in Thailand or already repatriated to Laos are a conduit of funds, supplies and occasionally personnel to the relatively small highlands insurgency.

Thailand’s role has come under greater suspicion because of a bizarre raid on a customs and immigration post in southernmost Laos on July 3d. Some 30 to 60 heavily armed men in camouflage uniforms somehow managed to cross over the border from Thailand at Chong Mek/Vang Tao. Thailand’s ITV television network had been alerted in advance to insure the event would be reported.

After an armed confrontation in which six raiders were killed, survivors fled back to Thailand and 28 were arrested: 14 Lao nationals, 10 Thai nationals and 4 of undetermined nationalities.

To date the Thai government has refused Lao requests to extradite the attackers, insisting their fate must be determined by the process of Thai courts. The Lao complain that Thailand also has not returned \$150,000 worth of goods stolen from the Lao duty free shop. Thai media broadcast that 3,000 Lao students had gathered on that day to demonstrate at the border. Since there was no demonstration of any kind, one wonders whether this is a case of wishful thinking, propaganda or disinformation.

Lao officials describe the attackers as “bandits” with robbery as their motive. That may be either a political or a legal characterization, seeking to preclude claims for political asylum. In any case, it is clear from documents released at the time and from the flying of the flag of the pre-1975 Royal government that at least some among the attackers had a political agenda.

Martin Stuart-Fox, a professor of history at the University of Queensland told the New York Times, “it’s the old network of resistance that was being supported by the Thai military and by an expatriate Lao network in the United States and France and Australia and is trying to resuscitate itself.” (7/20/00)

## Royal Pretenders

Raiders called for the restoration of a constitutional monarchy. Within twenty-four hours of the attack, “Prince” Saurayong Savang, the exile regent of the unrecognized Royal family, had responded favorably to their aspiration on Radio France International. Saurayong never claimed responsibility or prior knowledge, and two days later backed away from implicit public endorsement, but the Thai army, based on captured documents, accused him of backing the attack.

At the time Saurayong made his statement, he and the purported “crown prince”, 36 year old Soulivong Savang, were on a speaking tour of the US. This was the second or third such national tour since February involving appearances on college campuses, at World Affairs Councils, and in late June at the Army-Navy Club in Washington. Their one-sided portrayal of Laos generally is unchallenged by audiences with scant independent information.

Saurayong created the “Council of Lao Overseas Representatives” in 1997 in Seattle to oppose the government. He and Soulivong claim credit for encouraging anti-Lao PDR resolutions in the Senate and House in 1998 and 1999. Soulivong told an audience at Dartmouth College on February 21<sup>st</sup> that overseas Lao “conscious of the fact that their disorganized struggle [for democracy] has not been able to reach its objective, ...have turned to the Lao Royal Family to unify all the Lao people.”

While denying they support an armed struggle, the former royals insisted at Dartmouth that the Lao Communist Party will never allow a multiparty system. Their solution, is mediation by the

“government of a friendly country” between the Lao Communist Party and Lao abroad. For such a goal, terrorist bombings and cross border attacks can be a method to rally supporters, raise funds and attract the attention of potential mediators without posing any real threat to the existing government.

Barbara Crossette interviewed the two princes for the New York Times during the summer. Her article acknowledged that French colonialism, “promoted the modern Laotian monarchy. As its heir, the prince is portrayed in Laos as a client of the West.” However, she also accepted their view that the bombings and Hmong rebellion had, “shaken the last largely unreconstructed Communist government of Southeast Asia.”

The fact that an attack was staged from Thailand undermines the theory of internal Lao Communist Party conflict reflecting a Vietnam-China rivalry. But why would Thailand cooperate in such a potentially regionally destabilizing adventure? The Lao appear to accept on good faith statements from Thailand’s Prime Minister and Foreign Minister that they completely oppose use of their territory to interfere with a neighbor—and point out that two bombs coincided with the visits of high level Thai delegations.

However, as had previously been the case in Cambodia, it is entirely possible that factions within the Thai military are carrying out their own agenda. This could be based on historic Thai claims on contested border areas, strategic discomfort with close cooperation between Laos and Vietnam on political and military matters, or festering resentment with the embarrassing Lao success during the border war of 1984-86.

### The US Dimension

Also of interest is the possible American connection. It does not help, but also does not mean much, that the State Department’s Lao Desk Officer met the princes at their request. Under the Clinton Administration there is no likelihood of official US involvement with overseas Lao militants. The same may not be true of past or future Republican Administrations.

Among Lao Americans, the majority has in effect made peace with the past. However, there is a die-hard leadership core that proclaims its undying devotion to reversing their 1975 defeat. Both ethnic Lao and ethnic Hmong have established links with anticommunist conservatives in the Congress, as well as with some liberals who have Lao constituents or see foreign policy largely through an ideological prism of western style human rights and democracy.

Because there is not much current or prospective US investment in Laos, the country’s population is small, and its landlocked location seemingly lacks strategic value, there is little counter-pressure to balance opponents in Washington. Although Laos and the US signed a trade agreement more than two years ago, the Administration has not submitted it to the Congress because of fear that the atmosphere on the Hill is not conducive to passage.

Allies of the princes are active in Washington. A Washington think tank called the Center for Public Policy Analysis has organized five closed briefings in the Capitol under the rubric of the “U.S. Congressional Forum on Laos”. According to organizers, the “series seeks to explore and develop a deeper awareness of the current situation in Laos and the challenges and opportunities surrounding the 25th anniversary of the Lao Peoples Democratic Republic (LPDR)... Seating is exclusive. The event is by invitation only.” Among their speakers has been Vang Pao.

Unfortunately muted to date is the voice of American NGOs whose experience provides a more balanced perspective on Laos and on its process of economic, social and governmental renovation. We should be finding allies in the Congress to support the trade agreement and then urging the State Department to move forward. We should also be asking the State and Justice Departments whether under the Neutrality Act or other applicable laws they are investigating any possible involvement of Lao Americans in terrorist bombings, the Hmong insurgency or the attack from Thailand.

We should also oppose any exception being made for Hmong who cannot pass normal citizenship requirements for literacy and knowledge of US institutions. Hmong demonstrators have demanded this in Washington, claiming they received war time guarantees of citizenship from US officials. However, even some people in Congress sympathetic to fulfilling alleged CIA or military promises, were put off by Hmong demands that their own organization should determine who was eligible for accelerated citizenship.

It will not help US-Lao relations if Hmong who could not adapt here show up inside Laos with US citizenship. In addition to the two disappearances mentioned above, in January the Thai arrested on a charge of carrying concealed weapons three Lao American citizens and three permanent residents who failed in an effort to illegally cross the Mekong. The passport of a seventh Hmong American from Minneapolis, Charlie Vang, was also found by Thai officials. Vang is presumed to have been wounded and fallen out of his boat. The six jailed men were released without explanation after one month.

It plays into the hands of those wishing to destabilize Laos to overemphasize the significance of these incidents. So far no one has been killed by bombs but there have been serious injuries. At a time of economic hardship, much needed revenues and employment from tourism have been lost. Since no one has credibly taken responsibility for the bombs or been arrested, needless anxieties have been created among Lao civilians and international NGOs working in the country.

While there is no reason to believe that either the Thai or US governments are in any way complicit with these sad events, it is also not clear how much either is doing to prevent their repetition.

—John McAuliff <usindo@igc.org>

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