

# Indochina Chronology

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**EDITORIAL NOTE**

*Indochina Chronology* is a quarterly publication devoted to historical and contemporary events in Viet Nam (including the Viet Nam War), Cambodia, and Laos: it is a bibliographic resource on book, monograph, periodical and journal literature and a source of news of the field. It was launched in 1982 at the University of California (Berkeley) and moved to Texas Tech University (Lubbock) in mid-1997. It is available, gratis, to academics, historians, writers, researchers, journalists, veterans, and government officials. Publication by Viet Nam Center, Texas Tech University, James R. Reckner, director. Editor is Douglas Pike. Editorial assistance is supplied by Nicol Rincon-Blanco, Khanh Le and Myrna Pike. *Indochina Chronology* operates in conjunction with the Viet Nam Archive, also at Texas Tech University (Ronald Frankum, chief archivist).

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## From Plenum to Congress

The 11<sup>th</sup> Plenum (Eighth Congress) of the Communist Party of Vietnam (170- person Central Committee) met in Hanoi, Jan. 6-16, 2001. Party Secretary General Le Kha Phieu, in the chair, delivered opening and closing statements. Business was largely devoted to the agenda for the Ninth Party Congress, now due to convene in March. Before members was a report from the Politburo on the views submitted by "Party organizations at various levels, veteran revolutionaries, the Vietnam Fatherland Front, mass organizations and social scientists" to be considered in "perfecting" the draft documents for the Congress.

The Plenum received unprecedented press coverage, striking to anyone who has followed coverage of past plenums. Twenty years ago there would have been no before or after announcement of such a meeting. Indeed, this would not come until months after the fact when journal articles began to appear footnoting time and place and giving some narrow indication of what transpired. Decisions and messages from a plenum were circulated privately among Party organs, often tailored to a particular organ, e.g., worker, academic, southern, then leaked.

The run-up to a Party Congress in Vietnam, in many ways, is more important than the Congress itself. These pre-Congress activities are the ultimate source and original cause of all social change (or absence of it). Also it is a time of shift in the fortunes of individual careers at Central Committee level and above.

As in the past, the run-up to the Ninth Congress is characterized by (1) a major motivational campaign to arouse the country, both Party members and citizens, to anticipate developments (within the Party the chief mechanism is the multitude of "congresses" at the rice roots level); and (2) intensive activity in the word-of-mouth rumor mill (akin to the

Saigon "Radio Catinat" of the war years) as to whose leadership star is rising, whose is setting.

Unlike past such meetings, the 11<sup>th</sup> Plenum issued a communiqué (January 16) at the end of the 10-day session. It said that to promote national independence and socialism, uphold the Party stance on Marxism-Leninism and Ho Chi Minh thought, and enhance Party leadership over society, the Central Committee "seriously considered and discussed the contributed ideas and made proposals...aimed at perfecting" the draft documents. These include the draft political report, the draft strategy on socioeconomic development for the 2001-2010 period, the draft plan on tasks and orientations for the 2001-2005 period, the draft supplementary report on amendment to the Party Statute, the draft report assessing the Central Committee's leadership during its current term, and the report on appraisal of the criticism and self-criticism (*kiem thao*) drive. The Plenum also discussed and made suggestions on personnel and on problems for further discussion at the next plenum before submitting the issues to the forthcoming Congress.

The need for a 12<sup>th</sup> Plenum tells us that things did not go well at the 11<sup>th</sup>. The Politburo is insistent that all ducks – economic decisions, leadership appointments, etc.-- be in a row before the Congress is summoned. This is why Congress documents are drafted early and circulated among the faithful for comment, then re-drafted and re-circulated, until there is tacit approval of all concerned. It is clear at this writing that consensus has not been reached.

Much internal debate has been generated and news of it leaked to diplomats and news correspondents in Hanoi. It suggests that even a 12<sup>th</sup> Plenum may not produce the go-ahead signal that a third pre-Congress meeting may have to be held. Vietnam is in a time of troubles (see below),

most of which encroach on the harmony required for a Congress.

One of the knottiest policy issues has to do with over-aged leadership. The chief of the Party's ideological department, Huu Tho, told BBC he did not think any Party leader should remain in office after age 70, and said the matter of age was discussed at the Plenum (BBC World Service, 16 Jan. 2001) (see below). The session did approve criteria for electing new membership at the Congress, but unofficial reports said no suggestions for major changes in top leadership surfaced "due to lack of suitable successors for top posts." It was decided to reduce CC membership from 160 to 130.

The Plenum press release described the upcoming Ninth Congress in glowing terms: "(It) is of great significance because it promotes the people's intelligence, democracy, unity and renovation, thus symbolizing our people's steadfast impetus and great expectation at the historic juncture of embarking on the new century and the new millennium. The Central Committee appeals to the entire party, the armed forces, and the people to develop the glorious revolutionary tradition of the party and the nation, strengthen unity, continue to contribute ideas to draft documents of the Ninth National Party Congress. This will help the party to formulate correct plans, set correct tasks and orientations, firmly grasp opportunities, overcome challenges, and triumphantly carry out national industrialization and modernization, thereby fulfilling the objectives of building a prosperous people, a powerful country, and an equitable and civilized society so as to firmly advance towards socialism." As usual, long on verbiage, short on specificity.

Clearly, from out of the Plenum came indications of divisiveness, especially conflicting visions of economic reform and varied opinions on anti-corruption measures.

It is from this condition that an involuted ideological debate has been ingrained in the upper reaches of the Party. The differences are difficult to identify since each faction attempts to spread itself

across the political spectrum of reformers on the left to conservatives on the right. The heart of this infighting has to do less with issues and more with the fact of political change. How much change? What are the criteria for judging necessity for change? Hence, the disputation cannot be accurately aligned along a left-right continuum. "We have certainly been surprised at the level of recent debate, not just in the National Assembly, but also in the party-controlled press," said a Western diplomat.

Adjunct pronouncements before and after the Plenum stressed the centrality of the society's two coercive institutions: the armed forces and the police. Sec-Gen Le Kha Phicu told *Nhan Dan*: "We are determined to safeguard political stability. The best way to build socialism is to build up our armed forces. Our fatherland is a focal point for hostile forces constantly seeking ways to contain, sabotage, assimilate and subvert."

The army must adopt sharp political vision based on the Party's revolutionary views, be on high alert and readiness so as not to be surprised in any situation."

Phicu said training of younger personnel is especially important because in a few years nearly all field officers with experience in the "American War" will have retired. He invoked the now-traditional example of heroism against the United States, but it was clear that today's main threat comes from Vietnam's historic adversary, China. (Note: this was a week after Vietnam and China signed a Tonkin Gulf border demarcation treaty.)

**Leadership.** Hanoi operates on the principle of collective leadership, that is, no one is first among equals. Within this authority is a trio of members who are more equal than others: the Party Sec-Gen, General Phicu, President Tran Duc Luong and Prime Minister Phan Van Khai. They are supported by four deputy prime ministers, most important of whom is Nguyen Tan Dung, overseer of the economy and head of the State Bank of Vietnam. It is within the troika and their supporters that the conservative/reform issues are debated. These issues are complicated by generational shifts

of opinion, with the younger members preferring a less authoritarian model, and by a North/South split along similar lines -- southerners, with their greater exposure to the West, prefer the more market-oriented approach.

These splits are evidenced in the anti-corruption drive -- categorized as a purification campaign -- that was initiated over a year ago. Corruption is endemic among the low paid public servants and Communist Party officials for whom it is a way of life. But at present levels it also threatens the party's credibility and moral authority. The anti-corruption drive did force the removal of a deputy prime minister, Ngo Xuan Loc (involved in a corrupt land deal), and other officials caught in the campaign.

Membership at the Ninth Congress will be reduced, chief ideologue Huu Tho (PB), told the press (16 Jan). He gave no numbers. Eighth Congress membership totaled 170; the Seventh, 173; the Sixth, 133. None of the present Eighth Congress members over the age of 65 can be nominated "except for those in key positions," he said. In the past three Congresses, about one-third of the members were replaced. The intent, Huu Tho said, is to create a younger Congress.

Pressure for this change came from the three "advisers" to the Politburo: former Party Secretary-General Do Muoi, former President Le Duc Anh, and former Premier Vo Van Kiet. They wrote to Sec-Gen Phieu saying they believed all leaders and advisers over the age of 70 should step down. They added they didn't want to be reappointed as advisers. It was an implicit call to Le Kha Phieu, now 70, to step down. PM Phan Van Khai reaches 70 in 2003 and could get a limited term (one report said he already has resigned but this was vehemently denied by official sources). There is considerable speculation about whether the conservative Phieu will be eased out of office at the Congress. Informed party insiders told *FEER* that in late October the three senior advisers sent an unprecedented joint letter to CC members criticizing Phieu for "weak" leadership. The

apparent response, on October 27, was a Politburo circular in which Party members were instructed against giving a warm welcome to US President Clinton. That thousands should have turned out to greet Clinton has, as one senior official conceded, left party leaders "stunned." Phieu's standing may well have been damaged.

The Central Committee has now gone over the important Party documents and discussed the agenda but decisions on personnel remain, hence the possibility of a final pre-Congress plenum. Spokespersons have not given a date for the Congress, and rumors abound that there will be a delay as factions struggle for consensus. A Western diplomat was quoted as saying, "I just don't think they're ready."

It is worth noting that there is a singular character about this "unprecedented debate" within the Party. In the past, intra-Party debate -- even if generated by events at the grass roots -- was orchestrated by the Politburo, hence, went from the top down. This time it is more of a case of bottom up. Governance in Vietnam grows increasingly more difficult. One Politburo member remarked wistfully to a visitor: "During the war it was easy to govern, everything was clear cut. Now this is no longer true."

Hanoi observers say the heavy press coverage on the upcoming Congress reveals a strong challenge to Party conservatives; they suggest that 15 years of *doi moi* have created an alternative vision that strains Party cohesion. The number of complaint letters sent to the National Assembly in 2000 totaled 170,000, according to Assemblywoman Ngo Ba Thanh. Most complaints involved "mandarinism", misappropriation of land, corruption, embezzlement and arbitrary application of laws.

Vietnamese people seem to be increasingly contemptuous of officials who display their wealth with luxury vehicles and elaborate homes. They ask how people with monthly salaries of \$30, and restricted in business activities, can afford such things. Assemblywoman Nguyen Thi Mai claimed

that 50 percent of the people charged with economic crimes were Party members. Delegate Pham Minh Ha said the only solution was for the Party to abandon tradition and embrace private enterprise. "Why are Party members prohibited from developing business bases," he asked? "They are citizens and have rights to make their pile through legal means." Another said that internal cohesion and respect for the Party by non-members could only be assured by a new approach.

The leadership responded to the complaints by announcing (Feb. 3) a plan to require all top officials to declare their income and assets. The move was one of several new measures being taken to tackle this "scourge of remarkable proportions that has enveloped the Party." This is seen in part as a campaign by the conservatives against the drift toward a full market economy; hence, the demand that Party members divest themselves of money-making enterprises or at least reduce the size of them.

**Change of Party Line.** For the first 60 years of its existence the Communist Party line in Vietnam was Marxism-Leninism. Ho Chi Minh was the "moral compass" but Marxism-Leninism was the Party's ideological foundation. Gradually over the years, and especially after 1975, the writings and the examples of Ho more and more supplanted Marx and, to lesser degree, Lenin. The question among ideologues was how to balance the two thought systems. What is to be the strategic stature? Has not Ho's thought developed, attained a level about that of the two "European" thinkers? At best, M-L could be applied to Vietnam only at certain moments in its history. Dialectical materialism proved useful for a while as did surplus value theory and the inevitability of historical change. Leninism was useful as a doctrine for class emancipation but Vietnam was forced to avoid the danger of its rigid dogmatism (which China did not do). Much could be learned from Lenin about governance but Marx was a steadily diminishing guide.

But officially, doctrine in Vietnam stood on three pillars: Marx, Lenin and Ho. The problem was there was no clear statement of the thought of Ho Chi Minh. By the time of the Seventh Congress, and the months leading up to it, the issue reached a critical stage among Party ideologues and among some members of the Politburo (although others seemed only mildly interested in the subject).

So, the call went out to Party intellectuals: come up with a generalized definition of the Thought of Ho Chi Minh (what Western academics would call a field theory) to be presented to the Seventh Congress. Predictably, consensus could not be achieved. Some 60 separate definitions were put forward, each backed by a Party faction. Now, before the Ninth Congress the search still goes on.

Criticism of the system is not uncommon in Vietnam but attacking the fundamental principles of ideology is risky. Retired General Tran Do, the former party ideologue, began blasting the leadership in 1977 for maintaining what many Vietnamese have come to see as an impossible contradiction between a free-market economy and a socialist government. General Do raised hackles in Hanoi with a series of communiqués calling for democracy, free elections and an end to state-run economics. He was expelled by the party in January 1999.

Chief target of the "suggestion campaign" has been the secretary general's Draft Political Report, widely circulated, widely critiqued. Points made are these: 1) the draft is too long, too vague and not detailed enough on crucial issues. The 81 socialist systems in the world are characterized as being "successful history" but this does not address the Party's fall in the USSR and Eastern European countries (dismissed as a "temporary crisis"). 2) Analysis does not take into account new forces at work: globalization, the knowledge economy, and the revolution in the communication of ideas. Lauding *doi moi* (renovation) without acknowledging that it amounts to total rejection of classic Marx. 3) Vietnam must become a civil society in which people have the right to "think

differently". The idea that too much democracy can lead to chaos is an antiquated notion. No one in Vietnam wants a destabilized society. 4) Political change can be dangerous like "water, fire, robbery and war" but these can be tamed. There can be no political stability without real democratization.

One of the best of these manifestos came from Pham Ngoc Uyen, 77, respected intellectual, veteran, Party member since age 14. He wrote: "Marxist-socialism together with nationalism helped in the primary task of liberating the country. But after 1975, Marxist-socialism failed to help solve the crucial task of combating poverty and backwardness. Therefore, our people are silently abandoning it. The new revolution is one of brains, not guns, but Vietnam can only succeed if communism bows out in favour of the free market." (SCMP, 15 Jan 2001).

**Balky Public.** Ethnic unrest swept the Central Highlands beginning early in 2001. Thousands of minority protesters took to the streets in the region's main towns -- a four-day protest by thousands in Pleiku, 2,000 demonstrators in Ban Me Thuot. For the most part, they were venting their anger over loss of land to lowland Vietnamese settlers. Press reports said the unrest also was triggered by religious tensions, stoked by police action. Officials dispatched PAVN troops to Dak Lak and Gia Lai provinces, highland coffee growing areas. Military helicopters patrolled the coffee fields. Tourists were barred from Yok Don National Park, the country's largest wildlife reserve and major tourist attraction.

If the Highland dissent was unprecedented, so was Hanoi's mass media coverage. VNA, the state news agency, got on the story immediately and give it heavy play. Editors blamed "bad elements and extremists" for whipping up misunderstanding after the arrest of 20 ethnic minority men (subsequently the two most prominent were released after signing a "protocol confirming their illegal behavior and asking for leniency").

In Hanoi officials delivered a stern warning to religious leaders to keep out of the ethnic unrest.

The warning came on the heels of demonstrations in Gia Lai by Protestants. "You must not sow disunity," said Nguyen Vi Ha, the province's top official addressing the Congregations of Evangelical Church of Vietnam. Authorities in Hanoi (Feb 6) punished 13 members of the SRV Ethnic Affairs Department, including Chairman Hoang Duc Nghi. Some were expelled from the Party; others were reprimanded; all were guilty of "wrong doings," said the Party with no further explanation. The Protestant Evangelical church does not have official recognition in Vietnam. Neither does the Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam whose leading monk and prominent dissident, Thich Quang Do, was arrested for attempting to pay a *Tet* visit to the church's patriarch, Thich Huyen Quang, long under house arrest in Huc. This triggered a worldwide protest from Buddhists and Do was subsequently released. Hanoi officials insisted Do never was arrested; "Vietnam's point of view on religious freedom has been made clear many times" said a spokesman. About 10 percent of Vietnamese are Christians, primarily Catholic; about 80% are believed to be Buddhists.

**In other news of dissent in Vietnam this quarter:**

\* Two National Assembly legislators were ousted for "wrong doing": Le Minh Chau of Dong Thap Province (causing "internal infighting" in the province), and Tran Khan, Binh Thuan Province (allegedly involved in a logging scam).

\* Six members of the Hoa Hao sect denounced abuse of power by officials in An Giang Province, were subsequently tried and sent to prison for one to three years.

The Party newspaper *Nhan Dan* (Oct 12) reported that 2000 Party officials and members had been disciplined last year (2000), found guilty of "abusing democracy, violating laws and causing bad consequences in many fields."

\* Forty Viet *kieu* were arrested in August "for plotting the violent overthrow of the Vietnamese government," *Nhan Dan* reported.

Involved was the Free Vietnam Revolutionary Government, founded by Nguyen Huu Chanh (30 April 1995). The organization, said the newspaper, "sabotages political stability through explosions and riots. It hired drug addicts and prostitutes and trained them to use explosives, bring in leaflets, anti-socialist videos and audio tapes." An SRV spokesman said that the Free Vietnam "peace campaign" is led by Nguyen Huu Chanh, a Viet kieu millionaire dentist who describes himself as "prime minister in exile." Chanh's whereabouts is not known. (*SCMP*, Aug 17)

\* Foreign Enemies. The regime continued its campaign against "foreign plots." This long-standing allegation is not one that can be proven, but serves a good purpose. Like China, Vietnamese leaders find a foreign enemy useful. Like China, if they don't have one, they invent one. Phan Van, speaking at an assemblage of police (Aug 19), said: "We must tackle foreign plots and impositions at a time when hostile and reactionary forces show no sign of giving up their sabotage efforts. These are still seeking factors which might spark political and social crises and justify an intervention aimed at eradicating socialism and the leadership of the Party."

His comments came the same day that Police Minister Le Minh Huong declared: "Strongly supported and helped by imperialist countries and hostile foes, extremist reactionaries among Vietnamese communities overseas have not stopped organizing campaigns to send men and weapons into the country to overthrow the revolutionary regime."

## VIETNAMESE MILITARY

The Party organ within the military held its 7<sup>th</sup> Congress Jan 3, 2001 in Hanoi, with 358 delegates plus 342 delegates from subordinate Party organizations. Sec Gen Le Kha Phieu addressed the Congress, praised it highly and urged it to help preserve political stability in Vietnam.

The PAVN soldier has allegiances that extend beyond the armed forces. First loyalty is to the Party. Within a unit, at least prior to the introduction of the one-man command system, his allegiance was divided between his military commander and his political commissar. It is never made clear exactly how the military as an entity-- or the individual soldier in particular -- is to perform some of these duties. The Party is content to sensitize the individual to duty without ever explaining exactly what that is to mean.

Much of what officially is communicated to the military also applies to the Vietnamese police. The SRV Police Forces' Party Central Committee held its 3rd Congress in Hanoi January 3. Min. of Public Security Lt. Gen. Le Minh Huong delivered the police Political Report. He lauded the efforts by the police to maintain political stability in Vietnam, reduce crime and "enhance efficiency in security management". The job of the police in the next five years, he said, is to mobilize the people to fight the hostile forces, crime and social evil as contributions to national industrialization and modernization.

PAVN's first mission, of course, is defense of the Fatherland. It requires loyalty, dedication, military skill, and depending on rank, knowledge of strategy and military science. Its second duty is to ensure continuation of the present sociopolitical system. This overwhelming commitment has had secondary effects -- it has created a praetorian state. An imperative of militarism runs through the entire society.

PAVN's third mission is socioeconomic. It must contribute to the yet-unfinished restructuring of society, the never-ending effort to create a classless society.



**The Young and the Restless.** Three reporters for the magazine *Tuoi Tre* (Youth) sampled public opinion of the young in HCMC but the print run of 120,000 copies of the issue were destroyed by state censors. For an article titled "Idols of Youth", the reporters surveyed 200 randomly chosen individuals, aged 15 to 28, who were asked to name their idols and substantiate their choices. Forty-three percent claimed they had no idols, 57 percent named one or more whom they emulate. Politicians led the group with 38.6 percent identifying them as their idols. Ho Chi Minh was mentioned by 39 percent, Gen. Vo Nguyen Giap by 35%. From Vietnam's current leadership, only Premier Phan Van Khai made it on the list with 3.2%, the same percentage as Hillary Clinton and behind U.S. President Bill Clinton (6.5%). Businessmen were named idols by 22.7% of the positive respondents. Microsoft founder Bill Gates was a clear winner.

Rumors are rife in Ho Chi Minh City that Le Van Nuoi, the publisher of *Tuoi Tre*, and his deputy may be fired. In 1988 publisher Vu Kim Hanh of the same magazine was fired for printing an article about a French wife that Ho Chi Minh had in his youth, a fact revealed by a French historian and amply confirmed thereafter, the article said.

The high-level leadership this quarter renewed its attention to young Vietnamese. The Youth Union and the Young Pioneers held their respective congresses and were addressed by major Party figures. Politburo "consultant" Do Muoi gave gifts to the 20 outstanding Good Pupils of Hanoi. Pham The Duyet (PB member) praised the achievements of the 900 Good Pupils of the capital in the past year.

In the past five years, 147,000 young children have been admitted to the Young Pioneers' team and 68,000 Young Pioneers to the Communist Youth Union in the city. As many as 1,400,000 students have become Uncle Ho's Good Pupils.

An official campaign is underway to damp down the people's restiveness. The leadership is fully aware of the level of complaint. Dep. PM

Nguyen Cong Tan told journalists that the central government in the third quarter of 2000 received 1,500 letters of denunciation or complaint, most of them well-founded." Chiefly, these involved local Party cadres taking advantage of their positions and actions affecting land tenure. The central government fielded six "conflict resolution teams" to defuse the disputes. Officials at the center consider these as local problems to be solved locally, and appear to have little patience when they are not settled.

This general restiveness is the product of many grievances, the soil for which was cultivated for generations by rhetoric on the need for, and benefits to accrue from revolution in Vietnam. These grievances today are traceable specifically to economic or religious matters and no longer held to be revolutionary, but "social evils". To wit: the rare public show of anger directed against the government as dissidents camp outside government offices in HCMC, display banners and pass out handbills telling of official corruption and illegal land deals; the bomb that kills the Ky Hoa (Ha Tinh Province) police chief and wounds three children; the arrest of Buddhists in the South bringing aid to flood victims; the smuggled documents that surfaced in Washington claiming local people in one highland village seized Party officials and held them hostage for five days; and the Hanoi mass media blaming troubles on the Viet *kieu* for "sabotaging political stability through explosions and riots."

This restiveness triggering instability is worrisome to the other ASEAN countries who call on Hanoi to stabilize Vietnam's sociopolitical scene. Without a new approach, the efforts to eradicate "social evils" are likely to fail, with the society poised to suffer ever deepening divisions.

So, are the Vietnamese masses revolting? The stories in this issue of *Indochina Chronology* suggest they are indeed, especially in light of official, high-level public statements about dangers. However, judgments must be made carefully when relying on such reports because of the institution

known as *kiem thao* (criticism/self-criticism). During the Vietnam War, analysts in Saigon would point to published warning from Hanoi's top security people about the North in dire straits. Analysts tended to conclude the place was about to blow up. Then, nothing. A year later the drama would be repeated. Finally, it was realized that *kiem thao* was a public mobilization drill (similar to the late FBI chief J. Edgar Hoover's annual appearance before Congress warning that the Communist Party in the U.S. was getting larger and more dangerous). Now Viet *kieu*, as South Vietnamese did earlier, perpetuate these wishful reports; journalists were seduced then, especially if they could hang the story on an official source, and perhaps sometimes they still are.

### FLOODS AND THEIR AFTERMATH

The monsoon floods that overwhelmed the Mekong and its tributaries in September continued to claim casualties through October, even as waters receded. Vietnam suffered a double blow when the historic floods in the South were met by rain-swollen rivers in the Center as a tropical depression stalled off the coast. Deaths in Vietnam and Cambodia total nearly 600.

Relief efforts are still underway by governments and international agencies. It appears that both national and provincial governments were late to anticipate the magnitude of the Mekong flooding, and emergency response initially was seen as the responsibility of local authorities. It was early October before organized national relief efforts got underway in cooperation with aid agencies. U.S. aid is being flown on USAF C-130s from Elmendorf Air Force Base in Alaska.

Vietnam reports favorable conditions for agriculture in the North, but major flood damage in some central and southern provinces. In Long An and Bac Lieu in the Mekong Delta, some 14,000 hectares of newly planted rice were submerged, about half of the crop completely destroyed. Bac

Lieu farmers have transplanted 16,000 hectares of winter-spring rice, VNA reported, but this was only half its plan.

Major flooding occurred as late as December when heavy rains flooded rivers in Khanh Hoa Province on the central coast. One person was killed and landslides damaged roads, irrigation works, and destroyed tons of rice seed.

Cambodia has reached the stage where a serious debate is underway about the effects of dams, flood control and irrigation schemes. This is also the concern of the Mekong River Commission, which promotes and coordinates sustainable development of water and related resources for the riparian countries. Vietnam is particularly concerned about China and its dam building on the upper reaches of the Mekong, not only in terms of floods but about pollution, damage to fisheries, and trapping the rich silt that enriches the soil. It is not believed that the dam China is just completing in Yunnan Province was a factor in last year's devastating floods on the lower Mekong.

### **Vietnam Health Notes**

On AIDS Day (Dec 1) Hanoi officials reported 27,290 persons in Vietnam are infected with the HIV virus; 4,460 have developed AIDS; 2,370 have died. A convoy of cars traveled down main streets of Hanoi on the day distributing down main streets of Hanoi on the day distributing condoms.

Experts say that despite the best efforts by American veterans and others, land mines and UXO (unexploded ordnance) will continue to kill main Vietnamese for another 50 years. Still out there, and deadly, are 3.5 million land mines and 300,000 ton of UXO.

## Year of the Snake

Vietnam and much of the rest of Asia once again celebrate the Lunar New Year, the quintessential holiday. The *Tet* in Vietnam runs for three days to a month, depending on local custom, beginning on Wednesday, Jan. 24. Again, the observance is subjected to pronouncements, sacred and profane.

From Hanoi orders have gone out: observe frugality, stabilize gasoline supplies, above all "avoid commodity fever", i.e., excess spending. PM Phan Van Khai issued a series of decrees (87/CP and No 321/1999/ND-CP) regulating observances, banning toy guns, and emphasizing that the ban on fireworks remains in effect (noting reports of numerous instances of smuggling fireworks from China, which have been confiscated). He sends US\$7 bonus to state employees. The Buddhist patriarch, Thich Huyen Quang of the Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam (UBCV), issues a *Tet* message exhorting Buddhists in Vietnam and abroad to struggle actively against poverty, ignorance and injustice, also to struggle for democracy and human rights.

Vietnamese traditionally spend up to a month preparing for the New Year, with households stocking up on sticky rice cakes and other *Tet* specialties, cleaning house, visiting pagodas, and buying gifts for the ancestral altar as well as family and friends. Pre-*Tet* markets are nearly overwhelmed as the holiday draws near, particularly for ornamental flowers (peach blossom) and small fruit-bearing trees (kumquat). Heavy sales were expected of children's clothing and banquet items. Hanoi marketers in early January report ordering 700 tons of pork and beef, 300,000 liters of peanut and other cooking oils, 100,000 liters of *nuoc mam*, and 2.5 million bottles of alcohol/wine.

And Reuters (28 Nov.) reported that rat barbecue would not be among the delicacies on *Tet* tables this year as the recent floods all but wiped out the rat population in the Mekong Delta. Rat meat is sold in markets, and farmers, who want to get rid of

the pests anyway, catch and sell them. As one Vietnamese said, "rat is pretty good if you know how to cook it."

The Party line on *Tet* in Hanoi has moved 180 degrees in recent years. Initially, the holiday was treated as mere bourgeois sentiment with too many religious overtones and ignored as much as possible. Then it was targeted as an undisciplined exercise in overspending; capitalist waste, not socialist thrift. Eventually, it was clear that the people would neither abandon the traditional obligations of *Tet* nor deny themselves its pleasures, and now *Tet* is officially embraced with enthusiasm.

"Bid farewell to *Canh Thin*, Year of the Dragon. Vietnam is proud of its achieved landmarks...(*Tet*) brightens the intellect and strong will of the Vietnamese people. . . . The first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century saw...the oppressed nation stuck in a dead alley. Fortunately, the foundation of the Communist Party of Vietnam in 1930 cast aside the dark clouds of oppression and slavery.

"Having undergone years of devastation of wars and natural calamities, Vietnam treasures every single achievement obtained in the past 15 years of national renovation at the cost of sweat and intellectual labor of every patriotic Vietnamese. Despite repeated storms and floods of the previous year, Vietnam obtained 36 million tonnes of food; bumper harvests have placed Vietnam the second biggest rice exporter in the world in the past five years. This success is more significant against the background that Vietnam was subject to a quarter of a century of enemy embargo and the socialist system in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe disintegrated.

"Vietnam is fully aware that numerous difficulties and challenges still lie ahead and enemies never stop attempting sabotage activities. However...Vietnam is well equipped to enter the new millenium as a powerful and prosperous nation with an equitable, democratic and civilized society." (*Nhan Dan*, 23 Jan. 2000)

The winds of change that have buffeted the Soviet Union and East Europe – this “retreat from communism,” if that is what it is – have yet to reach Vietnam’s shores as more than a brisk indeterminate breeze. “The future,” as former Communist Party chief Nguyen Van Linh was wont to say, “the future, comrades, lies ahead.”

Reformers seek to mobilize the forces of change. But the battle between the reformers and neoconservatives, as they are labeled by outsiders, has not exactly been joined. It is a struggle marked by swings of success and setback. Observers monitoring this struggle for change do not agree on either its exact course or its pace. They do agree that Vietnam has myriad problems -- economic, social, administrative, diplomatic and psychological that must be addressed. Despite years of an energetic and often innovative reform effort, they stubbornly persist.

This is also the judgment of the Politburo. Indeed, no one in Vietnam would endorse the status quo as suitable for the new millennium. In the past, arguments that were very ideological in nature raged over what kinds of programs were needed. But as the early reform experimentation proved unsuccessful, the level of dogmatism in both camps was reduced and people were persuaded to join in seeking practical solutions.

The central quarrel today is not about the fact of change, indeed, massive changes have taken place over the past 15 years and much progress has been made. The quarrel that remains is over the inherent dangers implicit in change. How far and how fast can Vietnam go without risking the unintended effects that follow in the wake of deliberately induced change. The ruling Politburo’s opinion is influenced, on the one hand by what it sees as undesirable external influences on the culture and society, and perhaps even more by the lessons of Tiananmen and the Berlin Wall.

***Chuc Mung Nam Moi, and The Ky Moi***  
(Happy New Year and Century)

## News of the Field

**Zumwalt Personal Papers.** The Vietnam Center at Texas Tech has received the personal papers of Adm. Elmo Zumwalt, a former member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who has been credited with visualizing and then building the modern Navy.

Zumwalt served on the Vietnam Center’s National Advisory Council before his death at 79 in January 2000. On December 19, 130 boxes, including material about Zumwalt’s order to release Agent Orange in Vietnam, arrived at the university. Photo albums, telescopes and awards were displayed for the first time.

**President Bush.** Uncertain about the outcome of the 2000 presidential election, as was everyone, Hanoi leaders on December 14 decided Bush was the winner and sent him a congratulatory message. It said: “We hope relations between Vietnam and the U.S. will continue to improve and develop on the basis of respect, equality and mutual advantage.” Foreign correspondents say privately Hanoi officials made no secret of their desire to see Al Gore the winner. (AFP, Dec 15 2000)

**M.E. Sharpe.** Currently is seeking manuscripts and proposals for academic reference works in economics, finance, industrial relations, business and management, all fields of history and the social sciences, international relations, and area studies, which can be use to scholars and students for research purposes. Especially interested handbooks and research guides; disciplinary and sub-disciplinary bibliographies. Contact: Editorial Director, M.E. Sharpe, Publisher, 80 Business Park Drive, Armonk, New York 10504, phone: +1.914.273.1800, fax: +1.914.273.2106, email: [editorial@mesharpe.com](mailto:editorial@mesharpe.com)

“**The Press in Vietnam** is no longer just a propaganda machine. Scores of lively newspaper have sprung up. Artists have found new leeway to choose their topics and display their work abroad. One of “Vietnam’s most respected novelists, Dung Thu Huong, told People Magazine in April: “The government is a bunch of liars. They are corrupt, ignorant, incompetent leaders. “She did not go to prison.” David Lamb. Los Angeles Times (Aug 18, 2001).

## BIBLIOGRAPHY – BOOKS AND MONOGRAPHS

*The Imperial Archives of the Nguyen Dynasty*, Phan Huy Le, trans. and chief ed. The 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> years of the Minh Mang reign (1825-1826); 790 pages; 170 archival entries. A fraction of a fraction of what is available in Hanoi archives. If nothing else these charming entries testify to the meticulous record keeping in the pre-French era -- and to the care taken to protect them from wartime damage (moving from Hue to Dalat to Saigon). Found here is a wealth of detail that elicits a sense of wonder and admiration for a culture now long gone. Begins with initial entry of the Binh Dinh "protector's" crop report to the Emperor: "In December there was no rain, fields withered. So we sincerely prayed to Heaven. It rained. The fields became green. We request permission to spend public money on a thanksgiving ritual." The Emperor comments: "Good. We acknowledge." Many of the entries are weather, crop and food price reports; others deal with tax evaders, corvee labor regulations, and funerals for "Great Ministers". Fascinating reading. Preface by Anthony Reid (Australian National University); Foreword by Duong Van Kham (director, National Dept. of Archives, Hanoi). Gioi publishers, Hanoi. (2000)

*Opting for Partnership: Governance Innovations in Southeast Asia*, Joaquin Gonzalez et al, and eds. Case histories of efforts by states and societies to strengthen their economies. From Hanoi comes "The Vietnam Business Council: Collaborative Policy-making and Information Sharing". The Council is a newly formed institution that seeks to serve as a model for private sector development in Vietnam (at the moment it appear to be a bridge too far.) From the Institute of Governance (Canadian non-profit organization), 122 Clarence St., Ottawa, Ontario, Canada K1N 5P6, \$25.90. (2000)

*White Christmas in April: the Collapse of South Vietnam, 1975* by J. Edward Lee (Winthrop Univ., NC) and Toby Haynsworth (Winthrop and

US Navy, ret.), eds. A kind of cut-and-paste scrapbook with a strange title. Contributions by 60 or so, beginning with Alexander Haig and ending with George Esper. In between are found, among others, William LeGro, Tom Polgar, Rich Armitage, Stu Herrington, Wolfgang Lehman, and three Vietnamese including Tran Trong Khan (former VC officer now at the SRV embassy in Washington). Also poetry, copies of State and DoD classified telegrams (which will make old hands weep), snippets of Shakespeare, chronology of events and a glossary. Illustrated. Useful work for fiction writers and lecturers looking for citations. Peter Lang Publishing, New York. (1999)

*Vietnam and Other American Fantasies* by Bruce Franklin (Rutgers University). A well turned out piece of professional propaganda (propaganda as originally defined by the Roman Catholic church: to propagate the faith). Franklin was one of the academic community's knights in shining armor, taking on Stanford, the Vietnam War and Evil America, past and present. This book appears to be aimed at remnants of the anti-war crowd, who now entertain doubts about the cause or who, in any case, have moved on to other matters. Franklin seeks to lure them back. Also to offer to those happy few still at the barricades -- chiefly in the universities -- encouragement, fresh interpretation and new metaphors to raise high the banners of the "forgotten history of the Vietnam War." Like all skilled propagandists, he reaches widely for metaphoric connections: Star Wars, American Civil War photography, MIA myth, virtual reality, etc. In the wrong hands this is a dangerous book. Univ. of Massachusetts Press, \$28.95. (2000)

***Honor Bound: American Prisoners of War in Southeast Asia 1961-1973*** by Stuart Rochester and Frederick Kiley The world of the POW was drama, set apart from all other. It was played out in separate arenas: prisons in the North, jungle stockades in the South, caves in Laos. Performances ranged from quiet courage to defiant heroism to unspeakable tragedy to lasting notoriety. This fine work is based on interviews with 100 ex-POWs (the heart of the book), archival materials, and illustrations: maps, dozens of photographs, and prisoner sketches of camps and torture techniques. The remarkable character of this work is the evenhandedness of the authors; the section on chief POW villain Robert Garwood is superb reporting and treats him not so much with sympathy as with understanding. The same can be said for the captors who inflicted torture to gain information or to punish. Some loved their work; a few loathed it; others simply closed their minds. Putting aside particular wars or circumstances, this is a quite revealing study of the human species. Recommended. Naval Institute Press, 706 pp., \$36.95. (1999)

***Headline Diplomacy: How News Coverage Affects Foreign Policy*** by Philip Seib (Southern Methodist Univ.) Case histories of ways the mass media takes it upon itself to define success and failure, for example, the 1968 Tet Offensive in Vietnam, the Iran hostage crisis, the Bay of Pigs. What the press does is create public impatience, which pressures presidents into hasty actions turning trivial interventions into suffering everywhere. Praeger Publishers, \$59.95. (1996)

***East Asia and the U.S.: Current Status and Five-Year Outlook.*** Report from a conference (February 2000) sponsored by the Library of Congress (FRD) and the National Intelligence Council and attended by 20 analysts gathered from in and out of the U.S. government, all experienced with good credentials. Chapters deal with Japanese attitudes toward the U.S., trends in Chinese geopolitical assessment, ASEAN political interests, values and policies. The chapter, "Southeast Asian

Perspectives", by Marvin Ott (National War College) tends to give Indochina short shrift but treatment is solid. Available from Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC

***Why A Soldier: A Signal Corpsman's Tour From Vietnam to the Moscow Hot Line*** by David Fitz-Enz (US Army colonel, ret.). Technology, especially technical communications, revolutionized warfare in Vietnam. In particular, it changed the command function. Essentially, this is the story of the Signal Corps in action. A wandering report, it is not focused nor deeply analytical, more's the pity. It is a fact, not a bar room war story, that Lyndon Johnson in the Oval Office could, and did, pick up a phone and call a soldier sitting on a hill overlooking the Ia Drang valley; Fitz-Enz set it up. This may have been a technological miracle but it's no way to run a war. Illustrated. Ballantine Books, \$6.99. (2000)

***McNamara's Vietnam War and the Untold Truth*** by Pham Kim Vinh (prominent Viet kieu, author of 33 books). Written in 1995 when the author takes off after McNamara's first book, *In Retrospect*. Chief point made is that McNamara did not recognize that "the aid provided to South Vietnam constitutes one of the most noble crusades of human kind. America is the only country to engage in such a cause with such noble magnanimity" (says McNamara's tribute to the U.S. commitment was limited to "eight lines and two words on page 333" of *In Retrospect*. Vinh says McNamara "betrayed those under his command, betrayed the country he had taken a solemn oath to serve...has the blood of 50,000 on his hands" and "no calculated apologies or crocodile tears on television can wash away the depths of his infamy." Rest of the book is devoted to "untruths" around LBJ and Nguyen Van Thieu, the Western media, and of course, Gen. Giap and his PAVN troops. An angry, authentic voice. Vinh would be advised to revise his work in light of McNamara's second book, *Argument Without End*. From Pham Kim Vinh Research Institute. (1995)

**Major General Nguyen Van Hieu, ARVN** by Tin Nguyen. Biography of a South Vietnam general officer who has been likened to Patton, Rommel, Montgomery, and LeClerc. He was much admired by Vietnamese civilians and respected by his American advisors. If there had been more like him, the author believes, the South would have won the war. From Writers Club Press, San Jose, New York. (2000)

**Rice and Cotton: South Vietnam and South Alabama** by John Givhan. Autobiography of one of those singular figures out of the Vietnam War: Lt. Peg Leg, now of Jacob's Manor Ranch, Safford, AL. A decorated helicopter pilot, Givhan served in the Delta in the period before large numbers of American troops had arrived in Vietnam. Being a "deep South" southerner and a natural storyteller, Givhan weaves memories of his life at home with what he finds in a South Vietnam at war (the travails of the delta's rice farmers), and with stories of his fellow soldiers in the 120<sup>th</sup> Aviation Company, the "Deans". A lawyer, he writes well, which is the highest compliment one can pay an autobiographer. Privately published; available from [Orders@Xlibris.com](mailto:Orders@Xlibris.com) Givhan's e-mail address reflects his wounding in Vietnam: [ltpegleg@alaweb.com](mailto:ltpegleg@alaweb.com)

**Tangled Memories: the Vietnam War, the AIDS Epidemic and the Politics of Remembering** by Marita Sturken. How the AIDS quilt and the Vietnam Memorial in Washington create a cultural memory. Univ. of California Press, \$45 hc, \$16.95 paper. (2000)

**Battle For the Central Highlands: A Special Forces Story** by George Dooley. The Central Highlands in Vietnam is that clutch of provinces that includes the towns of Bao Loc, Dalat, Bannethuot, Pleiku and Dak Tho, a distinct geographic entity but otherwise not easily defined. During the war, the Highlands belonged to the US Special Forces (Green Berets) and the Montagnards of the Civilian Irregular Defense Group (CIDG) plus the FULRO cadres loosely tied to the French.

Most of the fighting here was by these forces, boxed in by troops from North Vietnam. This is a memoir about Dooley and his A-team as they fought a war he says was hot and bloody, one in which no one got a second chance. Ballantine Books, \$6.99. (2000)

**LRRP Company Commando: The Cav's LRRP/Rangers in Vietnam 1968-69.** The Long Range Reconnaissance Patrols of the 52<sup>nd</sup> Infantry stalked the enemy to his lair, boldly staged POW snatches. They are, the author writes, ordinary men with extraordinary courage and heroism. Not saints but often miracle workers. Ballantine Books, \$6.99. (2000)

**Vietnamese Village in Transition: Background and Consequences of Reform Policies in Rural Vietnam**, Bernhard Dahm and Vincent Houben, eds. Scholars, mostly European, contribute research findings on various aspects of village life in both northern and southern Vietnam: land issues, cooperatives, education and health, women's life, etc. Focus is on post-*doi moi* period but historical data is used to understand the changes that have taken place. Vol. 7 in series Passau Contributions to Southeast Asian Studies, Passau Univ; Germany. (1999)

**Mong Phu: un Village du Delta du Fleuve Rouge (Vietnam)**, Nguyen Tung, ed. Published by L'Harmattan, Paris, in Vietnamese and French. (2000)

***Where China Meets Southeast Asia: Social and Cultural Change in the Border Regions***, Grant Evans, Christopher Hutton and Kuan Khun Eng (Univ. of Hong Kong), eds. Deals with the symbiotic relationships that have developed between China and the societies along her borders. Some are beneficial, some detrimental. Reports on border trade, ethnic minority migrations, and various forms of cross-cultural linkage. Thesis set forth in opening essay: nothing is, as it seems. By 16 specialists, most of them anthropologists or sociologists. Interesting work. From ISEAS, Singapore, \$42.90 hc, \$28.90 pb. (2000)

***The Ghost Locust*** by Heather Stroud (NGO worker). An ambitious novel involving the wartime North Vietnamese Public Security Service, refugee camps and corruption. Protagonist Thanh is sent to the South from Hanoi to check reports of a Viet Cong massacre in Hue during the 1968 Tet offensive. Story then jumps ahead to 1980 when Thanh runs afoul of massive corruption among local security people, then across the border into a Chinese refugee camp, then to Hong Kong and still more corruption. Conveys well the atmosphere of postwar life in refugee camps. The author is a Brit who worked in Hong Kong camps helping inmates struggle against both Chinese and Vietnamese injustice. From Asia 2000, Ltd., Hong Kong. (2000)

***Whirling Fire*** by Jack Thomas (writer). Poetry by a one-time advisor to the RF-PF (militia) in Hau Nghia Province. It was a simple life, he says, living in a bunker, bathing out of a well. He learned to avoid VC booby traps while on patrol, how to coordinate artillery fire and chopper gunship strikes. Through it all, he came to understand the richness of the Vietnamese culture, and this fueled a need to write poetry. One poem, titled "Fun", reads in part: "Not having diarrhea/In a Vietnamese outpost/During a monsoon." From Lyndon Publications, Houston, TX, \$14. On line at [lyndonpublications@insync.net](mailto:lyndonpublications@insync.net)

***People's Liberation Army After Next***, Susan Puska, ed. Eight specialists on China's armed

forces, most of them with inside-the-beltway connections, examine the PLA -- its technological development, maritime strategy, missile development, doctrinal reforms, etc. Highly technical. Good scene setting by Amb. James Lilley. Authors write primarily with an eye on Taiwan, although there are scattered references to Vietnam. Available from Publications and Production Office, Strategic Studies Institute, Carlisle Barracks, PA 17013-5244, or on line: [rummelr@awc.carlisle.army.mil](mailto:rummelr@awc.carlisle.army.mil) Also from SSI and previously noted (IC XIX: 3, Aug.-Oct.) is the monograph, *Chinese Arms Exports: Policy, Players and Process* by Evan Medeiros and Bates Gill.

***The Dragon Millennium: Chinese Business in the Coming World Economy*** by Frank-Jurgen Richter (Stuttgart Univ. Tsukuba Univ., Tokyo), ed. There are enormous business opportunities out there in China, say these 17 specialists (most of them ethnic Chinese) from universities in Pennsylvania, Southern California, Michigan, Hawaii, Hong Kong and Mainland China. They advise potential investors not to concern themselves about the current Asian economic downturn, but they add, you have got to know what you are doing. They explore and analyze opportunities and lay out the management practices needed to realize them. Perhaps not everyone leaving for China to make a fortune shares the optimistic consensus of these authors, but this is a book all could do well to take along and read on the plane. Quorum Books, Westport, CT. (2000)

***The RAAF in Vietnam: Australian Air Involvement in the Vietnam War 1962-75*** by Chris Coulthard-Clark (consultant to Australian Defence Industries, Ltd.). Appears to be a definitive book on the Aussie airmen in Vietnam from the initial commitment of squadrons and specialists in 1964 to pullout in 1972 (then a brief return in 1975). They were an enthusiastic bunch and performed well. Fourth in the series of official histories of Australia's involvement. From Allen and Unwin in association with the Australian War Memorial.



***Three-War Marine: The Pacific, Korea and Vietnam*** by Francis Fox Perry (USMC, ret.) He witnessed just about everything that could take place in an American war -- at Guadalcanal, in the Okinawa Campaign, at Inchon and the Chosin Reservoir, and finally at the Combat Operations Center in Saigon. A story well and frankly told. Amazingly, throughout it all Perry never degenerated into cynicism. Pacifica Press, Pacifica, CA, \$24.95. (2000).

***The Story of Ray Davis*** (as told to William Davis). Autobiography of this general of Marines, Medal of Honor winner, veteran of three wars. Regarded by many of as the best of the best of the Corps. Now lives in Stockbridge, GA. From Research Triangle Publishing, Fuquay-Varina, NC. (1995)

***Handbook for Teaching Vietnamese Speaking Students***. This venerable teaching tool (first issued in 1982, rev. in 1994) now available from Bureau of Publications, California Department of Education, Box 271, Sacramento, CA 95812-0271, at \$5.50 (previously \$14.30).

***Against the Flood*** by Ma Van Khang (prominent contemporary Vietnamese author). This novel, dealing with the rare subject of sex and politics, shocked Vietnam in 1999. Protagonist Khiem, a novelist and Hanoi publishing house editor, confronts a clique of conformist writers who have arranged to have the Party ban his book, and also to get his mistress fired from her job (she goes into opium smuggling). Khiem's wife dies after a botched abortion; his best friend is railroaded into exile in Angola and dies there. Not a pretty picture of today's Vietnam. Well reviewed abroad. Trans. by Phan Thanh Hao and Wayne Karlin, Curbstone Press, \$15.95. (2000)

***The Co-Vans: U.S. Marine Advisors in Vietnam*** by John Miller (editor of U.S. naval magazines; one time advisor to South Vietnam Marine Corps). "Co van" was the US Marine Corps term for advisor in Vietnam who worked outside the "cocoon" of the Corps. Miller was one of them. His is a one-of-a-kind story. Many a good yarn

here, the best perhaps is about outwitting Saigon jeep thieves. Illustrated. From Naval Institute Press, Annapolis, MD 21402, \$24.95. (2000)

***On Point: A Rifleman's Year in the Boonies: Vietnam 1967-68*** by Roger Hayes (now a park ranger in Illinois.) That's really not the place you want to be -- out there on point in ambush country. Hayes' 12 month's tour coincided with one of the hottest years of the war. He did a good job, served his unit well, was lucky -- wounded four times but, importantly, he survived. From Presidio Press, Novato, CA, \$27.95. (2000)

***Vietnam: A Time of War, A Time of Peace*** by William Kimball. Sentimental gee-whiz-look-at-me memoir. Kimball is a different cut from most Marines (see above), although just as patriotic. Lots of war stories here, which need not be subjected to over-verification. Some of his tales are downright hilarious. From Vets with a Mission, PO Box 9112, South Lake Tahoe, CA 96158. (1994)

***The Clinton Foreign Policy Legacy*** by Alvin Rubinstein (Foreign Policy Research Inst.). What the Clinton administration did and did not do abroad during the past eight years and what this means we must do in the future. M. E. Sharpe. (2001)

***Escape from the Box*** by Edward Hubbard (Col., USAF, ret.). Thoughtful work on what author calls achieving the wonder of human potential -- wisdom drawn from his 2,420 days as a POW in Hanoi during the Vietnam War. Like James Stockdale and a few others, he came out of his ordeal a better man than he went in. The secret, as Socrates said: Know Thyself. Praxis Int., \$19.95. (1994)

***Prelude To Tragedy; Vietnam 1960-65***. Harvey Neese and John O'Donnell eds. Essays from eight old Vietnam hands ranging widely from first-rate (George Tanham on defeating the insurgency) to self-serving (Tran Ngoc Chau; "My War Story"), but each important in its own right, illustrative of the Vietnam war's competing perception syndrome. The authors' well-justified theme is that U.S. policy makers never paid much attention to the proffered

advice from the rice paddies. All in all, this book is a good read. Naval Institute Press, Annapolis, MD (2001)

***Why Vietnam Invaded Cambodia: Political Culture and the Causes of War*** by Stephen Morris (Johns Hopkins Univ.). A work in two parts. First, an account of the PAVN-Khmer Rouge face-off (invasion by the Vietnamese) in regional strategic context (especially the Sino Soviet dispute) which was more or less, about national interest and similar traditional motives. Second, an attack on existing academic explanations, particularly from the "rational actor" school. Comes as close as any literature of the field to answering the question: were the Khmer Rouge communists and if so how is communism defined and what does it mean? Not easy to apply to Pol Pot, given lack of paper trail out of the killing fields, Morris approaches it from the opposite direction, from Moscow where he did a great deal of work in the archives and from Mao and is his company. From Stanford University Press. (1999)

***After Vietnam: Legacies of a Lost War*** by Charles Neu (Brown University) ed. Five essays which, says the introduction, trace America's path from the slough of defeat to the exuberances of the late 1990s: 1) "The Vietnam War and the Transformation of America" by Neu; 2) "From Metaphor to Quagmire: The Domestic Legacy of the Vietnam War" by Brian Balogh (University of Virginia); 3) "Preparing Not to Refight the Last War: The Impact of the Vietnam War on the U.S. Military" by George Herring (University of Kentucky); 4) "Revolutionary Heroism and Politics in Postwar Vietnam" by Robert Brigham, Vassar College; and 5) "Reflections on War in the Twenty-first Century" by Robert McNamara (Ford Motor, Sec of Def. World Bank). From John Hopkins Univ. Press (2000)

***Nien Giam To Chuc Hanh Chinh Viet Nam 2000*** (Yearbook of Vietnamese Government

Administration Year 2000. Nguyen Quoc Tran, et al (eds.) Biographic data is the hardest kind of information to get out of Vietnam. It is a due to Confucian reserve, Buddhist effacement and Vietnamese inability to trust. Outsiders, international lending agencies in particular lecture Hanoi leaders they must make themselves and their society more transparent if they hope fully to join the world. This huge work -- 1,290 pages -- is a gesture in the right direction. Not exactly a "who's who", more like a phone book. Organized by governmental offices: the Cabinet, central administrative apparat, province and district officials. With addresses, phone and fax numbers; color photos of top rankers. Invaluable reference tool. On sale throughout Vietnam for 245,000 dong (\$19) (2000)

**Hail and Farewell**. Stand on K Street, main throughfare of Washington's ugly, sterile office district, and on my given week day you may see Robert McNamara, once the prosecutor of the Vietnam War, trudging by. Or former CIA Director Richard Helms, or ex-National Security Advisors Zbigniew Brzezinski, Brent Scowcroft or Robert McFarlane. Once, such men commanded movements of infantry divisions and satellites, talked into scrambler phones, rode in chauffeured limousines, flew on Air Force jets, walked with a phalanx of escorts. Now they are alone. In private life. Soon, they will be joined by a new crowd--the alumni of the Clinton administration. This is the essence of the transition we now are witnessing. The once mighty lose power and perks. Is that sad? Tragic? Hardly. It's what gives vitality to the American system and prevents it from developing the sclerosis that afflicts China's Communist Party or Japan's Liberal Democratic Party.

All fine, except for one chronic problem: Those who are losing their government posts have to make a living, and their need creates the potential for conflicts of interest. Now, as a result of a little-noticed action by President Clinton two weeks ago, the ex-officials from his and future administrations will have an easier time making a buck than they would have had earlier. The president signed an executive order that cuts back from five years to one year the length of time in which a retiring senior-level U.S. official is barred from lobbying the government agency or institution in which he or she formerly served.

When Clinton arrived in office, he instituted the five-year limit, and back then his policy was front-page news. But two weeks ago, when he rescinded his own rule just before it might have applied to hundreds of retiring officials from his own administration, the news was buried. Inevitably, we pay too much attention to a new administration and too little to the outgoing one.

## PERIODICALS

“International Relationships at the Border of China and Vietnam,” a set of four articles on the Sino-Viet border regions in terms of foreign relations and economic activities, in *Asian Survey*, Nov.-Dec., 2000. First article is a scene setter by Brantly Womack (Univ. of Virginia), followed by two lengthy essays: “The Borders of Vietnam’s Early Wartime Trade with Southern China: A Contemporary Perspective” by Christopher Goscha (Institut Politique, Paris) and “Sino-Vietnamese Relations and the Economy of Vietnam’s Border Region” by Christopher Roper (University of Virginia). Final article is “Border Cooperation Between China and Vietnam” by Gu Xiaosong (Guangxi Academy of Social Sciences, Nanning) and Womack.

“Vietnam Contradiction” by Andrew Pierre (Georgetown Univ.) in *Foreign Affairs*, Nov. 2000. Pierre, possessing a keen mind and a sharp eye, spent four months at the SRV Foreign Ministry’s Institute of International Relations. His report, on balance, is admirable, although he is a bit credulous about what he is told (something new Hanoi watchers must watch). He has picked up on most that is significantly relevant: the “southernization” of the North; the omnivorousness of the Party; deadly ideological disputation; the unrealized economic potential; ever-looming China; the ubiquitous hunger for sociopolitical change. He writes well.

“Escape with Honor: A Vietnam Tale” by Marc Leepson (historian) in *Foreign Service Journal*, Oct. 1999. Account of the last duty days of FSO Terry McNamara (then US consul at Cantho) who, as South Vietnam fell, would not abandon his Vietnamese co-workers. They embarked on a harrowing journey down the Mekong toward the sea looking for an evacuation ship. It turned out well.

“Khmer Studies Gets Institutional Support” by Michael Hayes in *Phnom Penh Post*, 13-26 Oct. The Center for Khmer Studies, whose objectives include helping to rebuild the country’s higher education system, has opened in Siem Reap on the grounds of Wat Damnak. Supported in part by the World Monuments Fund and the Luce Foundation, the center has established links with several foreign universities including UC Berkeley and Cornell. Director is Philippe Peycam; senior adviser is noted Cambodian specialist David Chandler (ANU). Temporarily linked-up through Cornell due to lack of capability in Siem Reap, the web’s address is: [www.crp.cornell.edu/projects/cks](http://www.crp.cornell.edu/projects/cks)

“Forestry Science: Commodifying Nature, Dismissing Local Knowledge” in *Watershed* (Bangkok), Nov.2000 – Feb. 2001. People from Hanoi, calling themselves “scientists of forestry,” justify interventions, such as commercial logging and large-scale tree plantations, that oversimplify diverse local contexts and natural ecosystems. They also treat the locals in the “father (or the Party) knows best” mode. In the same issue: “Laos Stops World Bank Forestry Program”; “On Palm Plantation in Cambodia: Growing Dissatisfaction”, and “Whose Trees? Five Million Hectare ‘Reforestation’ Program” (Vietnam).

“China’s Cambodia Strategy” by Paul Marks (Army major on loan to Dept. of State) in *Parameters*, Aug. 2000, one of three articles on threats to regional security. Outlines China’s use of its four instruments of national power (diplomatic, informational/cultural, economic and military) to achieve its objectives in Cambodia. Doesn’t list snookering the Vietnamese but this is implied throughout. Well annotated.

In *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, 22:3, December 2000, are found:

- “The Strategic Significance of the Mekong” by Milton Osborne (Australian historian and political scientist). Concern by downstream countries that China’s dam building program (in Yunnan Province) will damage the river’s

role as a source of fish and carrier of silt vital for agriculture.

- “U.S. Security Policy in Asia: Implications for China-U.S. Relations” by Wu Xinbo (Fudan Univ., Shanghai). Washington tries to build a Pax Americana; Beijing feels its security interests in Asia challenged. This relationship will shape the political security dynamics of the Asia Pacific in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.
- “Cambodia’s International Rehabilitation, 1997-2000” by Tony Kevin (Australian ambassador to Cambodia, 1994-97). Brief analysis of Cambodia’s recent history (post-1993), arguing that the country has found a “new domestic political equilibrium” that allows it successfully to resist challenges to its sovereignty by forces seeking to impose “international norms of behavior.”

“Vietnam Discontent” by Margot Cohen and Khanh Hoa in *FEER*, 7 Dec. 2000. Restiveness, if not actively expressed dissent, is rising in rural Vietnam. Main reasons: land tenure disputes and incompetent and/or corrupt local officials. From Hanoi, 18 teams have gone forth to 61 provinces to conduct fact-finding and arbitration. So far, they have simply made matters worse.

“China and the Issue of Indochina in the Second World War” by Xiaoyuan Liu in *Modern Asian Studies*, 33:2, 1999, on China’s geopolitical assessment of the three Indochinese countries during WWII.

“The Tiananmen Papers” by Andrew Nathan (Columbia Univ.), in *Foreign Affairs*, Jan.-Feb. 2001. Scholars love nothing better than to get their hands on secret reports and highly classified documents. This collection, translated and spirited out to Nathan in New York, reveals how Chinese authorities went about crushing the 1989 student protests, which had the effect of splitting Beijing leadership, triggering a purge, and freezing political reform. The papers seem to make clear that China’s leaders did not understand the presence and role of the foreign mass media; rather they appeared to care nothing for what outsiders thought.

“After the Deluge” by Itthiporn Cimi Tan in *Asia Inc.*, Dec.2000-Jan.2001, on how the summer floods have brought about a new crisis in Cambodia’s economic recovery. In the same issue is “An Instinctive Investment” by William Mellor. In Cambodia a \$40 million deal is being cobbled together by Thai businessman Supachai to attract tourists to Angkor. His motto: “pure business cannot succeed by itself, you’ve got to have politics behind you.”

“Fit for a King” by Dao Hung in *Heritage*, (Air Vietnam’s inflight magazine), Nov.-Dec.2000. The Nguyen Dynasty (1802-1945) raised royal cuisine in Hue to a sumptuous peak. The official cookbook lists recipes by class: First (161), Special (50), Pearl (30), Vegetarian (30). Common to almost all dishes were vegetables, fish and shrimp. Game (deer, boar, duck, crocodile) was consumed only at ritual banquets marking death anniversaries. Much of the food was surprisingly simple; what distinguished court cuisine from the commoner’s table was preparation and presentation. Tourists can experience these royal meals at the An Dinh Palace in Hue (10 or more diners with advance booking). Tel.: 054-833-019. In the same issue, “Dipping Delicacy” by Eric Thiel, about *nuoc mam* and how to judge its quality.

“Paradise Laos” by John Willoughby in *Gourmet*, Sept. 1999. Dining back in the good old days when cuisine standards by the *colons* were rigid and demanding.

“Voice from the Wilderness: Richard Nixon and the Vietnam War, 1964-66” by Andrew Johns in *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, 29:2, June 1999, on Nixon’s view of the war at the time of his mid-1960’s visit.

“Legacies of Vietnam” in *The Long Term View: A Journal of Informed Opinion*, 5:1, Summer 2000, from Massachusetts School of Law. In seven sections: (1) Culture, Protest, and Politics; (2) Composition and Use of the Military; (3) the Veterans; (4) the Press; (5) the Constitution; (6) Diplomatic Relations Between the US and Vietnam, and (7) In the End: A Memorial and a Consensus.

Well done work. Address: 500 Federal St., Andover, MA 81810.

“McNamara’s Wall” by Louis Metzger in *Marine Corps Gazette*, Sept. 1999. The plan, worked out at MIT, was to use technology to make it impossible for the North Vietnamese to move overland into the South. Described and evaluated by the Corps’ assistant commander on the spot at the time. Idea worked well in Cambridge.

“Bush’s Looming Asia Challenges” by Murray Hiebert and Susan Lawrence in *FEER*, 21 Dec. 2000. Asia waits and wonders what U.S. foreign policy decisions to expect: less intervention, greater indifference, smarter moves, steadier hands? The decisions will largely be determined at the deputy asst. secretary levels in State, DoD, Treasury, with Senate and House senior staffers. They do most of the thinking, buck their recommendations up to the principals. Tests to expect, say the authors, will come in meeting Pyongyang’s challenges, cooling down the Beijing-Taipai contretemps, readjusting the U.S.-Japan relationship. Also, of course, dealing with those problems that suddenly come out of nowhere and which no one foresaw.

“The Big Bad Fun Gun” by Bruce Porter in *New York Times Magazine*, 26 Nov. 2000. This is the 50-caliber sniper rifle that can blow a hole through an armored car. It costs \$5,000 and is the hot new item in survivalist circles. You can try one out at a shooting club in the Black Rock desert, 100 miles north of Reno, Nevada.

“Sticking to His Guns” by Terry Coffey in *American Legion Magazine*, Oct. 1999. Biographical sketch reflects on the late Adm. Elmo Zumwalt, his personality, his Navy career, his Vietnam, and his famed Z-grams.

“On Patrol with the Junk Force” by John Foster (USN captain, ret.) in *Vietnam*. He served with the Vietnamese Navy as a young lieutenant and gained, he says, valuable insights into the war and how it affected the Vietnamese people. One sardonic reflection: “Nobody came to win the war,

they came to survive a year doing the best they could.”

“Soldier Gore: the Story of the Veep and Vietnam” by Bob Zelnick in *National Review*, 22 Nov. 1999. Not exactly a kind account. What puzzles is how Al got out of Vietnam short of the mandatory one-year tour of duty.

### Census Result

The April 1999 Vietnam census is still being tabulated in Hanoi. State officials released preliminary data January 13, 2001:

- Population total 76,327,921 (11.9 million over 1989).
- Vietnam is the third most densely populated country in Southeast Asia, behind Singapore and Philippines.
- The urban-rural population balance has shifted toward the former in the past decade.
- The State employee work force has dropped 15% in the past decade.
- Population density has risen from 195 people per square km. in 1989 to 231 in 1999. Cities bore the brunt of that increase with a 23.5 percent rise in city dwellers over the decade.
- Close to two-thirds of the work force -- 63 percent -- is employed in the non-official, or private sector. The collective sector employs 27 percent, a drop of 50 percent since 1989.
- Some 38 million -- roughly half the population -- is reported to be employed; 70 percent of them are over the age of 13.
- Some 2.1 million farming households - just over 16 percent of the total -- were found to now own a “sizeable piece of motorized machinery, such as a tractor, plow, rice grinder or fishing boat.”
- Through family planning programs, Vietnam has managed to slow its population growth substantially. But with the large percentage of young in the population, experts say, the numbers are not likely to level off until there are between 120-140 million Vietnamese, sometime around 2020.

## History Redux:

**World War II Recalled.** Hanoi's official press took note of the 54<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of World War II this quarter. Lengthy articles summarized the history and meaning of the war. As it is now officially recalled 1) "The Soviet Army and people saved mankind from genocide and progressive mankind will forever engrave in their minds this sacrifice..2). Their victory enabled the Asian nations to rise up against Japanese fascism and regain their national independence...including the Vietnamese under the leadership of the Communist Party." Everything else about the war is written out of history. (Nhan Dan, August 10, 1999)

Parting Shot. President Clinton this quarter quietly signed legislation that allows U.S. universities to bar military recruiters from their campuses without risking loss of student aid money. Amendment was sponsored by Rep. Barney Frank (D-Mass.) to modify Solomon amendment, which apparently was never intended to affect student aid, only large research grants.

**Cold War Recognition Certificates.** Washington has approved a Cold War Recognition Certificate for all members of the armed forces and federal government civilian employees who faithfully served the U.S. during the Cold War, that is from 2 Sept. 1945 to 26 December 1991. About 22 million are eligible. To request: Cold War Recognition, 4035 Ridge Top Road, Suite 400, Fairfax, VA22030. Applicants must provide proof-of-service documents. Home page at <http://www.coldwar.army.mil> explains procedures.

### **Why Geography Matters**

I have learned that one can never know geography. Or to put it another way, one must learn more geography whenever one endeavors to learn more history. That is why it is so disheartening that most Americans emerge from their schooling as

functional illiterates in geography despite the fact that 90 percent of U.S. adults consider some geographical knowledge a prerequisite to being a well-rounded person. The poll, conducted on behalf of the National Geographic Society, showed that only one-third of Americans could name a single country in NATO and that half could not name any members of the rival Warsaw Pact. The average adult could identify only four European countries from their outlines on a map, and less than six of the fifty United States. One in four could not find the Pacific Ocean. What is more, the group that performed the worst in the survey was those aged between 18 and 24, a finding that would not surprise those of us who teach history in universities. For it appears that many American students were not even given a chance to learn much geography in their elementary and high school years. Why is that? Is it because educators have just been unaware of the importance of geography to many branches of knowledge, not least history? Is it because they once knew, but have forgotten? Is it because geography seems to involve rote learning of "boring" facts rather than development of the "thinking" faculties? Is it because the influential political-correctness and multiculturalism movements are suspicious of a subject that emphasizes distinctions among regions, invites unflattering comparisons and hierarchy among nations and cultures, and has been used in the past as an intellectual tool of empire? Is it because geography just seems passé in an era when communications technology, commerce, and ideas "transcend boundaries" and make the earth a "global village"? Or is it because geographers themselves have failed to define and promote their subject? Whatever answer it is probably all of the above. (Walter McDougall, Univ. of Pennsylvania professor and editor of *Orbis*. This excerpt is from the History-Geography Project for publication in the Middle States Yearbook 2001).

## NAMES IN THE NEWS

**Amb. Douglas (Pete) Peterson** will stay on in Hanoi when the Bush administration takes over, the US embassy in Hanoi announced Jan. 17. In a statement to his staff, Peterson said: "I have been asked by the new administration to remain in Hanoi for an indefinite period. I have agreed to do so with the idea of completing the ratification of the BTA (bilateral trade agreement) and attending to a number of other concerns that we need to address in the coming months. I am pleased and proud to continue my work here with what I consider the very best Country Team in the system." American businessmen in Vietnam also will be pleased; they conducted a quiet lobbying campaign, phoning, writing and e-mailing influential contacts, hoping to persuade the incoming Bush administration to retain Peterson, at least through completion of the U.S.-Vietnam trade pact. American C-of-C chair in Hanoi Peter Ryder said: "Pete Peterson has been the pivotal figure (making) this trade agreement a reality, and there is no one else who has his credibility in Congress and his relationships with the Vietnamese leadership." (Gregg Jones, *Dallas Morning News*, 6 Jan.). Hanoi, too, is hopeful that Peterson will be able to put the final touches on the agreement reached in July, which provides for the gradual opening of Vietnam's state-controlled markets and the lifting of tariffs on Vietnam's exports to the U.S. but which still requires congressional approval. FM spokeswoman Phan Thuy Thanh said Peterson "has made some positive contributions to the process of normalization."

**Tong Ly**, 50, former South Vietnam fighter pilot, commandeered a plane in Bangkok (mid November) aiming to drop anti-regime leaflets on HCMC. He had hired the pilot to give him flying lessons, then in the air said he had a hand grenade that he would use if necessary. The pilot buzzed Tay Ninh and HCMC but no leaflets went out; the plane then returned to Bangkok where Ly was detained. It was the second time he had staged such

a stunt; in 1992 he was sentenced to six years in a Vietnam jail for hijacking an Air Vietnam plane on an HCMC leaflet mission (he also once dropped 50,000 leaflets on Havana). Hanoi demanded "serious action" be taken against him; the Thai government said he would be tried in Thailand then extradited to the U.S. Ly, now an American citizen, met with US embassy officials (Nov. 20). In the Little Saigon community of Southern California, 700 representatives of 21 Viet *kieu* organizations demonstrated their support for their "hero".

**Paul Wolfowitz**. Nominated as U.S. deputy defense secretary. Currently he is dean of the Nitze School of Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins Univ. Under Pres. Reagan, Wolfowitz served in the State Dept. as director of policy planning and later as asst. secretary for East Asian and Pacific affairs. He was named ambassador to Indonesia in 1986. Under Pres. George H.W. Bush, he was undersecretary of defense for policy. In the 1970s, he served in the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency and then became deputy asst. defense secretary for regional programs. Wolfowitz, 57, is a graduate of Cornell Univ. and received his doctorate from the Univ. of Chicago. Senate sources said they would consider the nomination "expeditiously."

**Tran Van Khanh**, 35, top party official on the Thoi Ngoc District Committee (Can Tho Province), is executed for killing his fiancée, also a party official, after she jilted him. He also paid \$1,200 in damages to her family. (AFP, 12 Jan.2000)

**Richard Gephardt**, House Democratic Leader, leads a nine-member Congressional delegation (Jan. 10) on a 10-day trip to Vietnam, Cambodia and South Korea to review U.S. policy, bilateral relations and Asian regional issues. The group also was to examine foreign aid programs in the three countries.

**Nguyen Ngoc Truong Son**, age 9, wins a gold medal (under-10 category) at the World Chess Championships in Spain (Nov. 30). He defeated David Howell of Britain, having earlier defeated

players from France and Russia. Truong Son, from Kien Giang, is the son of schoolteachers. He stated playing chess at age three. He is the fourth, and the youngest, Vietnamese world chess champion.

**Phan Thu Ngan**, 20, Van Lang Univ. student, was crowned Miss Vietnam 2000 in the national beauty pageant Oct. 22 in HCMC. She also won the Best Behavior award. There were 40 entrants. Runner-up was Le Thanh Nga, 19, (Thai Nguyen Teacher's College) and third place went to Nguyen Thi Ngoc Oanh, 20, (Haiphong, Teacher's College). The pageant organizer, Tien Phong newspaper, donated 80 million dong to scholarship funds and 70 million to Mekong flood victims. The VCP takes a dim view of beauty contests.

**King Norodom Sihanouk** tells Reuters (Dec 21): "I have serious health problems like cancer and hardening of the arteries. I take 20 medicines daily. But I will continue to serve my people to the end of my life." Under the Cambodian constitution, the nine-member Royal Council of the Throne will choose a new king within seven days of the death of the monarch. The new king must be a male descendent of one of the three branches of the royal family. There are some 20 potential successors, although the most likely will be one of Sihanouk's two sons -- Prince Ranariddh or Prince Sihamoni -- or his half brother, Prince Sirivudh.

**Daniel Ellsberg**, Pentagon Papers purloiner, is interviewed by AP's Lawrence Knutson (25 April 2000). He said he returned from Vietnam in 1967 obsessed by the war. "Initially it was how to win it but then it was (for me) how to end it." He says he arrived at the Pentagon one Saturday walking with a group of anti-war demonstrators, then used his Defense Department pass to reach McNamara's office next to his work space. "I was both outside and inside on the same day." Ellsberg's most recent dissent was part of an eight-hour blockade of the IMF/World Bank headquarters in Washington protesting nuclear proliferation. He is now working on his memoirs.

**Huynh Quoc Quang**, a US citizen, is arrested in the Mekong Delta Province of Long An

and charged with extortion for posing as an Interpol agent who claimed he could use his connections to resettle people to the United States. Quang, 28, had been living with relatives in Long An since late 1998, a provincial police officer said, and had cheated people out of more than a billion dong.

**Nguyen Trong Thanh**, 58, famed Vietnam War news photographer, is killed at his VNA office in downtown Hanoi, Nov. 15. Police arrested Vu Truong Giang, 27, who earlier had argued with Thanh over some photographs he had taken of Giang's girl friend. Giang was quoted as saying he strangled Thanh then left, but returned later to be sure Thanh was dead. The police were waiting.

**Chea Sim**, 67, Cambodian Senate president and leader of the CPP, suffers a stroke (Oct 21) and is taken to Thailand for treatment. He returns a week later, saying he must rest before returning to work. There is speculation that he may retire, which if it happens, might allow Hun Sen to consolidate his political power.

**Everett Alvarez**. The US House of Representatives recognizes the longest-held Vietnam War POW by naming the US Postal Service facility in Rockville, MD, the Everett Alvarez Jr. Post Office Building. A Navy pilot, Alvarez was shot down in 1964 and was imprisoned until 1973. "The fortitude and patriotism of Everett Alvarez Jr. reflect the highest standards of the US Navy," said Rep. Bob Stump (R-AZ), chair of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee and WWII Navy veteran. "Few of us can begin to imagine the suffering, physical and psychological, that POWs like Alvarez went through. They endured that suffering in a way that inspired both their fellow prisoners and every American."

**Adm. Dennis Blair**, C-I-C of US Pacific Forces, scheduled to visit Vietnam in mid-January, had the trip scrubbed by Vietnam not by the U.S. as Hanoi officials first maintained, a US embassy official in Hanoi said. Observers acknowledge that Hanoi authorities traded barbs with US officials over who did what but cautioned not to make too much of the incident. Official Hanoi is indeed busy



at the moment, what with a Party plenum and the upcoming Party Congress, and with visits of high-ranking Chinese. As one local observer said, you can't be in three places at the same time.

**Le Huynh Duc**, a top Vietnam soccer player, is ordered by police to join the national squad after he announces he is going abroad, citing exhaustion and injury. Duc is a nimble-footed striker for the HCMC Police team. "Duc must be a vanguard soldier, fight to the end, devote his utmost to the fatherland," said Col. Huynh Tong Nghia, the HCMC deputy police chief. The national team has a new coach, Brazil-born Edson "Dido" Silva, who has not helped matters much by complaining about lack of commitment by several team members. Three star players quit soccer recently and a fourth has threatened to do so. Duc, himself a police officer, said he has to "obey his superiors." (Deutsche Presse-Agentur, 4 Jan.)

**Ta Mok**, in Phnom Penh jail on charges of genocide, is taken to hospital, treated for high blood pressure, and returned to his cell. His lawyer says he believes Ta Mok will die before he can be tried by the war crimes tribunal. His doctor says his condition is not serious. Ta Mok was the military chief of the Khmer Rouge.

**Ha Hai**, 70, secretary general of the outlawed Central Hoa Hao Buddhists Assn. in Vietnam, is sentenced to five years in prison for "violating house arrest regulations and abusing democratic rights to encroach on the interests of the state." He was detained November 16 in southern An Giang Province while enroute to HCMC on the eve of President Clinton's arrival. "He is not the only one to be tried in Hoa Hao related affairs, either; there will be more," a judge in the case said. In early December thousands of Hoa Hao faithful descended on Cho Moi, where the prisoner was held, and demonstrated for his release.

**Howard Mechanic**, anti-war protestor who calls himself the last prisoner of the Vietnam War, is sprung from jail (23 Jan.), one of the 140 persons granted pardons by departing President Clinton. Mechanic spent three decades on the run, then

turned himself in last February. He lived for 28 years as Gary Treadway, building a successful business in Scottsdale, AZ. He was active in social causes and a run for the city council brought about discovery of his true identity. Mechanic says it is good to have his name back. He was arrested in 1970 during a student protest at Washington Univ. in St. Louis when a witness said he threw a cherry bomb at firefighters; he denied this but was charged under a new anti-riot law and sentenced to five years in prison. He fled the state while out on bond. He has been writing a book during his time in prison, including a chapter called "Free Howard Mechanic" on friends' efforts to get him released.. (AP, 23 Jan.)

**Colin Powell**. The newly designated Secretary of State had no sooner been sworn in than the counter-culture vultures began circling. Typical is a column by John Lacny in *The Pitt News*, Univ. of Pittsburgh student paper, titled: "Colin Powell's Vietnam Atrocities". Lacny and others like him mostly use the My Lai massacre as their take-off point for attack, e.g., "Bush has chosen as one of his ministers a man with a history of involvement in the country's war of aggression and complicity in one of the war's most notorious and universally execrated massacres." Powell was up the chain of command line at My Lai and describes his role in *My American Journey* (which Lacny grossly misstates). See *Pitt News* on [www.pittnews.com](http://www.pittnews.com)

**Donald Rumsfeld** returns to the Pentagon for second tour as Secretary of Defense (also has served as naval flier, ambassador, White House chief of staff). Says after 50 years he has produced a 19-page booklet called "Rules", suggested by the "Seven Standing Orders of Rodgers' Rangers", the first of which was "Don't Never Forget Nothing." Some of Rumsfeld's Rules:

## OBITUARIES

**Ralph Bernard Smith.** Considered by many to be the preeminent Vietnam historian in Europe, Smith died in London Dec. 20, 2000, of congestive heart failure at the age of 61. Smith was trained in English medieval history (PhD on the Tudor period by Leeds University). He soon changed course and took up the study of Vietnam at the School of Oriental and African Studies, becoming an academic pioneer in Britain in the institutional study of Vietnam. He mastered Vietnamese language and history and began publishing articles on the country's colonial period. His first book was *Vietnam and the West*, followed by an edited book on medieval Southeast Asia. His major contribution to the literature of the Indochina field was his multiple volume *International History of the Vietnam War*. It approached the war in terms of its international dimension, taking into full account relevant developments in the USSR, Europe and China. At the time of his death, he was about to complete a new international history of Southeast Asia, focusing on key years of the last half century. As a teacher, Smith was highly valued by his research students at SOAS for his care in supervising their work and his interest in their progress.

**Nguyen Dinh Hoa**, Vietnamese intellectual, linguist, writer and professor who first came to America a half-century ago for university education, died December 10 at Stanford (CA) University Hospital of complications from heart bypass surgery. He was 76. Dinh-Hoa Nguyen, as he preferred to write his name, emigrated in 1966 but never lost his devotion to the culture, literature and language of Vietnam. He devoted much of his professional life to making this accessible to other peoples. Hoa was the leading Vietnamese linguist in the U.S. and his Vietnamese language texts and dictionaries have been used by people around the world. He taught first at universities in Vietnam, then began a career of writing and teaching in

academic stops that spanned the globe – Washington (state), Honolulu, London, Rabat, Bangkok. In 1969 he went to Southern Illinois University where he was professor and head of the Center for Vietnamese Studies until his retirement in 1990. He then held a professorial position at San Jose State Univ. for two years. Hoa's last book, published in 1999, was an affecting autobiographical memoir, *From the City Inside the Red River*, published by McFarland Co., Jefferson, NC.

**Ellen Hammer**, 79, one of the first American scholars in Indochina, died of lymphoma Jan. 28 in New York. Her *Struggle for Indochina* (1954) was one of the few books available at the time of any use to newly arrived foreign correspondents. Hammer was emotionally attached to the Ngo Dinh Diem regime, and after its overthrow and Diem's death she moved to France and abandoned the subject. Two decades later she returned to write *A Death in November: America in Vietnam* (1973). She left no survivors.

**Pham Van Dong**, one of the original communist old guard -- the half dozen leaders who formed the Viet Minh and fought colonialism and partition of Vietnam -- died in Hanoi April 29, age 94. He served as prime minister (first the DRV, then the SRV) for 37 years. One of the elite by birth and early education, Dong changed course when he joined the anti-colonial student movement and was sent to China for training under Ho Chi Minh. Later imprisoned by the French, Dong met other activists and led them in studying and planning revolution. He joined the Indochinese Communist Party in 1940. A committed nationalist and communist to the end of his life, he supported economic reform as necessary but was dismayed by the acquisitiveness, corruption and external influences that came with *doi moi*. (Numerous obits.on internet; see esp. Carlyle Thayer in *Vietnam Business Journal*, May 2000, and official notice in *Nhan Dan*, 2 May).

**Son Sann**, 89, one of the longest serving political figures in Cambodia, ally of King Sihanouk, died December 19 in Paris. Born in Phnom Penh in 1911, Son Sann was a graduate of the Haute Etudes Commerciales Institute in Paris. He began his career in Battambang Province, later became National Assembly president and, in the 1960s, prime minister. He went into exile after the Lon Nol coup in 1970, stayed out of the war in Cambodia, then returned after the Vietnamese invasion to form the Khmer People's National Liberation Front (KPNLF) in an uneasy alliance with Sihanoukists and the Khmer Rouge. Called the Coalition Government of Democratic Kampuchea, the only common bond among the three was opposition to the Vietnam-backed government. Son Sann served on the U.N.-sponsored Supreme National Council after the 1991 peace accord; he retired after Hun Sen was confirmed as prime minister in the 1993 election and spent his last years abroad.

**William Rogers**, 87, former Secretary of State and Attorney General, died in hospital near his home in Bethesda, MD, January 2, 2001. During his 60 years as a lawyer, Rogers won two landmark press freedom cases. His place in Vietnam War history is marked by his trip to China with President Nixon (Feb 1972), which led to the signing of the Paris Peace Agreement (1973).

**James Russell Wiggins**, 96, former chief editor of the *Washington Post*, died November 9 at his home in Brooklin Maine. Wiggins was responsible for building the *Post*, tottering in its early years, into an internationally respected publication of great integrity. He also took a journalistic lead into civil rights, stopping use of irrelevant racial descriptions, hired minority reporters, printed the first picture of an African-American bride. On the Vietnam War, Wiggins was a thoughtful and sensitive hawk; he believed the country's reputation was at stake if we abandoned its allies. LBJ said one Wiggins editorial was worth two divisions. In 1968 Johnson appointed him ambassador to the United Nations.

(See obituary by J. Y. Smith; also tribute by Katharine Graham, "The Evocation of Excellence: Russ Wiggins, good steward, farseeing guide of The Post for 21 years," *Washington Post*, 20 Nov. 2000).

**Oliver Wolters**, major academic figure in Southeast Asian history and professor emeritus at Cornell University, died December 5. He wrote on individual countries and on the region; his book, *History, Culture, and Region in Southeast Asian Perspective*, published by ISEAS, Singapore, 1982, has just been reissued in a revised and expanded version by Cornell's SE Asia program. Wolters published a series of articles on the Tran period in Vietnamese history (1225-1400), and was working on a novel set in that period at the time of his death.

**Most Venerable Ma Ha Thach Sa Ray**, 82, vice chair of the Viet Nam Buddhist Sangha, died January 2. He was a member of the Fatherland Front Central Committee, head of the Tra Vinh Province Buddhist Sangha executive board, and deputy head of the provincial Assn. of Patriotic Monks. He was head monk of the O Rang Pagoda, Long Son commune, Tra Vinh.

**Tran Van Lam**, 88, who had been foreign minister, chairman of the Senate, and ambassador to Australia under the Republic of Vietnam, died Feb. 6 in Canberra. Born in Hanoi and trained as a pharmacist, Lam studied in France and returned to Vietnam after 1954, where he represented the Diem government in the Mekong Delta. Elected to the GVN House of Representatives and later to the Senate, he was named foreign minister by President Thieu and participated in the 1973 Paris talks. He settled in Australia after April 1975.

**Gavin Young**, 72, long-time journalist and war correspondent, died January 18 in London. For 30 years he reported for *The Observer*, a British Sunday newspaper. A larger-than-life, old-school reporter ("I fell into journalism as a drunk falls into a pond."). When he arrived in Vietnam in 1965, he said he found the Vietnamese "possibly the warmest hearted people in the world," and that the stories he wrote about the effects of the war on them gave him

the most satisfaction. His motto was "When in danger, smile – and carry a pack of cigarettes." About death: "I felt no fear at the time. I concentrated on the mechanics of death. How will it happen? How do I feel? What the hell am I doing in this stupid place?" His most critically acclaimed book was *Slow Boat Home* (1985).

**Leonard Woodcock**, former UAW president and White House bargainer, died January 16 at his home in Ann Arbor, age 89. President Jimmy Carter sent him to Hanoi in 1977 to explore prospects of establishing diplomatic relations, the first such gesture after the end of the Vietnam War. Hanoi stiffed him with demands that first the U.S.

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### Clinton in Vietnam

President Clinton in Hanoi went to the Temple of Literature, walked through the Gate of Great Synthesis, Passed the Well of Great Clarity, arrived at the Stele Garden. For the Vietnamese it was the symbolic highpoint of his three day visit (Nov 16-19)

At various stops he enunciated U.S. policy stands, which were echoed by those traveling with him and by spokesmen for the U.S. embassy. This is the essence of what was communicated:

The United States is committed to full normalization of diplomatic, political and economic relations with Vietnam; among the issues in U.S. – Vietnam bilateral relations are POW/MIA accounting, resettlement opportunities abroad for Vietnamese refugees, economic and commercial cooperation, debt, security dialogue, and law enforcement cooperation.

Obtaining the fullest possible accounting of American POW/MIAs from the Vietnam War continues to be America's highest priority with regard to Vietnam. In 1993 President Clinton set out four specific areas in which cooperation by the Vietnamese would be examined as a basis for further improvement in relations: solving the discrepancy cases and live sightings; conducting field activities; recovering and repatriating remains;

send war reparations. Later, when that line failed and Hanoi changed its position, it was too late; America's opening to China was underway. Woodcock subsequently became U.S. ambassador in Beijing.

**Gus Hall.** The SRV Foreign Ministry (Oct. 19) issues a statement on the death of Gus Hall, 90, longtime U.S. communist leader who died of complications from diabetes. Hall, said the statement, "was a committed activist who devoted many years to the Party and international workers movement. Vietnam is deeply moved to learn of his death." (AFP, 19 Oct.)

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accelerating efforts to provide documents that will help lead to the fullest possible accounting; providing further assistance in implementing trilateral investigations in Laos.

In July of 2000 the United States and Vietnam signed a Bilateral Trade Agreement (BTA) that will help increase market access and transparency for U.S. firms in Vietnam. Under the Jackson-Vanik Amendment to the Trade Act of 1974, a bilateral trade agreement and certification of freedom of emigration are necessary for the United States to maintain conditional Normal Trade Relations – formerly called most-favored-nation (MFN) trading status – with non-market economies such as Vietnam.

Official response was by Vietnam President Tran Duc Lam who solemnly welcomed President Clinton and his wife to Hanoi and described the visit as an important event that is in agreement with the aspirations and interests of the two peoples. "I hope that President Clinton's visit will contribute to the promotion of relations and economic and trade cooperation between Vietnam and the U.S. I hope that the visit by the president, his wife, and other distinguished guests to Vietnam will be a success. I hope you will enjoy your stay in Vietnam."

President Clinton replied, expressing his pleasure in visiting Vietnam and thanked the Vietnamese state, government, and people for their hospitality. He praised the recent development in relations and cooperation between the two countries, and said he believed that his visit to Vietnam will help mutual understanding.

The official press abandoned its previous near total information blackout on the visit but made no mention of the crowds of tens of thousands who cheered his late-night arrival. Most newspapers carried only a single paragraph earlier in the week announcing "W.J. Clinton and his wife" would be in Vietnam this week; now the trip was on their front pages. And where earlier the trip had been dismissed as "nothing exceptional" and no different from that one by any other head of state, coverage now hailed a "bright future...at the dawn of a new century" in Vietnam, and focused on the growing rapprochement and trade ties between the U.S. and Vietnam.

*Lao Dong*, the workers' daily, also praised Clinton's war record. "After protesting against the Vietnam War and refusing to take part, Clinton has in the last few years taken several steps to reconstruct relations between the two countries," it said.

Nayan Chanda (FEER) summed it up well: "It's awkward, sometimes, to watch a former enemy being feted. Vietnam's communist elite endured just that this past week as tens of thousands of their own countrymen, showing indecent enthusiasm, spilled onto the streets of Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City to greet the first U.S. leader to visit the country since the Vietnam War. It was a jarring contrast to the cool reception U.S. President Bill Clinton was given during official meetings, and evidence of the wide gap that exists between Vietnam's rulers and their mostly much younger charges."

#### **VDIC**

The Vietnam Development Information Center, 63 Ly Thai To St., Hanoi, was officially

opened January 9, 2001. One of the few Distance Learning Centers in Asia Its purpose is to bring Vietnam to the world and the world to Vietnam. Education and Training Vice Min. Le Vu Hung said Vietnam is shaping its development strategy toward a knowledge-based economy to promote stable and sustainable development. "We believe that with this modern information and telecommunications facility, the VDIC will be one of the bridges linking Vietnam with the rest of the world." The opening ceremonies brought together government officials, representatives of the diplomatic and international community, and officials from distance learning centers, via live videoconference, from China, Thailand, Singapore, France, Senegal, and the US. VDIC offers the public and policy-makers in Vietnam a range of facilities and services to stimulate development thinking and provide access to the latest knowledge and information on development available worldwide. Facilities include a reference library, a bookshop, a public information materials section, Web-search and CD-ROM workstations, display and exhibition space, and videoconference and distance learning facilities.

The Center is a partnership initiated by official development assistance agencies and Government ministries who wish to promote access to, and use of knowledge for development. It is managed by the World Bank, and supported financially and in-kind by the UNDP and the governments of Australia, Canada, Denmark, and Japan. Staff includes a Manager, a Distance Learning Coordinator, a Librarian and Assistant Librarian, and a Public Information Assistant. Its open access reference library holds approximately 3000 titles, which will expand to a potential 8000 through acquisitions and donations. For a Vietnamese translation of the press release and/or the fact sheet, contact Hoang Thanh Ha at Tel. (84-4) 934 6600 ext 234, Fax (84-4) 934-6597, or e-mail: [hha@worldbank.org](mailto:hha@worldbank.org)

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## LAOS

Four major events occupied official Laos at the end of the year 2000. First, Chinese President Jiang Zimin arrived Nov. 11 for a 3-day official visit. Beijing remains concerned about Vietnam's close relationship with Laos and, despite its own sizeable aid packages, feels it must further increase its influence. For example, in 1999 when the Lao economy was overwhelmed by soaring inflation, China provided interest-free loans and export guarantees that helped Laos weather the storm. Vietnam also is concerned. Its foreign minister arrived in Laos for a meeting a few days before the Jiang visit and reportedly remained until Jiang left for Cambodia.

The second year-end event was the Seventh Round Table Meeting (i.e., international donors and lenders), which opened November 20 in Vientiane. Prepared for criticism of its economic management, the government put the best possible face on its efforts to improve the economy. Dep. PM and Finance Min. Boun-Gnang Vorachit said that in spite of continuing effects of the Asian financial crisis and Laos's weak private sector, the government is still committed to economic reforms.

Development partners made specific pledges for \$450 million in aid for 2001 and some made firm commitments for loans and grants in 2002, the government said. Japan has been very active in Laos, having committed some US\$90 million, according to UNDP official David Lockwood.

Then, on December 2, the country celebrated the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the Lao People's Democratic Republic. In the capital, crowds gathered to watch colorful parades and performances, many of the latter devoted to recognizing the socioeconomic development of the past 25 years. The grenade and bomb explosions that have frightened the populace and the

government over the past year did not recur, and festivities reportedly went off without a hitch..

Finally, on December 10 Laos hosted a meeting of ASEAN foreign ministers and delegates from the European Union, showing its pride in its newfound international status. Foreign Minister Somsavat Lengsavad recently told the press that Laos now has relations with 109 countries, 65 more than before the LPDR.

Security for the meeting, which already had been stepped up in Vientiane after an explosion at the airport in November, was tight with troops and police manning roadblocks around the center of the city. The meeting of the two regional blocs was seen as very important for the government to help overcome an image of instability, dissent in the cities, and rebellion by ethnic minorities that dominated news about Laos during 2000.

## CONFERENCES

**Texas Tech Next Conference.** The focus, scheduled for 20-21 April 2001, is "The Advisory Effort and the Armed Forces of the Republic of Vietnam." Its purpose is to examine the South Vietnamese Armed Forces and the role and outcomes of American advisors in Vietnam during the war. Papers representing all points of view and all aspects of the theme are welcome. Active participation by graduate students is particularly encouraged. Individuals interested in presenting papers should submit a one-page outline proposal to Dr. James Reckner, at the Vietnam Center, by e-mail, fax, regular mail. Deadline for submissions is March 15, 2001. [Vietnam.Center@ttu.edu](mailto:Vietnam.Center@ttu.edu) (806) 742-8664, (806) 742-3742, The Vietnam Center Texas Tech University, Box 41045, Math 4, Lubbock, Texas 79409-1045.

**“Vietnam Beyond the Frontiers”.** Title of a conference “to highlight new understanding of the transnational character of Vietnamese studies.” At UCLA, May 11-12, 2001. Seeks to build relationships between western and Vietnamese scholars and graduate students in the expectation that the interaction will help forge new directions in the field. Impresario is Nhung Tuyet Tran at [nhung6@ucla.edu](mailto:nhung6@ucla.edu).

**Euroseas Conference.** London Sept 6-8, 2001. Sequel to conferences in Leiden (1995) and Hamburg (1998.) Scholars and officials will share their views on current themes in Southeast Asia. Booked so far: Interaction of Political and Economic Change in SEA; Leadership and Cultural Reform in SEA; management and Business Culture in SEA; Media and Literature; Ritual, Pain and Religious Body in SEA. Contact: EUROSEAS Secretariat; Attn: Ms. Hilga Prins, P.O. Box 9515, 2300 RA, Leiden, The Netherlands, phone: +31 (71) 527 2639, fax: +3 (71) 527 2638, E-mail: [euroseas@rullet.leidenuniv.nl](mailto:euroseas@rullet.leidenuniv.nl)

**Knowing Asia.** Cornell Univ. sponsor; October 25-26, 2001. “We encourage papers that explicitly address methodologies used to analyze and present knowledge about Asia. Contact: Keith Taylor, Department of Asian Studies, 380 Rockefeller Hall, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY 14853, E-mail: [kwt3@cornell.edu](mailto:kwt3@cornell.edu) phone: (607) 255-3237, fax: (607) 255-1345, on the web at [www.einaudi.cornell.edu/nycas](http://www.einaudi.cornell.edu/nycas)

**Texas Tech’s 4<sup>th</sup> Triennial.** The Vietnam Center’s 4<sup>th</sup> Vietnam symposium is set for April 13-14, 2002. Interested scholars should gather thoughts and submit proposals; particularly welcome are participants who can organize and entire panel. Open to all topics related to Southeast Asia. Encourage and papers from scholar, veterans, anti-war activists and graduate students.

#### **U.S. Presidential Election.**

AP asks about trade with Vietnam:

**George W. Bush (Republican):** “I support the trade agreement with Vietnam. I believe

expanded trade with Vietnam will help the forces of economic and political reform take root and grow. At the same time, we must make clear to the Vietnamese government that we expect them to cooperate fully with our efforts to obtain the fullest possible accounting of missing servicemen in Vietnam. Like all Americans, I want to see improved human rights, and living and working conditions worldwide. The best way to address these issues is not through unilateral trade sanctions, but through multilateral agreements. The primary goal of our trade policy should be to open markets abroad because the better way to raise living and working standards is to increase trade.”

**Al Gore (Democrat):** “I believe that we must ratify and fully implement important new trade agreements, and as president, I will insist on and use the authority to negotiate and enforce worker rights, human rights and environmental protections in those agreements. I believe that the U.S.-Vietnam Bilateral Trade Agreement provides important benefits to American businesses and workers, including dramatic new market access for American goods, services, and agricultural products; intellectual property protection; investment protection provisions; and transparency and rule-of-law measures. The treaty also represents an important step in the normalization of our relations with Vietnam, a process which will strengthen cooperation on bringing American POW-MIAs home, promoting religious freedom and combating the narcotics trade.”

#### **Phan Van Khai to George W. Bush:**

Relations between Vietnam and the United States have undergone an encouraging evolution. We hope this process will be continued and will increase in the interests of the two countries and in line with the wishes of the two peoples. The trade agreement, which is one of the main fruits of the normalization policy, still has to be ratified by the new U.S. Congress but Vietnam is already forging ahead with implementing its provisions. The landmark deal provides for the gradual opening of Vietnam’s state-controlled markets in return for the U.S. lifting punitive tariffs. (SRV Foreign Ministry on Vietnamese leaders’ congratulatory messages to new U.S. president, 22 Jan.)

**NEW PUBLICATIONS:**

**Vietnam War Generation Journal.** Bruce Solheim, ed. A quarterly. Publishes fiction, nonfiction, poetry, artwork. Subscription \$45 individual; \$85 institution. Address: Vietnam War Generation Press, 23630 – 201<sup>st</sup> Avenue S.E., Maple Valley, WA 98038.

**Conversation.** Name of semi-annual journal from Australian National University. Will carry cultural and literary articles reflecting the philosophic, geographic and cultural interests of university subscribers. US\$40 annually, A\$50. Free sample on request. From Publishing, Imaging and Cartographic Services, Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, The Australian National Univ., Canberra 0200 Australia, Tel: 61-6125 3269, FAX: 61-2-6125 9975.

**Asian Ethnicity.** Describes itself as an international venue for well-researched articles on ethnic minorities and ethnic relations in Asia, contemporary and historical; no political stance. Editor Colin Mackerras; (Griffith Univ. Australia) twice a year. Vol I, No. 1, March 2000 included: review of *Development or Domestication? Indigenous People of Southeast Asia* (Don McCaskill and Ken Kampe (eds) by Jan Ovesen and Mackerrgas and review of Barnes et al *Indigenous Peoples of Asia*. Subscriptions: institutions \$134; personal \$38. Address: Carfax Publishing, Taylor & Francis, 47 Runway Road, Suite "G", Levittown, PA 19057-4700. By E-mail: [enquiry@tandf.co.uk](mailto:enquiry@tandf.co.uk); for details visit the Carfax Website at <http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals>.

**Sui Tam** (Collector), Nguyen Xuan Son, ed. Newsletter aimed at antique, stamp, and coin collectors. First quarter, 2000 issue has article on an antique auction in HCMC last November; articles on coins of the Ly Thai dynasty and counterfeit coins of the Le dynasty. In Vietnamese. Address: 5 Lambeth Loop, Fairport, NY 10440; tel. (716) 223-8321; [emailson@hotmail.com](mailto:emailson@hotmail.com)

**Tap San Tu Tuong** (Journal of Ideology), Dinh Cung, ed. From eminent Vietnamese writers (professors, scholars) on Vietnamese history, archaeology, and politics. Valuable. Address: P.O. Box 246 Croydon Park, NSW 2133 Australia; tel/fax: (612) 9716 7010; email: [dcun2789@mail.usyd.cdu.au](mailto:dcun2789@mail.usyd.cdu.au)

**The 1999 Mekong Papers**, Long Pham (ed) Study funded by Mekong Forum and the Vietnamese American Science and Technology Society. A warning to government and business entities who would exploit the delta's hydrodynamic possibilities without first ensuring food security. Copies available at: V.A.S.T., 1910-62 Palmyra Ave., Orange, CA 92868. See also <http://coombs.anu.edu.au/~vern/avsl-list.html>

**Vietnam's Urgent Issues.** Bi-monthly magazine from The Gioi Hanoi Publishers. Articles selected from Vietnamese magazines and newspapers on such subjects as globalization, elimination of hunger; reduction of poverty; human rights; street children; education and training; environment protection; unemployment; gender equality. Price (6 issues per year) \$30 foreign \$21 Vietnam. English or French. Also, **Files on Vietnam**, bi-monthly magazine in French or English. Information on Vietnam economic activity; newly promulgated laws and regulations; decrees; legislative documents. \$24 p/a foreign; \$15 p/a in Vietnam. To subscribe: Tho Gioi Publishers Marketing and Distribution Department (attn: Tranmai Hong) 46- TrCn H-ng &sect;&supl;o Str., H&micro; Nei Tel: (844) 9343196, 8253841 Fax (844) 8269578, Email: [Thegioi@hn.vnn.vn](mailto:Thegioi@hn.vnn.vn)

**Social Science Research on Southeast Asia.** Alexander Adelaar (ed) Biennial social scientific forum on SE Asia. From issues no. 99 (December, 1999): Andre Feillard, "The Veil and Polygamy" on Islamic gender role expectations; Mina Roces, "Compadrazco and Delicadeza in Philippine Political Culture"; Guy Drouot, "Pouvoir at minorite ethniques au Laos." Contact Moussons, c/o IRSEA, Maison Asie Pacifique, Univ. of



Province, 3 Victor Hugo Place, Marseilles, 13003; tel. 33-491106123; email [moussons@romarin.univ-aix.fr](mailto:moussons@romarin.univ-aix.fr)

**Global Networks:** A Journal of Transnational Affairs (Alisdair Rogers, ed). From Blackwell and the Transnational Communities Programme, a journal of transnational sociology devoted to the study of globalization. First issue January, 2001. Contact: Global Networks ISCA, 51 Banbury Road. Oxford OX2 6PE; tel. +44 (0) 1865 274689; email [global.networks@kcb.ox.ac.uk](mailto:global.networks@kcb.ox.ac.uk)

**Veteran's Enterprise,** Randy Simons (ed.) EM Publishing. An express attempt to better the image of all veterans and rehabilitate the image of the disaffected Vietnam vet. Articles are positivist—from history to personal interest to opened-and interspersed with ads for veteran-owned business throughout. Address is 22106 Clarendon St. #162, Woodland Hills, CA 91367; ph. (818) 225-8366.

**Persimmon: Asian Literature, Arts and Culture.** From Contemporary Asian Culture Inc., a not-for-profit organization whose mission is to bring to English-speaking readers insights into Asia. Issues include fiction, profiles; city scans, and feature articles, on site reports book and film reviews. See the Asian Studies WWW Monitor, vol. 7, no. 103 (January, 2000)

**Manusya: Journal of Arts and Humanities** Pranee Kullavanijaya, ed., Chulalongkorn University. Thai forum for studies in human sciences a sampling from the September 1999 edition: Khaisang Sukhavadhana, "The Thai Garden," Ronald Langacker, "Correspondences, Compositinality, and Grammar," Vorasun Buranakarn, "Philosophical Issues of Recycling." Editor Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, 10330; fax (662) 218-3210; or at [pranee@chula.ac.th](mailto:pranee@chula.ac.th)

**The Mark Satin Report** (Mark Satin, author), From the Center for Visionary Law, Business and Public Policy, Inc. Political newsletter offering promising ideas in politics, law, business and culture with intellectual honesty (free subscription for finding an example of political

correctness). \$36/per year to CVLBPP, P.O. Box 57100, Washington, DC 20077-6714.

### **OFFICIAL VIETNAM LINE-UP ON EVE OF 9<sup>TH</sup> CONGRESS**

Chairman, National Assembly.....Nong Duc Manh  
 President.....Tran Duc Luong  
 Vice President.....Nguyen Thi Binh  
 Primer Minister.....Phan Van Khai  
 First Dep. Prime Minister.....Nguyen Tan Dung  
 Dep. Prime Minister.....Nguyen Cong Tan  
 Dep. Prime Minister.....Nguyen Manh Cam  
 Dep. Prime Minister.....Pham Gia Khiem  
 Min. of Agriculture & Rural Devlp.....Le Huy Ngo  
 Min. of Construction.....Nguyen Manh Kiem  
 Min. of Culture & Info.....Nguyen Khoa Diem  
 Min. of Ed & Training.....Nguyen Minh Hien  
 Min. of Finance.....Nguyen Sinh Hung  
 Min. of Foreign Affairs.....Nguyen Dy Nien  
 Min. of Industry.....Dang Vu Chu  
 Min. of Justice.....Nguyen Dinh Loc  
 Min. of Labor, War Invalids, & Social Welfare.....  
 .....Nguyen Thi Hang  
 Min. of Marine Products.....Ta Quang Ngoc  
 Min. of Nat'l Defense....Pham Van Tra, Sr. Lt. Gen.  
 Min. of Planning & Investment.....Tran Xuan Gia  
 Min. of Public Health....Do Nguyen Phuong, M.D.  
 Min. of Pub Security.....Le Minh Huong, Maj. Gen.\*  
 Min. of Science, Technology, & Environment.....  
 .....Chu Tuan Nha  
 Min. of Trade.....Vu Khoan  
 Min. of Transportation & Comm.....Le Ngoc Hoan  
 Chairman, State Youth, Sports, & Physical Training  
 Affairs Ctr.....Ha Quang Du  
 Chairman, Govt. Office.....Doan Manh Giao  
 Chairman, Govt., Personnel & Organization  
 Ctte.....Do Quang Trung  
 Governor, State Bank.....Le Duc Thuy  
 Chief, General Staff, People's Army of  
 Vietnam.....Pham Van Tra, Lt. Gen.  
 Ambassador to the US.....Le Van Bang  
 Permanent Representative to the UN, New  
 York.....Ngyen Thanh Chau

## Vietnam Country View

**Overview:** We still expect the existing factional balance within the leadership to survive the intensified political maneuverings in the run-up to next year's Party Congress. Strong manufacturing and agricultural growth will drive GDP growth up to 6% in 2000, but growth will slow in 2001 as investment weakens. The resumption of import growth will reduce the current-account surplus, but inflation will remain low throughout the forecast period.

**Domestic Politics:** A series of changes to middle-level Communist Party and government leadership positions in recent months indicate that the initial jockeying for position in the run-up to the next Party Congress (scheduled for March 2001) is under way. Rumours that the economic reformist prime minister, Phan Van Khai, who ranks number three in the Politburo, will be forced out of power at the congress have also been growing, suggesting to some that the reformists are on the defensive. However, this analysis is not supported by recent headway in a reformist direction, most graphically illustrated by the conclusion of negotiations on the US trade treaty in July. This indicates that recent and impending personnel changes do not reveal the state of play in the putative struggle between economic reformers and conservatives, but more personalized factional infighting within the party.

**International Relations:** The trade agreement concluded with the US on July 13<sup>th</sup> is expected to have wide-ranging repercussions on both domestic politics and the Vietnamese economy. Fear of the domestic political implications was a major reason why it was met with strong resistance from within the party. Its eventual conclusion was an indication that the leadership now fears that the political costs of its failure to deliver economic growth are likely to be higher than risks to its hold on power arising from the liberalisation required under the agreement. The clearest benefit to Vietnam came from the reduction

of tariffs on Vietnamese goods entering the US from an average of 40% to an average of 3%. The opening of the US market is expected to set off a new round of foreign investment involving the US and other investors. However, the reciprocal commitments required of Vietnam, from opening up sectors, including strategic ones such as telecommunications, to compliance with international norms in areas such as intellectual property rights and to reducing its own barriers to trade with the US, clearly gave powerful forces pause. The long periods (of up to six years) envisaged for the phasing-in of these changes and advice from China--with which Vietnam consulted closely in the months leading up to the agreement--that concessions to the US in these areas did not necessarily herald the collapse of the party state seem to have weakened their resistance. The agreement has still to be ratified by the US Congress and the Vietnamese National Assembly. Congress is not expected to ratify it before early 2001 and only then will the National Assembly follow suit, probably at its May 2001 session. It will then take some time for domestic and foreign firms to gear up for easier access to the US market.

**Policy Trends:** The government will continue to maintain fiscal and monetary discipline. However, entrenched interests in the party will prevent a concerted effort being mounted to break the nexus that links the government, the banking system and state-owned enterprises. The acceleration of GDP growth that occurred in the first half of 2000 and the absence of significant new reforms will strengthen the position of these interests. Movement in a reformist direction is likely to continue to be thwarted by weak implementation. One test of this proposition will be the recent wide-ranging amendment by the National Assembly of 26 articles of the Foreign Investment Law, which address a number of the most persistent foreign-investor complaints.

**International Assumptions:** The global environment will be generally favorable for Vietnam over the next two years. GDP growth in Vietnam's main markets should stimulate demand for Vietnamese exports. The Japanese economy will gradually pick up momentum; despite some moderation of growth in the EU next year, the region will still keep expanding at around its trend rate; and the recovery that got underway in North-east and Southeast Asia in 1999 will be consolidated. These underlying strengths will be reflected in rapid world trade growth (averaging 8.5% over the next two years) and improving prices for manufactured exports and commodities. In 2000 average oil prices (Brent) are now expected to rise by 51% on their 1999 level, before falling back by about 19% in 2001. Generally higher dollar prices for exported commodities and manufactures will partially offset the fall in the oil price in 2001. However, two of Vietnam's leading export commodities, rice and coffee, will not benefit from the general improvement in commodity prices.

**Economic Growth:** On the basis of unexpectedly strong output growth and a recent government estimate that the economy registered GDP growth of 6.2% in the first half of 2000, we now expect GDP to grow by 6% this year. At the same time we continue to see little chance of growth being sustained at that level in 2001, particularly as the impact of the trade agreement with the US on investment and exports is not expected to be felt before late 2001.

**Inflation:** We now expect a downturn in inflation over the next two years from the average annual rate of 4.3% recorded in 1999. We are still assuming that slightly stronger domestic demand, a higher floor price for rice and the phasing-out of some subsidies, together with the depreciation of the dong, amplified by rises in the dollar prices of some imports, notably petroleum products, will boost inflation during the rest of 2000 and into 2001. But even if month-on-month rates of inflation, having turned moderately positive in August, stay that way for the rest of the year, the

average annual rate of inflation will be - 1.3% in 2000. However, we expect some upturn in the rate of inflation, to an annual average rate of 4.5%, in 2001.

**Exchange Rates:** The dong is expected to depreciate steadily over the next two years, at an annual average rate of about 5%. This may not be sufficient to stimulate foreign investment but for other reasons--in particular, the desire to limit inflationary pressures and to prevent the don value of Vietnam's foreign debt from ballooning--the Vietnamese authorities will be eager to preserve the stability of the dong relative to the US dollar.

**External Sector:** During the next two years export growth will accelerate in dollar terms to an average annual rate of 19.3%, but import compression will cease and imports will actually grow slightly faster than exports, at an annual average rate of 20.1%, narrowing the trade surplus and returning the current-account to deficit. Further volume increases in commodities exports will be partly offset by low prices of two of the main produces, rice and coffee, but rising dollar prices and volume sales of manufactured exports and relatively buoyant oil prices will keep exports growing in double digits over the forecast period. Rising demand for intermediate and capital goods, largely to feed the expansion of export-oriented industry, will boost the average annual rate of growth of imports in 2000-01.

By the Economist Intelligence Unit, "Outlook", 6 Sept 2000, London. From kenphan@webmail.netimages.com (Sept 12)

#### **Bio Sketches**

**Charles A. Ray**, US Consul General, HCMC, Vietnam. Senior career Foreign Service officer, served in US Army 1962-82, including two tours in Vietnam. After joining the Foreign Service, served in Guangzhou and Shenyang China; Chiang Mai, Thailand, Assistant at Bureau of Political-Military Affairs in the State Department; and DCM (1993-96) at US embassy in Freetown, Sierra Leone. Received B.S. in Business Administration from Benedictine College, Atchison, KS, M.S. in Systems Management from the Univ. of Southern California, and M.S. in National Security Strategy from the National War College in Washington, DC; also a graduate of the US Army Command and General Staff College in Leavenworth, KS, and the Industrial College of the Armed Forces, Washington, DC. Has authored numerous articles and his poetry has appeared in print and electronic anthologies. Ray was editorial cartoonist for the *Spring Lake* (NC) *News* from 1976 to 1979. Married to Myung W. Soe and has four adult children.

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