

Interchange

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

Volume 9, Issue 4

Fall 1999

Governor George H. Ryan at the University of Havana:

All of us have been impressed with Cuba. This island has often been called the "Pearl of the Caribbean." That's very appropriate.

But for any pearl to reach its full value, it must be pried from its shell and held up to the world. So it is with Cuba. Establishing ties between Cuba and Illinois that allow for cultural, economic, athletic and humanitarian exchanges will help pry Cuba from its shell. As do many others in the United States, I believe that the current economic embargo against Cuba has not advanced cooperation or understanding between our two peoples. If anything, it has pushed us apart.

Yet, although I disagree with this policy, it is not up to me alone to change this policy. I believe that it's important that this debate over US relations with Cuba continue. It's important for two reasons. It's important because these discussions may one day lead to fundamental changes in US policy toward Cuba. And it's important that these discussions continue in the United States because a debate like this keeps the principles of freedom and democracy alive and strong - not just in my country, but in any country that respects individual liberties.



(see page 7 for details of Governor Ryan's visit to Cuba)

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Vietnam Suffers Worst Flooding in a Century

Cambodia also experiences disastrous floods

by Amanda B. Hickman

Rainy season floods in Vietnam reached proportions not seen in at least a century, though you wouldn't know it from the minimal attention given to the catastrophe by the US media. By mid-November, the death toll was approaching 550 people, and much of central Vietnam's seven million residents face severe food shortages and illness in the months to come. A million homes had been damaged or destroyed and Deputy Prime Minister Pham Gia Khiem reported that at least 900,000 people in Hue were homeless as a result of the rising river.

According to reports from the Mine Action Program (MAP), the Hue City region saw the most damage. The northern half of the city was submerged, including more than 200,000 homes, many of whose occupants were stranded on their rooftops, while local officials did not have the resources to conduct a systematic rescue operation. Overland travel into and out of the city was impossible, and food supplies dwindled fast, though at least one relief helicopter

was able to land. According to some reports, one entire commune was swept into the ocean by floodwaters, and the official death toll as of mid-November stood at 123 in Hue alone. All phone communication was cut off for several days.

Northern Vietnam was essentially cut off from the south, as Highway 1 sustained substantial damage and the rail lines may not be completely repaired until February. Portions of Highway 1 in Hai



Flooding in Hoi An, photo courtesy Vietnamese Embassy Web Site

(continued on page 16)

Dinner Honors Ministers from Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam

The first annual dinner in celebration of closer cooperation in business, education and development between the United States and Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam took place on September 23 at the Institute of International Education in New York.

A sell out crowd of 140 honored HE Nguyen Manh Cam, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Socialist Republic of Viet Nam; HE Hor Namhong, Senior Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Kingdom of Cambodia; and HE Soubanh Srithirath, Minister attached to the Office of the President, Lao People's Democratic Republic.

The reception and dinner were organized by the Fund for Reconciliation and Development in cooperation with the Business Council for International Understanding and the Institute of International Education and with the assistance of Geneva Global Group, Ltd.

Corporate sponsors were Eli Lilly and Company (Dinner Chair), Salomon Smith Barney (Benefactor), General Electric (Patron) and Allied Domecq Spirits & Wine, The Americas (Friend).



Daniella Goodman, Le Van Bang (Vietnam's Ambassador to the US), Russell Proctor (Director, International Public and Government Relations, Asia Pacific and Greater China, Eli Lilly and Company), Deputy Prime Minister Nguyen Manh Cam. All Photos Stephen Jerrom/Glassgarden

Special contributors included the American Friends Service Committee, Glassgarden, House & Garden, PepsiCo Inc., MetLife, Mr. and Mrs. Irwin Jay Robinson, Sandler, Travis & Rosenberg, Siasconset Bookstore (Nantucket) and Vietnam Business Journal.

The atmosphere of the evening was enhanced by table cloths and settings from Lao Cotton, flowers from Tudor City Florist and food prepared by Cambodian Cuisine, Mangez Avec Moi (Lao), and the sister restaurants Nem and Cuisine of Saigon. In addition dinner participants received gift bags manufactured in a village in southern Viet



Ouch Borith (Cambodia's Ambassador to the UN), Alounkeo Kittikhoun (Lao Ambassador to the UN), Minister Soubanh Srithirath, Kanika Phomachanh (Director, International Organizations Department, Lao MFA), Geraldine Kunstadter (Chairman, Kunstadter Family Foundation), Allan Goodman, Vang Rattanavong (Lao Ambassador to the US).

Nam from a design learned twenty years ago in the Sa Pa area of northern Vietnam, stuffed animals made by handicapped people including land mine victims and purchased at the Disabled Peoples Shop in Phnom Penh and additional handicraft items from the Lao Women's Union Shop in Vientiane.



Minister Soubanh Srithirath, Senior Minister Hor Nam Hong, Allan Goodman (President, Institute of International Education).

There was broad sentiment that the evening was unusually enjoyable and should be repeated next year. The presence of high ranking officials in New York every fall for the UN General Assembly session offers a unique opportunity for Americans from NGOs, foundations, educational institutions and corporations to meet them and each other as well as numerous additional guests from the Embassies, UN Missions and delegations from home.

The speech and background material of each Minister is available. See page 31.

Don't Leave Your Light Under a Bushel!

New Annotated Listing of North American Organizations Working in Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam

One of the roles of the Fund for Reconciliation and Development is to facilitate cooperation and sharing of information between not-for-profit organizations in North America which work with Indochina. The publication of the annotated listing of North American non-governmental organizations, foundations, corporate philanthropies, charities, universities and cultural groups working in Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam has been a resource for individuals and organizations seeking to identify and collaborate with others whose interests overlap. Recognizing the reality of the internet as an invaluable wellspring of information, we plan in the coming year to publish a new edition of the annotated listing on our website as well as on paper. If you represent a North American organization working with Cambodia, Laos or Vietnam (even if you have been listed in previous directories), please either fill out the database form at <www.usirp.org/annotate.html>, ask us to e-mail you the form, or fill out the following and return before December 31, 1999.

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Mission Statement:

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

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Organization Name: _____

Department/Program: _____

Contact Name: _____

Address: _____

E-mail: _____ Website URL: _____

Telephone: _____ Fax: _____

Date began working in country, for each country:

Location of Field Office(s), contact information:

For each project, please list its location (city, town, province, commune, etc.) and sector (health, education, business training, etc.)

Agent Orange Update: United States and Vietnam

Veterans and Birth Defects

The San Diego Union-Tribune reported in September that a Veterans Administration study of nearly 4,000 female Vietnam veterans — and an equal number of female veterans who did not serve in Vietnam — found about 50 percent more birth defects in the Vietnam group. Most striking was the finding that for women serving who were not nurses, the risk of serious birth defects to their children was 160% percent greater than in the comparison group. In all women who served the risk of severe birth defects was 46% greater than the general population.

Nearly twenty years ago the US Air Force began a study of male veterans that found comparable rates of birth defects in the children of veterans who sprayed Agent Orange and other herbicides in Vietnam.

Based on the results of the study, the VA's Agent Orange Task Force is recommending that children of female Vietnam veterans who have disabling birth defects receive compensation. Since 1991, Vietnam veterans who have credible evidence that health conditions are related to exposure to Agent Orange can apply for compensation.

Le Cao Dai Visits the United States

Dr. Le Cao Dai visited the US in November sponsored by Dr. Arnold Schechter, now Professor of Environmental Sciences at the School of Public Health at the University of Texas, at Dallas. Dr. Dai is one of Vietnam's leading investigators on dioxins and is now Director of the Vietnam Agent Orange Victims Fund of Vietnam's Red Cross. Dr. Dai was keynote speaker at the American Public Health Association meeting in Chicago for the Vietnam Caucus, was interviewed by the Voice of America, met with Sen. Tom Daschle's aide to discuss new funding for Agent Orange research in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, and gave talks at the University of Texas Health Science Centers in Houston and in Dallas. He also was videotaped for an oral history presentation at the Vietnam Archives of the Vietnam Center in Lubbock, Texas. He also met with Vietnam Veterans of America president Bobby Muller and his coworkers.

Arnold Schechter can be reached at
<arnold.schechter@email.swmed.edu>

New Evidence of Contamination

Last year, the Hatfield Group, a Canadian environmental consulting firm, completed a four-year study in the A Luoi valley. These ecologists and chemists found, measured, and documented unexpectedly high levels of TCDD (a dioxin) in the soil, food, and blood of the ethnic minorities who live in the A Luoi valley. The A Luoi valley was chosen because other chemicals, such as pesticides, could not confound measurements of TCDD. The ethnic minorities who live there are too poor to afford pesticides. <www.hatfieldgroup.com>.

As much as 1000 parts per trillion of TCDD were measured in the soil near a former Special Forces base (A Sau) nearly 30 years after Agent Orange spraying had terminated. This discovery is astounding news to many American scientists who have long believed that TCDD is not that persistent in its potency.

The levels of TCDD, which the Hatfield scientists found in the soil, would result in portions of the A Luoi valley being declared as hazardous-waste sites, if these areas were in the US or Canada. However, the valley's inhabitants cannot afford to move. In fact, the valley is advertised as a "free economic zone," a place where destitute people from the city try to find a better life because the land is relatively cheap.

The Hatfield scientists are, by some accounts, the first western scientists to lend credibility to what Vietnamese scientists have suggested for the past 30 years, that a causal connection exists between the continual exposure to the TCDD in Agent Orange and the epidemic proportions of birth defects, cancers, and other serious health problems suffered by Vietnamese people who have been exposed to this toxin for nearly 40 years.

Excerpt from "Historic floods and the Legacy of Agent Orange in Vietnam", an article by Greg Gianas gianas@earthlink.net

Good News From Cambodia

Progress: In October the second quarterly review by 100 delegates from bilateral and multi-lateral donors to Cambodia found "good and positive progress" according to World Bank representative Bonaventura Mbida-Essama. German Ambassador Harald Loeschner, representing the European Union, said, "we are encouraged by the reform program...We are also pleased to notice good headway in the economic and financial sectors." Japanese Ambassador Masaki Saito cautioned that military reforms, particularly demobilization, are going slow.

Thousands of Ghost Soldiers Identified: Cambodia has found and removed 15,551 "ghost" soldiers and 159,587 dependents from military payrolls from January to September as part of the effort to demobilize police and military and reduce their budget share.

Rice Surplus: Cambodia expects a surplus of up to 60,000 tons of milled rice this year, twice that of last year. Minister of Commerce Cham Prasidh is seeking foreign investment in milling to gain greater profit from the industry.

In Memorium:

Larry Tankersley, director of the Southern Asia Office of Church World Service and Witness for five years, will be remembered by those who attended the Forum conference at Bryn Mawr College in June of 1997 for his skillful chairing of the panel "INGO Regulation and Registration". Larry lost his battle with cancer in September.

Development Triangle

The three countries of Indochina reaffirmed and updated their traditional friendship at a summit meeting in Vientiane in October. The Prime Ministers of Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam, accompanied by foreign affairs and economic ministers, agreed to set up a development triangle with special trade relationships, a joint power grid and cooperation on tourism, agriculture, telecommunications, transportation, environment, education, forestry, public health training and suppression of narcotics.



Photo Emiko Omori

Regret to Inform is a powerful meditation on loss and the devastation of war on a personal level, and a film that very much needs to be seen by a broad audience. If you are interested in organizing an event around the viewing, contact the P.O.V. publicists, Kate Scott or Su Patel at (212) 989-8121.

The national P.O.V. broadcast is a co-presentation with the National Asian American Telecommunications Association.

**Monday, January 24, 2000, 10 PM ET on PBS
(check local listings)**

So exquisitely filmed, edited and scored it is the documentary equivalent of a tragic epic poem. Every word and image quivers with an anguished resonance.

—Stephen Holden, *New York Times*

In January, PBS's P.O.V. documentary series will air **Regret to Inform**, Barbara Sonneborn's Academy Award nominated documentary, which follows her pilgrimage to the Vietnamese countryside where her husband died during the war. The film weaves interviews with Vietnamese and American widows of the war into a moving testament to the chilling legacy of war. The stories that these widows tell are stirring reminders that shared sorrow can inspire meaningful reconciliation, and that forgiveness does not mean we have to forget the war.



Photo Emiko Omori

A New Wind Blowing On Cuba Policy?

[Editor's note: The Latin America Working Group (LAWG) is a coalition of over sixty religious, human rights, policy, grassroots and development organizations striving for U.S. policies that promote peace, justice and sustainable development in the region. The Working Group regularly convenes its participating organizations to analyze developments in Washington and the hemisphere, and to craft common positions and effective strategies for action, while the Working Group's staff members assist organizations in designing and implementing coordinated advocacy efforts and public education campaigns. Recently LAWG mobilized in support of the Ashcroft Amendment and other legislation advocating humanitarian trade with Cuba. The following was excerpted from LAWG documents with contributions from Mavis Anderson, Cuba Project Coordinator, and details recent congressional events relating to Cuba, as well as LAWG's activities.]

It was an amazing year in the effort to lift the embargo on the sale of food and medicine to Cuba. A strong new wind is certainly blowing through the Congress on U.S. policy toward Cuba. In August, a decisive Senate vote of 70-28 approved the Ashcroft amendment to the Agriculture Appropriations bill to authorize the sale of food and medicine to the Cuban government, the first significant move toward easing the embargo in 40 years. Ultimately, the amendment was struck from the bill by Republican leadership in the House-Senate conference committee. Nonetheless, they needed to resort to hardball, non-democratic tactics to accomplish it. Moreover, new initiatives and partners have emerged from the October struggle over Agriculture Appropriations.

Senators Ashcroft and Hagel introduced their amendment to eliminate unilateral sanctions on the sale of food and medicine and to institute very strict procedures under which these kind of sanctions could ever be implemented again while the Agriculture Appropriations bill was on the floor of the Senate this summer. The day after the amendment passed, Senate members opposed to trade with Cuba [Torricelli (D-NJ), Mack (R-FL) and Graham (D-FL)] pushed to get Cuba excluded from the Ashcroft amendment. As a compromise, a few modifications were agreed to, but the sale of food and medicine to the Cuban government remained covered by the provision.

Nonetheless, the House Agriculture Appropriations bill had no provision addressing unilateral sanctions. The House/Senate conference committee met on September 22nd to work out the differences between the two bills. At the conference committee stage, House and Senate conferees vote as separate groups and therefore, to resolve a dispute, both sides must accept proposed language. The Senate conferees immediately voted to reaffirm their position in support of the Ashcroft language. The

reaffirmation of the Ashcroft provision passed overwhelmingly by a vote of 7-4 among the Senate conferees. Individual votes remains unknown as no spectators were allowed and no record has been published. After this vote, it was clear that those seeking to remove Cuba from the Ashcroft provision would not find a majority of support among Senate conferees.

A discussion about excluding Cuba from the Ashcroft provision then proceeded to House conferees. The House Republican leadership said that they could not accept the Ashcroft provision and that they had a different proposal which kept most of the Ashcroft amendment, but put extra conditions on selling food and medicine to Cuba, making it impossible for sales to take place in the immediate future. Representatives Rosa DeLauro (D-CT) and Jo Ann Emerson (R-MO) then spoke against the House leadership's attempt to exclude Cuba. At this point, the House Republican leadership recessed the conference committee rather than allow a vote on the Ashcroft provision. The general understanding was that the House conferees would have voted to allow the sale of food and medicine to Cuba.

After it became apparent that the Republican leadership could not secure the votes to exclude Cuba from the Ashcroft provision, and that conferees disagreed on dairy issues, the leadership never reconvened the conference committee. The Republican leadership made known that it had come up with its own compromise without the participation of the conferees. Their proposal dropped the Ashcroft language and the controversial dairy issues while increasing funds for a farmer assistance package. They then circulated the proposal on the entire Agriculture bill to members of the conference committee for their signature. For an agreement to be finalized without reconvening the committee, they only needed a majority of House and a majority of Senate conferees to sign the conference report, which occurred on September 30.

While the House Republican leadership thwarted efforts to allow the sales of food and medicine in the 11th hour, Cuba has risen as a focus of the trade debate in Washington. The extraordinary procedural manipulation of the legislative process infuriated Republicans as well as Democrats. The injustice of this defeat has angered, not discouraged, supporters of the Ashcroft amendment. Furthermore, press coverage of the Agriculture Appropriations conference committee has focused on this debate, not as a debate on unilateral sanctions, but as one on Cuba.

Furthermore, a promise was apparently made to Senator John Ashcroft (R-MO), the sponsor of the amendment, that this issue would be brought before the Senate again during this Congress. In fact, on October 10, Senator Ashcroft introduced S. 1771, the Food and Medicine for the World Act, "a bill to provide stability in the United States agriculture sector and to promote adequate

availability of food and medicine for humanitarian assistance abroad by requiring Congressional approval before the imposition of any unilateral agricultural or medical sanction against a foreign country or foreign entity”, a slight re-write of his amendment to the agriculture bill. The bill currently has 36 co-sponsors; it hopefully will see some action in early 2000.

A similar effort is afoot in the House, with pressure being put on Speaker Dennis Hastert to allow a debate and vote on the House floor. Two “Dear Colleague” letters, one Republican and one Democratic, are currently collecting signatures for letters to the Speaker urging him to take up legislation allowing exports of food and medicine to countries subject to economic sanctions. This includes Cuba. The number of signers is steadily growing; between the two letters the goal is to exceed 218, the number needed to pass a bill in the House, which looks hopeful.

This work finds us in coalition with new and sometimes unusual partners: the U.S. business community, agriculture interests (both agribusiness and small mid-western farmers), Cuban-Americans open to ending the embargo, as well as our customary partners from the religious and human rights communities. The coalition continues to gain in strength and resolve, as we work together to benefit both the Cuban people without access to needed medicines and food, and U.S. farmers in search of new markets for their products.

In addition, the Administration recently came out with seemingly contradictory actions. President Clinton said in early November that he could favor an easing of the embargo on Cuba “under the right circumstances,” a plan similar to legislation considered recently by Congress to exempt food and medicine from U.S. embargoes. At the same time, the State Department initiated a new web site focused exclusively on Cuba. Its stated purpose is to help Americans understand the maze of rules and regulations governing travel to Cuba, the U.S. embargo against the island and related issues. It highlights, with the help of pictures, the Administration’s view of perceived shortcomings of the revolution in such areas as housing, transportation, and human rights. Then, on November 10, President Clinton rejected appeals from House Republicans to put Cuba on the so-called “majors” list of drug exporting and drug trafficking nations, stating that no clear evidence has been found that cocaine or heroin are transiting Cuba en route to the United States in quantities that significantly affect the United States. House Republicans have promised retaliatory measures.

Cuba Web Sites

US State Department Site:

<http://www.state.gov/www/regions/wha/cuba>

Republic of Cuba Government Site:

<http://www.cubagob.cu>, *in Spanish*

LAWG continues to encourage that you contact your Senators and Representative to become cosponsors of the Dodd/Serrano legislation (S. 926/H.R. 1644) to end the embargo on the sale of food and medicine to Cuba. This enables us to assess support for the Ashcroft bill and the similar bill to be introduced in the House, plus pending travel legislation. The House of Representatives is especially important at this time. For the status of your Congressperson or Senator’s positions, and contact phone numbers call or write us.

LAWG’s Cuba grassroots network is active and growing, having increased to an e-mail list of over 400 groups and individuals. The response to our alerts and requests for action from this network of people concerned about U.S. policy toward Cuba is heartening. They can be credited with positively changing a significant number of votes on Cuba legislation this session. If you’d like to join the network, e-mail us and request to be put on the list. A current effort is to provide an organizing packet to raise the issue of Cuba in the up-coming Congressional campaigns. We’ll be in touch with our state/district contacts to assist in designing a strategy in your area. Please contact us if you’re willing to help organize or participate.

For more information, contact the Latin America Working Group, 110 Maryland Avenue NW, Box 15, Washington, DC, 20002; telephone: (202)546-7010; e-mail: lawg@lawg.org; <http://www.lawg.org>.

Governor of Illinois visits Cuba

On October 23rd, Governor George H. Ryan became the first sitting US governor to visit Cuba in over 40 years. Ryan brought almost \$2 million of humanitarian supplies, and a delegation which included First Lady Lura Lynn Ryan, Representative Edgar Lopez (D-Chicago), Illinois Speaker of the House, Illinois House and Senate minority leaders, as well as state representatives, senators, and cabinet members. “My hope is that this humanitarian mission will usher in a new era of cooperation and understanding between the people of our two countries. We’re going to build bridges between the people of Illinois and the people of Cuba,” Ryan said. “Isolating Cuba is not in the best interests of Illinois or in the best interests of the US.” Issued a U.S. Treasury Department license, Ryan met with Fidel Castro, and other government officials. Ryan emphasized the similarities between Cuba and Illinois: “We have visited with your Minister of Agriculture and toured your farms,” he said. “We have discovered much about your land and what it can produce. We have learned that our commitment to the land is the same. It’s what we produce that is different.” His humanitarian aid included school supplies, medicines, food, and clothing. “Too often these kids are not getting the proper medical attention they need,” Mrs. Ryan said. “By providing these supplies, I hope that we can improve their plight today and help them prepare for a better tomorrow.”

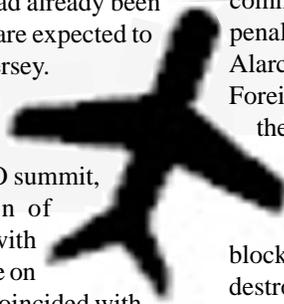
Direct charter flights to Cuba from New York City

will begin on December 3rd for the first time since 1962. On August 3, the Clinton administration first announced the opening of New York and Los Angeles to such flights, previously only possible through Miami. As with the Miami charters, only travelers licensed by the Treasury Department will be allowed on the flights. Marazul Charters will operate the first set of charters. The 3½ hour flight costs \$629 for a round-trip fare. The charter will leave Kennedy International at 8:35 every Friday night and return before dawn on Saturday morning. More flights will be added in response to demand. The majority of the 150 seats on the first flight had already been sold by early November. Most of the passengers are expected to be Cuban-Americans from New York and New Jersey.

NNOC Conference coincides with WTO Summit.

Due to the possibility of Cuban President Fidel Castro attending the WTO summit, the National Network on Cuba, a coalition of organizations working to normalize relations with Cuba, held its US/Cuba 2000 conference in Seattle on December 3-6. The conference and preparation coincided with the tens of thousands of environmental, human rights and labor activists convening to protest corporate globalization and free trade policies of the WTO. US/Cuba 2000 featured panels and teach-ins covering a wide range of Cuban issues, including democracy, the island's economy, health and education in Cuba, and the situation of women. Workshops included members of Congress, academics, labor leaders, and Cuban government officials. Cuba is one of the WTO's founding members, but also one of its strongest critics, insisting that the organization do more to contribute to fair and equal development for the Third World. The Cuba government has also sought to overturn the 1996 Helms-Burton Act as a WTO-illegal obstruction of trade due to the way the act imposes extra-territorial barriers on countries trading with Cuba. The Cuban government consistently challenges the neo-liberal agenda advanced by the WTO. In the past, President Castro has warned that corporate globalization threatens to turn "the Third World into a huge free-trade zone, full of maquiladoras that will not even pay taxes." *Information provided by Caryn Mandelbaum, Global Exchange.*

Ibero-American Summit in Cuba. In his closing remarks on November 16, Fidel Castro hailed the IX summit as a "fruitful and fertile" exchange. The final declaration reaffirmed a commitment to political pluralism and human rights, as well as calling for the US "to put an end to the application of the Helms-Burton law, in conformity with resolutions approved by the General Assembly of the UN." Chile and Argentina boycotted the summit in protest of Spain's attempt to extradite Chilean General Augusto Pinochet. Nonetheless, the Document of Havana did include the "energetic rejection of the application of unilateral and extraterritorial laws or national measures that infringe upon international law," seen as endorsement of Chile's position. US Administration officials applaud the call for democracy and human rights in Cuba while discounting the censure the US embargo as a matter of US policy, not international law.



U.N. again calls for United States to end embargo against Cuba.

For the eighth consecutive year, the U.N. General assembly overwhelmingly supported a resolution calling for the end of the U.S. embargo against Cuba. This year's vote of 155-2 with eight abstentions, compared favorably to last year's tally of 157-2 with 12 abstentions. Like last year, only Israel voted with the United States, despite their own record of trade with Cuba. Estonia, Georgia, Latvia, Micronesia, Morocco, Nicaragua, Senegal and Uzbekistan all abstained. The resolution referred particularly to the Helms-Burton Act of 1996, viewed by many in the international community as a violation of international law and sovereignty by penalizing international companies that trade with Cuba. Ricardo Alarcon, president of Cuba's National Assembly as well as former Foreign Minister and UN permanent representative, spoke first on the resolution by "officially announcing to [the] assembly that a lawsuit will be filed against the government of the United States for compensation of over \$100 billion on account of the enormous damages caused to the people of Cuba by the blockade." Alarcon argued that the U.S. embargo is intended "to destroy the Cuban people," and should be considered an act of genocide, thus punishable under the 1948 convention against genocide.

Why Should We Care About

By Cristina Kanizares

One of the biggest problems faced by proponents of organic agriculture is the firmly established agroindustry, which claims that organic, small-scale, sustainable methods of food production are simply not economically viable. The popular perception is that toxic chemicals, the demise of the family farm, and the consolidation of the control over our food system into a few, powerful, transnational corporations are all necessary if we are to feed the world's ever-expanding population.

Cuba is proving that preconception a myth. It is the first nation to attempt to convert its entire system of food production to sustainable methods. This conversion does not mean a simple substitution of organic inputs for chemical ones; Cuba has changed the very structure of its agricultural system. The formerly monolithic state farms have been slowly parceled out to cooperatives and individual farmers, thereby increasing their efficiency and allowing the farmers greater food security. In the cities, unused land has been made available to its citizens for cultivation, creating a vast system of organic urban gardens. The more than 8,000 gardens in Havana alone produced 541,000 tons of food in 1998 and accounted for as much as 30% of the nutritional needs of certain areas.

Cuba has become a leader in the world of organic agriculture. Its research and development and its extension agencies have

Alternative Nobel Goes to Cuban Group Promoting the Organic Revolution

STOCKHOLM and OAKLAND: The Grupo de Agricultura Organica (GAO), the Cuban organic farming association, which has been at the forefront of the country's transition from industrial to organic agriculture, was named as winner of a major international prize—the Right Livelihood Award—commonly known as the 'Alternative Nobel Prize.'

The Grupo de Agricultura Organica is one of four winners of the 1999 Right Livelihood Award, chosen from more than 80 candidates from 40 countries. GAO brings together farmers, farm managers, field experts, researchers, and government officials to develop and promote organic farming methods.

Its aim is to convince Cuban farmers and policy-makers that the country's previous high-input farming model was too import-dependent and environmentally damaging to be sustainable, and that the organic alternative has the potential to achieve equally good yields.

"This award is truly an honor for Cuba, for GAO, and for all the farmers, researchers, and policy makers who have struggled to make organic farming work in Cuba," said Dr. Fernando Funes-Aguilar, President of GAO. "We hope that our efforts will demonstrate to other countries that conventional chemically-dependent agriculture is not

the only way to feed a country."

During the 1990s Cuba overcame a severe food shortage caused by the collapse of its trade relations with the former Soviet-bloc and the on-going U.S. trade embargo. Self-reliant organic farming played a significant role in overcoming the crisis.

GAO was founded in 1993 as the Asociación Cubana de Agricultura Organica (ACAO), but recently changed its name when it was legally incorporated as part of the Cuban Association of Agricultural and Forest Technicians (ACTAF). Over the past five years it has built up an impressive program of lobbying, training courses, workshops, documentation centers, demonstration farms, and exchange visits for farmers, and has held three international conferences.

"I hope this award will awaken the world to the amazing achievements Cuba has made in organic farming and food security", said Martin Bourque, Sustainable Agriculture Program Director of Food First/The Institute for Food and Development Policy. "Through their hard work, innovation, and scientific excellence, GAO and the whole Cuban agricultural sector have demonstrated that low-input sustainable agriculture can work on a national scale."

Food First has had a scientific and technical exchange program with GAO for several years, and will co-sponsor GAO's Fourth National Encounter on Organic Agriculture in May of the year 2000.

GAO is the first Cuban winner of the Right Livelihood Award. It shares the prize money of SEK 1,800,000 (approximately US \$225,000) with a Colombian network, Consolidation of the Amazon Region (COAMA), working for indigenous rights and biodiversity, and with Chilean-Spanish lawyer Juan Garces, who is honored for his untiring efforts over many years to bring the former Chilean dictator, General Pinochet, to justice. One of the world's leading promoters of solar energy, Hermann Scheer, receives an honorary award.

The prizes will be presented at a ceremony in the Swedish Parliament on December 9, the day before the conventional Nobel Prizes. Founded in 1980, the Right Livelihood Award has honored more than 80 outstanding individuals and organizations for work contributing to a better future for the world.

Peter Rosset, executive director of Food First, said: "This award shows the enormous potential of sustainable agriculture, which is so underexploited in other countries. The whole world should learn from Cuba." Dr. Rosset went on to say that "in Cuba, organic is for everyone, not just for those who can afford it."

For more information on the Grupo de Agricultura Organica or Food First, you can contact Food First staff members who are available for comment, and access the following website: <http://www.foodfirst.org/progs/global/cuba>. Food First/The Institute for Food and Development Policy, 398 60th Street, Oakland, CA 94618, USA; telephone: (510)654-4400; fax: (510)654-4551; e-mail: foodfirst@foodfirst.org; <http://www.foodfirst.org>

Agriculture in Cuba?

advanced organic methods in the urban and rural sectors. The National Institute for Basic Research in Tropical Agriculture (INIFAT) has research stations across the country that specialize in the specific challenges of their area. They construct and maintain nurseries and assist farmers with technical questions through their extension programs. The Plant Protection Research Institute has created more than 200 Centers for the Reproduction of Entomophages and Entomopathogen (CREEs) that research and produce biological controls. The CREEs are located throughout the country, supplying farmers and gardeners with new and useful biological products.

The international community could learn a great deal by aiding and studying this system. With continued commitment and international support, the Cuban organic movement can become a new way to think about food production. With so much hunger and food insecurity in the U.S. and across the world, and the persistent social and environmental degradation caused by our current "modernized" system of agriculture, it is time for us to seriously consider our alternatives. Cuba presents us with a case where alternatives are practiced, and where they are succeeding in increasing food security and environmental safety.

Cristina Kanizares is Program Assistant for Food First/The Institute for Food and Development Policy. This article was taken from their materials and is available for viewing online at <http://www.foodfirst.org/progs/global/cuba/2-2000-cuba1.html>.

NGO Self Profile

Global Exchange is a non-profit research, education, and action center dedicated to promoting people-to-people ties between the United States and the developing world. Since 1989, through our Campaign to End the U.S. Blockade of Cuba, Global Exchange has played a leading role in creating a broad discussion on the need to normalize relations with Cuba. Our Cuba program is designed to challenge U.S. policy and continually engage new and ever larger communities in the debate. Our campaigns, Reality Tours, public forums, and publications have informed and broadened the discussion in both institutional and grassroots communities. Additionally, our humanitarian assistance and development partnerships have allowed us to assist the Cuban people in their struggle to survive these difficult times. Explore the many faces of Cuba on one of our study tours, which focus on diverse themes from Afro-Cuban Culture to Alternative & Traditional Medicine to Sustainable Agriculture. Learn about our island neighbor and the warmth of the Cuban people, while experiencing their dramatic history and culture reflected in their daily lives.

Study Tours

Health & Healing with the real Dr. Patch Adams, Dec. 10-20, 1999

The Millennium in Havana, Dec. 27, 1999 - Jan. 4, 2000

Cuba at a Crossroads, Feb. 11-20, 2000

Sustainable Agriculture, Feb. 20-29, 2000

Following Che's Footsteps, March 18-28, 2000

Renewable Energy, April 18-28, 2000

Jammin' in Havana, June 16-28, 2000

Cuban Culture: Fiesta del Caribe July 1-10, 2000

Global Exchange also offers specialized trips on various topics, including bike tours with the *Eco-Bici por Cuba* Bicycle Club; two-week Dance and Percussion workshops with the National Folklore Dance Company of Cuba; and Spanish language and culture classes at the University of Havana.

Bike Tour Program Dates: Jan. 14 - Jan. 22, 2000 Havana/Matanzas; Feb. 26 - March 5, 2000 Havana/Cienfuegos; Oct. 24 - Nov. 2, 2000 Havana/ Pinar del Rio; July (dates TBA) Havana/ Eastern Provinces/ Santiago de Cuba.

Dance and Percussion Program Dates: Jan. 2 - Jan. 16, Feb. 5 - Feb. 19; Apr. 30 - May 14; June 3 - June 17; July 2 - July 16; Aug. 5 - Aug. 19.

Spanish Language and Culture Classes Program Dates: Classes are held Monday through Friday, 9AM to 1PM. Program duration is one month or two weeks. Two-week programs start only at the beginning of the month. Program extensions are available.

For further information, contact Global Exchange; 2017 Mission Street #303; San Francisco, California 94110; telephone (415) 255-7296; fax (415) 255-7498; e-mail: info@globalexchange.org. A full description of Global Exchange and current trips can be found at their website, <http://www.globalexchange.org>.

Self profiles are provided by NGOs or adapted from their materials. We edit profiles only for style.

3rd International Conference on the Rights of Disabled People, Havana

International Conference Center Palacio de Convenciones, April 4-7, 2000. Organized by Cuban Association for the Physically Handicapped, National Association for the Blind and the Visually Impaired, National Association for the Deaf, Ministry of Labor and Social Security, Ministry of Public Health, Ministry of Education and Havana International Conference Center to promote social participation of people with disabilities through the exchange of experiences on the rights of the disabled in today's society. Topics include: Social Integration; Rights of Disabled People; The Right to Work and to Equal Opportunity; Social Security and Social Services; Removal of Barriers; Education, Arts and Culture; Sports and Leisure; Family, Parenthood and Sexuality; Social Communication. Expected participants are social and disabled peoples organizations, people with disabilities, religious and nongovernmental organizations, governmental institutions, professionals and individuals interested in these subjects. *For more information, contact Mrs. Luciana Valle Valdés, Vice-President of Public Relations; telephone 537.29.30.99; fax: 510.654.4551; e-mail: e-mail: aclifim@infomed.sld.cu; or Lic. Eva Paula Bravo (OPC); Apartado Postal 16046, La Habana, Cuba; telephone: (537)21-51-99 or 22-60-11 (al 19), ext. 1514; fax: (537)21-94-96/22-83-82; e-mail: eva@palco.get.cma.net.*

Casa del Caribe Workshops, Each year Casa del Caribe, an institution for investigation and promotion of Cuban Caribbean culture, holds international workshops for dance, music, Afro-Cuban percussion and magic-religious systems, presented by specialists of well-recognized national and international prestige, and with the participation of international personalities and performers. These workshops take place each year in the city of Santiago de Cuba, during the following months: December, to coincide with the festivities of San Lázaro (Babalú Ayé); July, concurrent with the Caribbean Festival, a notable event in itself; and in September, with the festivities of the Virgen de la Caridad del Cobre. *For further information, contact: Lic. Angel Trincado Fontán, Casa del Caribe, Apartado Postal 4144, Havana 10400, Cuba; telephone: 53-797-250; e-mail: trkaribe@ceniai.inf.cu; <http://www2.cuba.cu/trinkaribe>.*

Historiography, Higher Education and Popular Culture in Latin America

La Universidad de Matanzas, Cuba, January 10-21, 2000. Departamento de Ciencias Sociales Universidad de Matanzas 'Camilo Cienfuegos' [UMCC] convenes an international interdisciplinary school with professors from three continents – America, Europe and Australia. The 10 day program includes the following intensive courses (5 sessions of 4-5 hours each) : Popular Culture and Education in Latin America, Trends in Latin American Historiography, General Studies in Our America, Higher Education in Latin America. We invite students, professors, researchers, and intellectuals to participate in this encounter. Organizers will compile a book from the contents of the event, including the collaborative work produced in the workshops. The Minister of Education of Cuba will accredit 48 hours of study at the post-graduate level, equivalent to three credits. Bilingual sessions offered if needed. Participants from foreign universities have the option of seeking credit in their own institutions; each participant receives a certificate of accreditation. *For more information, contact Mirtha Rodríguez, Departamento de Ciencias Sociales, U. Matanzas, Cuba; e-mail: mirta@cdict.umtz.edu.cu or Robert Austin; Escuela de Periodismo, Universidad ARCIS, Santiago de Chile; e-mail: rwaustin64@hotmail.com, ramirez@M140.aone.net.au*

MADRE Delegation to Cuba

January 7-15, 2000. Join Madre, an international women's human rights organization. Visit Cuba's renowned health clinics and schools. Talk directly with Cubans; learn for yourself the effects of the US embargo. Licensed travel. \$1,650 (double); \$1,920 (single). Includes round-trip direct flight from New York, hotel, breakfast, translation, guide and much more. Send \$200 deposit to reserve your space (full payment due December 15). *For more information, contact MADRE; telephone (212)627-0444; fax (212)675-3704; e-mail: madre@igc.org.*

LASA2000: XXII International Congress

of the Latin American Studies Association. Miami, Florida 16-18 March 2000; Scholars and practitioners from a wide range of disciplines and countries have submitted a series of proposals dealing directly or in part with the LASA2000 theme of "Hands Across the Hemisphere: Cooperation and Connections for the New Millennium." The LASA International Congress will feature panels, workshops, and special sessions with a multitude of topics and approaches to research in the field of Latin American studies. The fall issue of the LASA Forum features a list of sessions accepted for the Miami meeting, as well as an update on some of the special features of the Congress. Preregistration and complete conference information is available on the web. Visit the LASA2000 page to download the form in either Corel WordPerfect 6.1 for Windows or PDF format. *For more information, contact Latin American Studies Association, University of Pittsburgh, 946 William Pitt Union, Pittsburgh, PA, 15260; telephone: (202)546-7010; fax: (202)543-7647; e-mail: LASA+@PITT.EDU; http://lasa.international.pitt.edu/lasa2000.htm.*

Food First's 5th Annual Sustainable Agriculture Delegation

February 20-29, 2000. Cuba is currently engaged in one of the most ambitious and intensive transformations from chemically dependant to organic, sustainable agriculture ever attempted. Join Food First as one of the growing number of international farmers and agricultural professionals to study and support this valuable undertaking. Visit cooperative & individual farms, organoponics, biological control production centers, worm composting facilities, and research extension agencies. Learn about the policy changes and technological innovations that have facilitated the transition to organic systems. Meet the farmers, researchers, extension workers, and policy makers leading the transition. Deadline for application: December 31, 1999, space limited. *For more information, contact Institute for Food and Development Policy, 389 60th Street, Oakland, CA, 94608; telephone (510)654-4400; fax: (510)654-4551; e-mail: kcaniz@foodfirst.org; http://www.foodfirst.org/progs/global/Cuba.*

U.S. Healthcare Exhibition in Cuba PABEXPO

Exhibition Center, Havana, January 25 - 29, 2000. Medical professionals from throughout Cuba and U.S. healthcare companies will participate. PWN Exhibition International L.L.C. will assist exhibitors in obtaining licenses from the U.S. Bureau of Export Administration. New Jersey-Based Kallman Worldwide will coordinate exhibitor recruitment and New York-based International Exhibit Transport will provide shipping and customs coordination. Licenses will be issued for products to be exported to Cuba for up to two years for the purpose of demonstration and testing by entities associated with the Cuban Ministry of Public Health and then remain in Cuba as a donation to an NGO. *For more information contact Peter W. Nathan, PWN Director, Exhibition International LLC, in Westport, Connecticut.*

IFCO-Pastors for Peace Delegation to Study Afro-Cuban Culture and Religion

January 16-26, 2000. This delegation will explore the complex subject of the Afro-Cuban culture and religion in Havana and Matanzas, Cuba. The trip will include lectures and discussions about Afro-Cuban culture and religion, conversations with believers, and visits to Houses of Lucumi, Palo and other African religions. Delegates will explore the use of dance, music and drumming in religious ritual, as well as the effects of African religions on the Christian religious practices in Cuba today. Delegates will also learn about how the Afro-Cuban culture, religion, healing and other aspects are reflected in the medical and educational system, as well as the daily lives of the people. The delegation will include a 7-day workshop in Matanzas led by Prof. Israel Moliner Castañeda, president of the Society of Social Anthropology of the Island of Cuba, co-author of the Encyclopedia of Caribbean Religion, and lecturer at University of Matanzas. *For more information, contact the Interreligious Foundation for Community Organization, 402 West 145th Street, New York, NY, 10031; telephone: (212)926-5757; fax: (212)926-5842; e-mail: ifco@igc.org; http://www.ifconews.org/afrocuban.html.*

some upcoming Cuba events and **CONFERENCES**

Debt Relief and the Economic Crisis in Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam

by Andrew Wells

A global movement to relieve debts owed by the world's poorest countries is gaining momentum. The Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund has identified 41 countries (including Vietnam and Laos) as eligible for \$55 billion in debt forgiveness. At the June G7 Summit in Köln, Germany, world leaders committed themselves to a new initiative, agreeing to cancel an additional \$45 billion of debt.

For Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam, the possibility of debt relief offers mixed prospects. All three countries possess moderate to high levels of debt, as defined by the World Bank. Unlike many other Asian countries whose debt is largely private, the vast majority of Cambodian, Lao and Vietnamese debt exists in the form of bilateral, concessional Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) loans made in the 1980's. (see Table 1). Relatively little of the debt is owed to the US—none in the case of Laos. The main creditors remain the former Soviet Union, Eastern Europe and Japan.

In all three countries, high levels of debt had already been incurred before the transition began from closed command economies to market-based systems. Significant amounts of loans—perhaps as high as 30% in some cases—have been lost to corruption. However, *doi moi* in Vietnam, new economic policies in Laos, and the end of the Cambodian civil war brought increased foreign assistance and investment. By the mid-1990s, the reform strategies appeared to be working well. As the Southeast Asian region experienced economic growth, the relative burden of this debt declined. Even if little of the debt principal was being repaid, expansion of national income and growth of exports substantially reduced the ratio of total debt to Gross National Product (GNP). Since most of the debt carries low concessionary interest rates, the net present value of the debt—the amount needed to pay off the debt now—has been reduced to as little as 50% of the total.

The Asian economic crisis set this process in reverse. The effects of the crisis have followed different paths in the three countries, but all have seen a slowdown in economic growth. In addition,

all three economies depend heavily on trade and direct investment from other Asian countries. Exports have also suffered, as the relative prices of goods have risen compared to Asian competitors, and Asians' demand for imported goods fell dramatically. Hotels built for Asian tourists and business travelers stand empty. Airlines have cut back on flights and reversed plans to expand. International relief efforts have focused on the hardest-hit Asian economies—Thailand, South Korea, Indonesia—leaving Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam behind. The effects of the crisis will continue to be felt over the next several years, meaning a slower recovery.

As GNP and exports contract, the relative debt burden can be expected to rise. In addition, the 20-30% of debt denominated in US dollars, and debt in other more stable currencies, has become more difficult to repay as regional currencies depreciate. Although complete data for 1998 is not yet available, the estimated 16% rise in overall debt levels for the East Asia-Pacific region will probably be reflected in figures for Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam as well.

Vietnam: A "Helping Hand"?

As with other aspects of economic reform, Vietnam has proceeded cautiously on debt relief. Realizing that economic growth and an improved international image depended in part on satisfying creditors, however, the SRV government entered into negotiations in the mid-1990's with international creditors. A small part of this involved wartime debts to the US (see box). Another portion consisted of debt owed to the "London Club" of private creditors. \$797 million of pre-1989 debt, mostly owed to Japanese banks, was reduced by over 50% in a deal signed in December 1997. At a time when most other Asian countries saw their debt burden increasing due to the crisis, Vietnam was thus able to bring its total debt under its GNP. Over the course of the 1990's, debt service fell from 27% of exports to 12%, but this figure is expected to continue rising after 1997 to a projected 15.1% in 2000. According to a World Bank country study, Vietnam: Rising to the Challenge (1998), these rates "remain manageable and sustainable" despite slower growth in exports.

Table 1: Total Debt (in millions of \$US)

	Total external debt	Multilateral	Total bilateral	Bilateral to US	Private	Total payments (1997)	Debt/GNP ratio
Cambodia	\$2,129	\$215	\$1,810	\$431	\$6	\$9	69.9
Laos	\$2,320	\$816	\$1,431	0	0	\$22	179.8
Vietnam	\$21,629	\$828	\$13,274	\$317	\$4,737	\$797	89.4

Sources: World Bank, *Global Development Finance* (1999); US Treasury, *Report on Debt and Scheduled Debt Service* (1996)

The largest portion of Vietnam's debt, roughly three-quarters, still consists of debts to the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. These debts are nonconvertible and therefore not covered in any international debt relief proposal to date. (Russia, as the eighth "observer with special status" to the G7, did endorse a version of the Köln initiative, but this covers only multilateral debt.)

The most responsive of Vietnam's bilateral creditors has been Japan, whose finance minister, Kiichi Miyazawa, promised Prime Minister Phan Van Khai in March to "extend a helping hand" to Vietnam as part of an aid package to crisis-hit economies. (Japan's ODA "debt relief" typically consists of grants tied to the purchase of Japanese imports.) Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi also committed 88 billion yen (\$721.3 million) in new loans during Khai's visit to Tokyo.

When Japan unveiled its 400 billion yen (\$3.28 billion) debt relief plan in June, however, Vietnam was among four of the 41 HIPC countries not included on the list. The paradoxical reason given was that countries in the debt relief package would not be given any new ODA loans. Forced to choose, the SRV government decided to continue receiving Japanese aid rather than cancel its existing debt. Such a recycling of the loan burden—like using one credit card to pay off another—forms one peculiar feature of the global debt charade.

Laos: Land of the Free-Falling Kip

Due to its close economic relationship to Thailand, Laos has been more heavily affected by the economic crisis than Vietnam or Cambodia. Between July 1997 and April 1998, the kip plunged along with the Thai baht to less than 50% of its previous value. But as the baht began to recover, the kip kept falling, losing another 50% by the end of 1998. According to Vice Minister Khempheng Pholsena, her country has experienced "the highest exchange rate, inflation and currency depreciation in the whole region" (Bangkok Nation, 1/22/99). Cheuang Sombounekhanh, governor of the Lao PDR central bank, blamed external factors for the fall, including speculation and "defamation by ill-willed elements" (FBIS, 6/18/98).

Whatever its causes, Lao PDR's financial distress threatens to unravel the progress in development which the country has made in the past 10 years. Laos' debt burden, already the highest in the region, is likely to increase. Unlike Vietnam, Laos has not been able to pay back large amounts in debt service or negoti-

ate debt-restructuring agreements. Viewed in terms of the country's ability to pay, therefore, the Lao situation is extremely serious. Government revenues already depend heavily on international aid, and no end to the economic crisis is yet in sight.

The high proportion (35%) of multilateral debt in Laos' total offers the possibility of debt reduction from the IMF and World Bank through the HIPC and Köln initiatives. However, no action has yet been taken. A small amount of bilateral relief has come from Japan, which agreed to give a grant of 144 million yen (\$1.18 million) in March, equal to the amount of principal and interest repaid by Laos in 1998. The small size of Laos continues to work against it, masking its high debt burden per person (see Table 4 above) and receiving little international attention. Laos should be a prime candidate for far-reaching debt cancellation, but it is unlikely to be among the first group of countries included in the new multilateral plans.

Cambodia: A Fate Worse than Debt?

Although Cambodia has suffered from the economic regional crisis, economics continue to be overshadowed by political drama. The decline in foreign assistance following the July 1997 fighting in Phnom Penh probably did more initially to damage the economy than the crisis itself. Faced with enormous human need, Cambodia's leaders have been quite understandably more concerned with attracting more aid than in paying off their substantial debts.

Fortunately, most of the world's ODA programs have seen the light and no longer give the low-interest concessionary loans which have been the source of so much long-term debt. (An exception is Japan, as noted.) Aid grants may be stingier than in the past, but at least there are no annual payments. Nevertheless, Cambodia's indebtedness is likely to increase as the country, now at peace for the first time in thirty years, begins to reconstruct.

Political turmoil nearly hit Cambodia's debt burden in a direct way in February 1998, when reports circulated that the US planned to demand repayment of \$450 million in loans made to

Table 2. Debt and the Economic Crisis

	Effects of economic crisis on:			Eligibility for debt relief:			
	Exchange Rate	Trade	Economic growth	World Bank classification	HIPC	Restructuring	Japanese/Köln plans
Cambodia	Small (dollar based)	High and immediate	Moderate	Moderately indebted, low income	No	None yet	Not eligible
Laos	High	High	High	Moderately indebted, low income	Yes	None yet	Yes
Vietnam	Moderate	Moderate and delayed	Moderate	Highly indebted, low income	Yes	Yes (Dec. 1997)	Not included

the former Lon Nol government. These loans were reportedly used for military purposes from 1970-75. Not surprisingly, then-Second Prime Minister Hun Sen reacted violently to the idea in a radio interview: "This could have been the money borrowed from the United States to buy bombs to drop on Cambodians, but now Cambodians are asked to repay the loan?" (FBIS, 2/28/

98). Fortunately, these plans went nowhere, but as the Vietnam example indicates, the US seems unaware of the historical baggage of some of its past "development assistance."

The principle of paying past governments' loans is still common international practice. When Hun Sen became prime minister, he had to sign repayment documents for debts from the Sihanouk and Lon Nol period, borrowed from the Asian Development Bank and from Japan. "If we do not pay back," Hun Sen told his radio listeners, "we will not be allowed to borrow anymore."

Table 3. Social Indicators

	Income per person (nominal)	Income per person (PPP)	Debt per person	Debt service payment per person	Debt service as % of GNP	Spending on education as % of GNP
Cambodia	\$270	\$1,365	\$195	\$0.83	0.3%	2.9%
Laos	\$258	\$1,290	\$464	\$4.40	1.7%	2.5%
Vietnam	\$310	\$1,705	\$272	\$10.04	3.7%	2.6%

Sources: World Bank, Jubilee 2000, Asiaweek

Ironically, the World Bank's ranking criteria, which include debt/export and debt service/GNP ratios, shifted Cambodia from the "highly indebted" to "moderately indebted" category between 1997 and 1998. As a non-HIPC country, Cambodia is therefore ineligible for any of the debt relief plans currently under consideration by the World Bank, IMF and G7. Other Asian countries in this predicament include Bangladesh, India and the Philippines. Burma (Myanmar) meets HIPC guidelines, but fails due to its non-compliance with the IMF. These omissions underscore the

Vietnam's Bilateral Debt: A Clear Case for Economic Justice

As international debt figures go, the \$146 million that Vietnam owes the US is a relatively small amount. Yet the origin of this debt and the terms of its repayment make a bitter pill that Vietnam has been forced to swallow as the price of "normalization."

When the former South Vietnamese government fell in 1975, it left behind \$76 million in unpaid agriculture and development loans used in the late 1960s and early 1970s for road building, power projects and grain purchases. Afflicted with "Vietnam syndrome," the US never wrote off these loans; in fact, the Treasury continued to assess interest on the unpaid principal. By 1997, the amount the US claimed it was owed had climbed to \$146 million.

Former Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin traveled to Hanoi in April 1997 to sign a bilateral debt agreement, obligating Vietnam to repay the debt over a 20-year period. At the time, Rubin claimed that the pact "removes an important obstacle to improving ties between the United States and Vietnam." He also hinted that future improvements would depend on Vietnam's privatization and removal of trade barriers along the lines favored by the US. More than two years later, normal trade relations have yet to be established.

Vietnamese officials negotiated for months but felt they had little choice to accept the US terms. "We had to agree on old debts so that we can have new relations," said Ministry of Finance official Nguyen Manh Hoa at the time the agreement was signed. Ambassador Le Van Bang admits that the debt issue rankles, but remains characteristically optimistic that future US investment will more than account for the repayments.

From an historical point of view, of course, the US owes far more to Vietnam (and to Laos and Cambodia) than it can ever repay. The historical injustice of so-called US "assistance" to South Vietnam alone makes the bilateral debt issue a prime candidate for cancellation, relief, or swaps (see main story). The overbearing way in which Rubin pressed Hanoi into accepting the US terms adds insult to injury. Fortunately, several efforts to address the situation are underway. One option would use debt repayments as an education fund to bring Vietnamese students to study in the US. Another would channel some of the debt into development programs carried out by the Vietnamese government and American non-governmental organizations. Less likely at this time, but the most honorable

narrowness of the HIPC list. Cambodia should not have to wait until its debt burden becomes unbearable before becoming eligible for assistance.

Options for Debt Relief

Of the 41 HIPC countries, only four (Uganda, Bolivia, Guyana and Mozambique) have so far met the program's strict economic conditions for liberalization and "structural adjustment." Three others have begun the process, none in Asia. The concept is to reduce debt enough so that it is "sustainable," in other words able to be paid back through export earnings and capital inflows. As the IMF admits, "The Initiative is not a panacea and cannot solve all the problems of the heavily indebted poor countries. Even if all the external debts of these countries were forgiven, most would still depend on significant levels of concessional external assistance..." Of the three countries considered here, only Laos stands to benefit substantially from the HIPC program.

The Köln Debt Initiative formulated in June presents essentially an enhanced version of HIPC. Debt relief is still administered by the World Bank and IMF, and no new countries are admitted, although the conditions to move from eligibility to action are somewhat looser. Many of the G7 have cancelled existing bilateral ODA loans, or recycled loan payments as grants in the case of Japan. If this process continues with creditors in the former Soviet Union (a dubious possibility), Vietnam and Laos could benefit substantially. Cambodia, as a non-HIPC eligible country, would still be left out under the Köln guidelines.

Critics of the World Bank and IMF argue that the HIPC and Köln initiatives are too limited to have any lasting effect, and that the economic conditionalities imposed with debt relief might actually damage recipients' economies further. The worldwide Jubilee 2000 movement, using the Judeo-Christian tradition as a base, has called for "definitive debt cancellation that benefits ordinary people and...is not conditioned on policy reforms." In part due to its faith-based nature, the campaign has up to now concentrated on indebted countries in Africa and Latin America, with little mention of debt in Asia. However, Jubilee groups are active

in some Asian countries, including Japan, Hong Kong and the Philippines. Many of the Southern campaigns, along with secular and progressive NGOs, reject the HIPC and Köln frameworks outright, believing that Bank and IMF-led "relief" will increase their governments' dependence on international financial institutions and the global economy.

Even though the US share of bilateral debt is actually quite low (Vietnam and Cambodia owe little to the US, and Laos nothing), America personifies to many the injustice of the world economic system. The US has not been the most willing to cancel bilateral debts, even to the point of holding them hostage to political purposes. As the largest shareholder in the World Bank and IMF, however, the US Treasury can wield great influence in international economic policy. US intransigence contributed to the IMF's poor initial response to the Asian economic crisis, and the US has consistently lagged behind Europe and Japan in proposals for debt relief. To cite one example, Cuba canceled all of its debt owed by Central American countries after Hurricane Mitch, while limited US relief became entangled in Congress. Continued pressure on the US government is needed to encourage Treasury to move forward.

Members of Congress from both parties have introduced bills calling for stronger US action on debt relief. Unfortunately, some proposals would limit debt relief to governments that are "democratically elected" and "do not engage in a consistent pattern of gross violations of internationally recognized human rights," as determined by the US. Of highly indebted countries in Asia, only Burma deserves to be judged ineligible, but domestic political pressures regarding Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia frequently interfere. The results of the foreign aid compromise bill in November do not go as far as many proposals in revising the terms of debt relief and challenging IMF conditions. But Congress did expand eligibility to poor countries in all regions, with broad bipartisan support.

Where debt cancellation is unsuccessful, the concept of debt-for-development swaps might be able to make inroads. Pioneered

Sources and Contacts

European Network on Debt and Development offers details on international debt agreements. (www.oneworld.org/eurodad)

Jubilee 2000/UK has a comprehensive site on debt, including a "country of the month" section. (www.jubilee2000uk.org)

Jubilee 2000/USA tells how to get involved in the US campaign for debt cancellation. (www.j2000usa.org; 202/783-3566)

The World Bank has some economic statistics online; more complete data is available in the World Development Indicators and Global Development Finance publications, also on CD-ROM. (www.worldbank.org)

International Monetary Fund gives an overview of the HIPC Initiative. (www.imf.org/external/np/exr/facts/hipc.htm)

New York Bay Company carries out debt-for-development swaps. (212/344-5450)

(Floods, continued from page 1 ...)

Van Pass connecting Danang to Hue slid off the hillside and buried the rail line below, so Danang's only hope for new supplies of food is traffic from Ho Chi Minh City. One of the long-term concerns for MAP is that as flood waters recede they will leave newly uprooted unexploded ordinance and landmines in their wake. (For details on MAP relief efforts, see sidebar.)

The World Food Program in Vietnam estimates that lost harvests and damaged crop lands will cause food shortages well beyond the immediate danger. Radio Voice of Vietnam has said that 185,000 acres of paddy fields have been destroyed or damaged across the region. Short-term supplies have also taken a beating: some 130,000 tons of warehoused food, including rice and corn, have been saturated and are vulnerable to rot. Thousands of cattle and large numbers of pigs have been killed by the floods. In addition to the lost food, the carcasses posed a substantial health threat.

The Vietnamese People's Aid Coordinating Committee (PACCOM) released information on damage and needs assessment in Vietnam as reported by individual provinces, with requirements ranging from immediate rice supplies to replacement textbooks and construction materials. PACCOM estimates that they need nearly 9000 tons of rice alone, as well as other foodstuffs to feed the flooded population. In regions where schools have been badly damaged, nearly 400,000 notebooks and 2 million textbooks must be replaced. In Binh Dinh, reconstruction of the dyke system and 2 badly damaged reservoirs is estimated to cost 30 billion VND. Medicine and first aid supplies are in short supply and PACCOM is rounding up over 200,000 mosquito nets for villagers left homeless.

(Wells, continued from previous page ...)

by UNICEF and Finance for Development in the 1980's, debt swaps have been successfully performed in at least 10 countries worldwide. The US-based New York Bay Company is currently pursuing the possibility of such a swap in Vietnam, whereby the net present value of the debt in dollars would be exchanged into dong and used to fund social development or environmental protection activities in cooperation with NGOs. Debt swaps can also be used for trade promotion activities, which might assist in financing to implement the US-Vietnam trade agreement. According to Jack Ross of New York Bay, the US Treasury "has shown flexibility on debt conversions and would look with favor on a

High marks were given to the Vietnamese military for their quick and effective response. The largest bilateral donor was the US Government, which provided substantial goods and supplies in addition to \$475,000 in cash aid through the International Fund for the Red Cross. Other embassies who donated money through the IFRC include: Australian Government (\$348,590); British Embassy (\$50,000); French Embassy (\$50,000); Embassy of Japan (\$80,000); Dutch Embassy (\$46,500); New Zealand Embassy (\$80,000); Danish Government (\$107,000); Swiss Embassy (\$64,002).

Cambodian Floods

Damage was milder in Cambodia, where the worst flooding in nearly a decade forced some ten thousand from their homes and damaged as much as twelve thousand acres of rice.

Heifer Project International (HPI) Cambodia, reports that tens of thousands of people have been displaced or left homeless in the provinces hardest hit. The government has promised free rice seeds to the hardest hit communes and is distributing rice, mosquito nets and kramas to flood victims.

Corporate Donations through the IFRC, totaling \$42,000 came from BP/Statoil (\$10,000); Citibank (\$25,000); Motorola (\$2,141); Nikko Hotel (\$937); Dupont Far East Inc (\$4,000). Other organizations who donated through the IFRC include: UNDP (\$75,000); UNICEF (\$51,000); WFP (\$200,000); American Chamber of Commerce (\$11,952); Hanoi International Church (\$1,200); UN Staff Association (\$1,499); Australian Red Cross (clothes); Hong Kong Red Cross

(clothes); Malaysian Red Cross (clothes).

International NGOs who donated to the total of \$1,737,477 in cash aid, independent of the IFRC, include: Asia Foundation (\$10,000); Australian Foundation for the Peoples of Asia and the Pacific/AFAP (\$10,000); Canada Red Cross (\$73,700); Catholic Relief Service/CRS (\$75,000); Cooperation Internationale pour le Developpement et la Solidarite/CIDSE (\$35,000); Danish Red Cross (\$141,000); Ford Foundation (\$3,235); Fred Hollows Foundation (\$200); GB Red Cross (\$200,000); German Red Cross (\$270,000); Global Care (\$714); Groupe de Recherches et d'Echanges Technologiques/GRET (\$500); Holt International (\$1,000); International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies/IFRC (\$45,000); Japan Red Cross (\$100,000); Maltesers (\$77,000); Medical & Scientific Aid for Vietnam, Laos & Cambodia/MSAVLC (\$4,800);

well-structured plan" from Vietnam. The Ministry of Finance in Hanoi has also expressed interest in the concept.

While this approach brings possible pitfalls of its own, it offers a creative alternative to the debt relief proposals currently on the table. Jubilee 2000 organizers are still far short of their goal of canceling all debts to the world's poorest countries by the millennium, but they and other outsiders have succeeded in bringing the debt issue to the attention of world leaders. Whether and how Cambodia, Laos and Viet Nam benefit from debt relief depends on not only the agreements of governments, but also the advocacy of civil society.

Mennonite Central Committee/MCC (\$20,000); Netherlands Leposy Relief /NLR (\$142); Netherlands Red Cross (\$24,000); Nordic Assistance to Vietnam/NAV (\$200,000); Oxfam Great Britain (\$49,500); Oxfam-Belgium (\$5,000); Plan International (\$50,000); Samaritan's Purse (\$5,000); Save the Children US (\$15,000); Swiss Red Cross (\$32,010); World Concern (\$1,800); World Vision International/WVI (\$227,000); Quaker Service (\$10,000); Foundation for International Development/Relief (\$8,066); Canadian Centre for International Studies and Cooperation (\$3,000); Population Development International (\$210); Population Council (\$600); Vietnam Veterans of America Foundation (\$500); ADRA (\$17,500); CAMA (\$20,000); Netherlands Development Organisation (\$1,000).

NGO responses reported to Interchange:

American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), will collect and distribute funds for flood relief in Vietnam. Donations should be marked Vietnam Flood Assistance. AFSC will release \$10,000 from the Crisis Fund for immediate relief. AFSC is NOT accepting material donations for victims of the floods at this time. *For more information, contact Jason C. Erb, Assistant Director, EMAP American Friends Service Committee, 1501 Cherry Street, Philadelphia, PA 19102. Tel: (215) 241-7041, fax: (215) 241-7026, e-mail: jerb@afsc.org, http://www.afsc.org/ematasst.htm.*

Cultural Health Education and Environmental Resources (CHEER) Vietnam, is collecting donations to send to Vietnam. *Donations can be sent via CHEER for Vietnam, PO Box 341, Culver City, CA 90232.*

Global Village Foundation/Volunteer Service is collecting donations to be sent via CHEER in Vietnam. Tax deductible donations can be sent to *Global Village Foundation/Volunteer Service, attn Flood Relief/Central VN, PO Box 130656, Carlsbad, CA 92013. Tel: (760) 929-9174.*

The **Mine Action Program (MAP)** has loaned its 4x4 to several groups doing active relief work. MAP has also been using the truck to transport relief supplies provided by the Committee for the Protection and Care of Children (CPCC) and the Women's Union (WU), and has provided the PPC with a substantial supply of ramen noodles. Priorities identified by MAP for the immediate future are as follows: ensure the safety of all employees and (if possible) their families; support the PPC disaster relief effort; provide daily reports on the situation in Quang Tri Province; document and respond to new landmine and UXO threats as they emerge. *For more information on MAP efforts, contact Patt Douglas Cooley, MAP Program Manager. Tel: (540) 568-2332, e-mail: pattdc@jmu.edu.*

Operation USA is sending a 40-foot container load of medical equipment and supplies to the Danang Health Service and is preparing additional shipments to the Hue provincial health authorities. The supplies are intended to replace capital equipment lost by clinics and hospitals. Operation USA urges those organizing relief shipments to ask competent authorities in Vietnam for a

current list of needs and to pre-clear all cargoes before shipping them as pipelines in the flood zone are fragile and easily overloaded. *Operation USA 1-800-6787255 for funds and supplies; checks can be sent to: Operation USA, 8320 Melrose Ave. #200, Los Angeles, CA 90069; web address: www.opusa.org. (Richard Walden & Neil Frame)*

Prosthetics Outreach Foundation, PeaceTrees Vietnam, Kid's First Education Project and Greater Seattle Vietnam Association, all Seattle based organizations, are coordinating fund raising efforts and have established an account at Key Bank in Seattle labeled "Vietnam Flood Recovery Fund" where they have amassed \$2000 within a few days. The coalition will set up advertising locally to solicit additional money. *Donations can be sent directly to the bank or contact Arden Norvold at the Prosthetics Outreach Foundation, 726 Broadway Suite 306, Seattle, WA 98122.*

Save the Children/US in Vietnam has donated \$ 15,000 to flood stricken areas and is in process of raising an additional \$30,000.

Vets with a Mission wired an emergency donation of \$5,000 to Health authorities in Danang for flood relief to purchase medicines and food stuffs. Vets With A Mission has worked closely with health authorities in Danang for over six years and has constructed seven clinics in that area along with ongoing support of the "Health Education & Information Center" in Danang. *Those interested in contributing to our ongoing assistance in the Danang area can send checks to: Vets with a Mission, P.O. Box 9112, South Lake Tahoe, CA 96158. (Bill Kimball)*

Viet-Nam Assistance for the Handicapped (VNAH) is appealing for contributions to assist flood victims. VNAH will be working with local authorities to airlift food, medical supplies and medicines to flooded areas. They will also hold a fundraising dinner on Friday, December 3, 1999 in Falls Church, Virginia. (The Maxim Restaurant has agreed to donate foods and beverages at half price). VNAH hopes to work with other groups in the Vietnamese-American community in this humanitarian relief effort and welcomes the opportunity to coordinate aid delivery with other groups. *For contributions contact VNAH—Flood Relief Dept, 1421 Dolley Madison Boulevard, Room E, McLean, VA 22101. Tel: (703) 847-9582, fax: (703) 448-8207, e-mail: VNAH1@aol.com, http://www.vnah.com.*

VNHELP's aid recipients and project coordinators are among those displaced by the flooding in Hue. They have established a Flood Relief Fund to assist the Flood Relief Committee in Hue. Relief priorities include ensuring the safety of all children and staff residing at the street children center in Hue by providing food, clothes, and needed medications; assisting disabled children in Hue; and assisting Phu Vang District with funds to purchase dried noodles and rice that can be delivered to affected communities in the district. *Donations can be sent to VNHELP, Attn: Flood Relief Fund, 5232 Claremont Ave, Oakland, CA 94618.*

Energy Conservationists Get Motivated

Vietnam Women's Union Hosts Training

by Lisa Surprenant

Twice as many people in Hanoi, Hai Phong, and Thanh Hoa own television sets as own refrigerators, a recent survey conducted by the Vietnam Women's Union revealed. But if TV is the preferred media, energy conservation ought to be the message, stated respondents during a workshop to train key motivators held August 11-18th, 1999, in Hanoi. Armed with a basic idea of the level of people's energy knowledge from a survey conducted by the Vietnam Women's Union, the Vietnam Energy Conservation Program (VECP) began promoting energy saving measures by holding the first training for 40 "Key Motivators" from Lao PDR, Cambodia, and Vietnam.

In Vietnam's three survey areas, the VWU found that nearly a quarter of the average family's income is devoted to paying for energy use. And while this might appear to compare favorably against countries like the US where a similar percentage of the family's income might go towards energy bills, that's where the favorable comparison ends... because the typical US citizen uses 40 times more energy than a person in Vietnam and Americans use energy-conserving appliances and habits in their daily life. So while they do use more energy, Americans use it more efficiently.

Yet Vietnamese people are more than willing to take the time to learn about energy saving, the survey also found, with nearly half saying they would spend at least 2 hours a month just to learn. Moreover, an overwhelming 97% think saving energy will save money and this "money conservation", more than anything else, would move them to action.

And moving folks to action is exactly what the VECP's "key motivators" training was all about. The classes were designed to teach individuals from the Vietnam Youth Union, the Vietnam Women's Union, the Vietnam Consumers Association, and Vietnam Television how to pass on energy conservation knowledge while motivating others to become more conscious of energy use. Since the initial survey also found that many people think that conservation depends on consciousness-raising, emphasis during training was placed on innovative techniques like role-playing, to encourage participants to use new knowledge in real-world situations. This training also marked the first time that "south-south" cooperation in energy conservation has occurred with the Vietnam EC Program at the helm.

Organized by the Vietnam Women's Union and the Energy Conservation Program of the Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment (MOSTE) with support by Foundation EDP, the government of the Netherlands, and the Swedish International Development Authority (SIDA), the training sessions provided a forum for discussions about saving energy that included participants from Vietnam Women's Union, Lao Women's Union and the Cambodian Women for Peace and Development as well as participants from local organizations.

Ms. Kang Sao Thorn of Cambodian Women for Peace and Development cited the need for training at the grassroots level, "Cambodian women account for 55% of our population while 47% of our population is under the age of 15. Since women use energy in many aspects of their lives, they must bear the consequences of energy shortage. This fact in itself makes women very active motivators in energy conservation...because it makes sense in a very real way to them."

Not only is this true in Cambodia, but the close relationship between women and energy was echoed in the survey which found 80% of the women responding do all the household cooking, regardless of having to work outside the home. And nearly half of those women use wood, which they must gather, as fuel. So as the new brochure on energy saving states, "Saving energy really will save women's energy!"

During the closing ceremony, Dr. Bui Thien Du, Manager of VECP within MOSTE, said, "The training of this past week has benefits that reach far beyond our borders. With participants from Laos and Cambodia attending, we're certain that this marks a new era of cooperation between our countries. And if we are successful, none of us will need to purchase power from our neighbors, but rather we will (as a region) learn to make better use of our natural resources as we enhance our human resources."

Making best use of all resources is what these newly trained motivators will set out to do next, basing their teaching around the techniques used at the workshop. Ms. Pheulavanh Luongvana of the Lao Women's Union disclosed her plans to implement what she learned, "This training course for key motivators in energy conservation has been meaningful for Laos because it is new knowledge with creative methods that we can readily carry out in the future. We're going to take these important lessons from Vietnam to conduct classes in our own country."

With support from the Energy Conservation Program of Vietnam along with Foundation EDP and the SIDA, classes in Vientiane and Phnom Penh were being outlined as the training drew to a close.

A willingness to learn from others how to guide Vietnam towards a more sustainable development trajectory is one of the tenets of Vietnam's Energy Conservation Program. The posters, brochures, and t-shirts that were given to participants at the end of the weeklong training were emblazoned with the slogan "Energy Conservation—For a Brighter Life". And if the high-energy dedication of these motivators was any indication, energy conservation training will shine bright throughout the region very soon.

Lisa Surprenant is the Coordinator of the Energy Conservation Program of Vietnam in the Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment, Hanoi.

What Happened to the Trade Agreement?

by John McAuliff

[The headline on the cover of the Summer 1999 issue of Interchange read "US and Vietnam Approve Trade Agreement". We should have said "Negotiators Approve Trade Agreement" because there were problems to come. The following is adapted from remarks given at a conference at the University of North Texas on October 16, 1999.]

The most visible but not the only gap between the US and Vietnam lies in the area of our economic relationship, the absence of what formerly was described as Most Favored Nation, but is now more accurately characterized as Normal Trade Relations or NTR.

NTR is important because until it is achieved, Vietnamese products and the products of American and other foreign companies manufactured in Vietnam cannot compete with those coming to the US from China and other low income developing countries. (Of the other two countries in which the US waged war, Cambodia has NTR; Laos doesn't, although the implementing legislation could be submitted to the Congress at any time.)

The prerequisite for NTR with Vietnam is approval of a bilateral trade agreement. We felt this step was a foregone conclusion once the negotiators from both sides agreed to a text last July.

However, as I found out ten days ago in Hanoi, there is a serious possibility the Vietnamese will not approve the Agreement in its current form, or may do so too late to avoid a more problematic fate in a Congress whose growing pre-election partisanship just killed the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty.

In an article in the October 15th Asian Wall Street Journal, Samantha Marshall wrote that Vietnamese hesitation to approve the trade agreement, "may signal the resurgence of concerns among hard-liners that economic openness might lead the Communist Party to lose control of key industrial sectors or invite political instability."

The same article argues that while freer trade will add \$56 million a year to America's annual output, Vietnam will earn three times that figure. It acknowledges, however, that the delay in Vietnamese Party and Government approval, "is partly due to the unprecedented complexity of the [100 page] agreement."

For Americans, the trade agreement is a technical document, simply requiring Vietnam to take steps in economic reform which are necessary to compete in the world market and to obtain admission to the World Trade Organization (WTO). A sympathetic US official in Hanoi was both bemused and bewildered that every member of Vietnam's political leadership was trying to become a trade expert, poring over translated technical language that even he hadn't fully read and comprehended.

In this lament, I heard echoes of wartime American leaders who couldn't understand why Hanoi didn't see its own best interest to accept a political settlement and end the ghastly toll of US bombing and the inevitable triumph of our massive high tech military presence.

Then, as now, Americans would do well to take seriously Ho Chi Minh's famous dictum that "nothing is more precious than independence and freedom". Vietnamese Communist Party leadership has been extraordinarily stable in contrast to that of Russia and China because it operates by consensus. A step by step approach to economic and political reform may not satisfy critics in the West, or all sectors of opinion at home, but is a deeply rooted process.

The Sixth Party Congress in 1986 was a turning point in the organization of the domestic economy when it adopted the policy of renovation or *doi moi*. But it came as the culmination of a process of debate and experiment which began almost a decade earlier. Since 1986 Vietnam has been engaged in learning about foreign investment through trial, error and intense study—a process complicated by South East Asia's economic crisis.

The US Trade Agreement requires Vietnam to make a definitive and probably irreversible decision about its economy. It dramatically opens the country not only to US investment and competition but also to that from more immediate and in some cases more avaricious neighbors.

Vietnam, like China, sees the need to be a successful part of a world dominated by international capitalism, but seeks to do so on at least some of its own terms and values. From a Vietnamese viewpoint, American steps toward normalization of relationships are welcomed but still mark the removal of layers of unjustified hostility rather than an affirmative acknowledgment of mutual respect.

A story recounted in Hanoi during my visit was of the rudeness shown by Secretary of State Albright during her private conversation with Party Secretary Le Khac Phieu. Secretary Albright is reported to have observed to Phieu that there were only five communist countries left in the world and then to have asked when the Vietnamese Party would give up its power. This was said shortly before the APEC summit in Auckland, New Zealand, at which the US expected the trade agreement could be signed by the President. One wonders whether Ms. Albright was being deliberately provocative or was so immersed in America's post-Cold War ideological triumphalism that she didn't anticipate or care about the reaction to her words.

Whether or not American analysts are correct that our trade agree-

(continued on the following page)

Reflections ... The Mangrove and the Pear Tree

by Felicity Wood

The 1990's were a special time in Vietnam. The mid-90's were an era of hope and optimism. In Ho Chi Minh City where I was executive director of the American Chamber of Commerce we saw 15% growth rate and the start of promising careers for foreign and Vietnamese alike. Ten new restaurants a month opened in Hanoi in 1996. George Bush, Bill Gates, Sting and other celebrities came to town.

Like sisters the United States and Vietnam are opposite in almost every way yet bound together in history. Our shared memories are something no outsider can partake in. The relationship between the US and Vietnam saw great progress in the 1990's with opened communication between the governments, NGO's, and businesses. The trade embargo was lifted in 1993. Embassies were opened in 1995. The Jackson-Vanik amendment was waived for the first time. Cultural exchanges increased. Vietnamese students started going to the United States just for college. American business school classes, White House Fellows, delegations of small and medium enterprises and the Department of Commerce, veterans, even the AFL-CIO have visited in the 1990's, where a decade before few Americans would have thought of going to Vietnam.

In November 1996 I was on a project with Goldman Sachs & Co. in Hanoi when it met its Dien Bien Phu. Like the French when they lost their hold in Vietnam, the company was defeated despite assets several times those of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. After two years and five million dollars invested, Goldman Sachs failed to receive a license for its telecommunication project in Vietnam. My career ("careen" might be a better word) took me to a building materials company in Binh Duong

(McAuliff, continued)

ment simply codifies adjustments Vietnam must make to be competitive, and regardless of whether one agrees or disagrees with Albright's assessment of historical trends, one must acknowledge the Vietnamese will have some difficulty in distinguishing the message from the messenger. It is probably true that the US is only asking Vietnam to do what WTO requires, but it might have been better for someone else to do the asking.

There is a body of opinion on both the right and the left that is disdainful of globalization and demonizes the World Trade Organization. However, I believe a trade agreement is in the interest of both Vietnam and the US. My hunch is that Vietnam ultimately will approve it, perhaps after some minor adjustments of language. The challenge then will be for friends of Vietnam, whether in the business community or among not-for-profit organizations and universities, to persuade Congress to also assent.

Province outside Ho Chi Minh City. The Asian currency crisis wiped out our market. Nobody was building. According to the Ministry of Planning and Investment in 1998 Binh Duong Province was losing 2000 jobs a month to factory closings. As with the rest of the country, 75% of the investors were from ASEAN nations, the hardest hit by the crisis.

For Vietnam, the currency crisis was the cloud that obscured the silver lining of so many pockets. The crisis was a convenient smoke screen for the real problems faced by investors and the NGO community trying to accomplish projects. These problems included internal disputes between foreign and local partners, hemorrhages of cash to employees and officials, lack of market research, solid research and planning before starting projects, and lack of profound understanding of Vietnam itself by outsiders. The crisis also obscured the fact that comprehensive understanding of a market system is a long way off in Vietnam. For example, the tax authorities in Binh Duong visited our factory one day to announce a reduction in our land rent, as we were "small." But they had raised taxes on the large American factories in the province like American Standard, mistaking size for profitability. Those factories were not making profits. It is difficult to make business projections on capricious taxing methods.

Both the NGO and American business communities are there with the idea of helping the Vietnamese. But I think the idea of "helping them" needs to be examined. Help is a two-way street, or as is the case in Vietnam's streets, fifteen-way. The traffic exemplifies social order in Vietnam. It works, but it's not the western way. Vehicles come and go in fifteen different directions on your average street, but they accommodate each other. As business or NGO professionals, we come in expecting to drive our big organization one way down the street in a straight line. But what are we learning? What are we learning from the people we pass by every day, or only once? To them, we may *not* represent The Best Way To Do Things. To them, we may simply be a lone person far from our country of origin, one with or without family, one to whom they can offer compassion and a smile. I believe we as a country, and as individuals from America, have so much to learn from the Vietnamese social fabric. There is so much that we struggle with so hard here in America that was worked out thousands of years ago in Vietnam. For example, there are lessons to be learned in treatment of the elderly, childcare, obesity, depression and life-passages.

The US is like a pear-tree grafted on a garden wall at Mt. Vernon. It grows in a systemized way; all the branches are laid out. The tree was deliberately planted and is relentlessly tended. The "developing world" is more like a mangrove swamp. It is a deep-rooted, widely connected system. Most connections are below ground. The grafted pear-tree might charitably wish the mangrove could one day be like the grafted pear-tree, without seeing

The Legacy of the Khmer Rouge

by Craig Etcheson

With the disintegration of the Khmer Rouge political organization and the collapse of their military power, we are nearing the endgame of the epic tragedy of the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia. However, I often find that people who are new to the topic of Cambodia do not immediately recognize the profound consequences the Khmer Rouge have had for Cambodia's society and people. Thus this seems like an appropriate juncture to discuss the legacy of the Khmer Rouge and its implications for the future of Cambodia. It is a complex legacy, indeed, but I will try to summarize some of the more important aspects under the headings of economic, military, social, political and legal legacies of the Khmer Rouge.

Economic

At today's remove, it is difficult to recall that thirty years ago, the Cambodian economy looked pretty good compared to their Vietnamese and Thai neighbors. The Khmer Rouge utterly destroyed the Cambodian economy between 1975 and 1979, which was no mean feat insofar as it was primarily a barter and subsistence agrarian economy, though with an emerging modern sector in the urban areas.

Even after the Khmer Rouge were driven from power in 1979, however, the threat of their "return" continued to haunt Cambodia in the form of nearly two decades of festering warfare. For the past twenty years, huge portions of the national budget have been devoted to defending against the return of the Khmer Rouge, meaning that these resources were not available for rehabilitation and development. This legacy shows in the condition of the country's economic infrastructure.

Further, to support the seemingly interminable war, all sides resorted to rapacious and unsustainable exploitation of natural resources — mainly gems and forest products — driving the country to the edge of ecological catastrophe, perhaps over the edge. Time will tell about that, but the environmental rape continues even though the war has ended. The current government has pledged to terminate these disastrous policies, and has made some moves in that direction. But the problem is deeply enmeshed in the socio-politi-

(Wood, continued)

or being old enough to understand the long history of development the mangrove enjoys. When will we see that a "developing country" has roots far deeper than ours?

Regardless of NGO or business, an American has to recognize Vietnamese culture is one of relationships over rules. That means contracts won't be honored, as Goldman Sachs found out, but humor and a "vui tin", happy heart, will.

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cal structure. Elements of the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces are now the chief culprits in deforestation.

The "former" Khmer Rouge in the northwest have recently proposed rather grandiose development projects, and those proposals are currently pending at the CDC in Phnom Penh. Ieng Sary's men wish to attract foreign direct investment for infrastructure development projects — large hydro dams for power and agricultural irrigation — and foreign humanitarian aid for social development projects — schools, clinics, demining and so forth. The European Union recently announced a grant of \$5.7 million for this latter category of projects in the northwest. In any event, these development proposals amply demonstrate how far from their Maoist origins Khmer Rouge economic thinking has come. As do the casinos and Vietnamese prostitutes in Pailin.

In the northern former Khmer Rouge zones, old ways of thinking continue to hold sway. Logging and looting of the ancient temples for artifacts appear to still be the main forms of economic activity there, but presumably this will change with time as the temples and the forests play out as sources of revenue, and as the northern Khmer Rouge begin to realize the potential for tourism from nearby Thailand, proximate to many important historical sites which have been inaccessible for decades.

Military

The Khmer Rouge military threat no longer exists. The international political isolation which resulted from the Paris Peace process, combined with the government's two-decades old dual track policy of reconciliation and military pressure, led to the final collapse of Khmer Rouge military power. This final collapse was marked by the capture of the last hard-line holdout, the feared General Ta Mok, in March of this year.

Fundamentally, the policy of Phnom Penh toward the Khmer Rouge has remained consistent for the last twenty years. In January 1979, Heng Samrin announced on behalf of the Revolutionary Front which was displacing the Khmer Rouge regime, "Those who have committed crimes, show true repentance and who return to the revolution will be forgiven."

For those who refused to heed this message, there was the fist, but this policy has remained in practice for two decades with only two exceptions. In 1979 the new regime formally blamed everything on the "Pol Pot - Ieng Sary Clique," condemned those two to death in absentia and sentenced a few captured Pol Pot security cadre to brief stints of political reeducation. That first exception was at the beginning of the end of the Khmer Rouge. The second exception is coming now at the end of the end of the Khmer Rouge, when a still-undetermined number of senior cadres will face formal condemnation and some kind of punishment to place an historical exclamation point at the end of the Khmer Rouge nightmare.

Former Khmer Rouge Deputy Prime Minister Ieng Sary's minions periodically threaten that they will go back to war if their old leaders are brought to justice. These threats ring hollow. Many of

their fighters have been demobilized, and the remainder are in the process of being integrated into the national armed forces. They all know that a return to war means a return to Khmer killing Khmer, eating grass, and death by landmines and mosquitos. They won't do it. For many, it seems, their highest aspiration now is to get a job at the Pailin casino. They want food for their bellies, and schools for their children. The war is over.

Banditry, of course, will remain a chronic problem, as it always has been on the fringes of the country. This is an unavoidable consequence of traditional methods of governing Cambodia. But it will be a manageable problem, whether there are extensive Khmer Rouge trials or not.

Demobilization of the bloated armed forces is now Cambodia's primary military challenge. There is a significant potential for social unrest and increased banditry arising from unemployed former soldiers, Khmer Rouge or otherwise, if this is not properly handled and well-funded. Offers from the People's Republic of China to underwrite a large portion of this demobilization process are not entirely reassuring. The Chinese model of civil-military relations is not appropriate for a Cambodia which aims to realize the values embodied in its liberal democratic constitution. A World Bank conference on demobilization in May failed to even broach many of the key issues, including disarming ex-soldiers, selection of demobilizers, and so on. This will be much harder than it looks.

Another long-lasting military legacy of the Khmer Rouge, of course, is landmines. This scourge will continue to haunt the Cambodian people, and constitute a serious drag on economic productivity, for generations. Recent financial scandals in the Cambodian Mine Action Center notwithstanding, humanitarian demining and the strengthening of Cambodia's indigenous capacity for demining should remain a principal concern of the donor community.

Social

The social legacy of the Khmer Rouge is complex, and frankly, little understood. Psychiatrists and social psychologists are still studying the impact of the decades of genocide and war on the Cambodian population at large, and there is no scientific consensus yet as to the incidence of PTSD and other social and psychological maladies arising from the conflict.

But very soon after one arrives in Cambodia and begins to have relations with ordinary Cambodians, one notices that this legacy of the Khmer Rouge remains profound among the population.

Cambodian society traditionally was organized communally, around village and clan. Despite their rhetoric of social solidarity, the Khmer Rouge shattered the traditional social mode of organization and atomized society, forcing each individual to fend for himself. The legacy of this insane policy is a nation of strangers, where the old concepts of mutual obligation have been deeply eroded. It is as if the leap from traditional society to modernity was done not over a few generations, but rather forced in a few short days.

Oddly, the current government's development policy appears as if it could be inspired by doing precisely the opposite of what Pol Pot did, a perfect mirror image. Pol Pot sought to develop through total autarchy, severing virtually all external economic relations, isolating internal regions one from the other by enforcing self-sufficiency, and isolating people one from another by declaring that Angkor, the Organization, was the only permitted object of attachment.

The current regime has reversed this logic. It seeks to build webs of economic relationships with nearby and distant countries, and to catalyze domestic commerce by linking the internal regions of the country through improved lines of communication and transport. It also provides a significant measure of freedom and autonomy to the individual.

This strategy is particularly important when it comes to the former Khmer Rouge zones. It is imperative to integrate these regions of Cambodia which have been isolated from the rest of the country for decades. The former Khmer Rouge in the north and the west sometimes act as if they belong to another nation than the rest of the Cambodians, and this gulf can only be bridged by reconciling the bulk of the former Khmer Rouge populations with their Cambodian brothers and sisters.

But the consequences of the government's development strategy on society may well be profound far beyond their impact on the Khmer Rouge legacy, as rural life becomes tied to urban life in a way never before experienced in Cambodia.

Political

The most complex of all the legacies of the Khmer Rouge, perhaps, is their political legacy. Here, we need to go back to the formative event of the current political scene: July 1997.

In my view, the spark which ignited the July 1997 fighting was singular. Under the influence of a tragically misguided strategy, the royalist forces of the coalition government foolishly attempted to form a military alliance with the Khmer Rouge in an effort to counter the superior strength of CPP forces.

Predictably, this was perceived by the Cambodian People's Party (CPP) as not only a coup d'état, but indeed as the return of the Khmer Rouge. So the CPP responded in kind. One effect of these dueling coups in 1997 was that the CPP crushed and eliminated the command elements of the royalist armed forces. Though it was extremely brutal, this had the salutary effect of removing a critical axis of structural instability: competing armed forces. Hun Sen thus accomplished the integration of armies, which was a key plank of the Paris Accords. It was probably inevitable that this could not be done without spilling some blood.

Further, the forcible unification of the RCAF command under the CPP effectively eliminated the ability of Khmer Rouge elements to play the royalists and the CPP off one against the other. At the same time, however, there remain deep factional divisions within

CPP. Earlier this year at a June 28 party plenum, Chea Sim said,

“The opponents of the Cambodian People’s Party persist in their efforts to break our internal solidarity...(and) the unity among the party leadership with a view to destroying the party. Yet they never succeed in their objective thanks to the fact that we know how to unite and mobilize the forces which enable us to solve the problems.”

Despite these fine words from the CPP chairman, if party unity were not a problem, the issue would never arise in the first place. The party’s quasi-Leninist internal rules of “democratic centralism” disguise the fissures rather well, but the fissures are there, nonetheless, and probably constitute the single most significant threat to the internal political stability of Cambodia today.

There was serious unrest within the party over the issue of how to treat the defeated top Khmer Rouge leadership. The toasting of Nuon Chea and Khieu Samphan at the turn of the year was a ritual of dominance and submission to Hun Sen, but the scene revolted many of those who have struggled for decades to defeat the Pol Potists. This, I suspect, more than international pressure, was what turned Hun Sen from his early declarations that “the past should be buried.”

Within the Khmer Rouge, there was always a policy of total fealty to the party, in the person of the supreme leader. But well before Pol Pot’s demise, the party began to disintegrate into mutually-suspicious factions based primarily on personal loyalty to local military commanders. Given the ruthless history of internal purges, there was no basis for trust or cohesion, beyond an apparent consensus that there had been too much killing of senior cadre. Violating this unstated consensus apparently precipitated Pol Pot’s final downfall, and that of Ta Mok after him.

The ex-Khmer Rouge leaders fundamentally distrust each other, and thus, despite CPP cleavages, this gives CPP the advantage in applying divide and conquer tactics. They all recognize that Hun Sen has no viable challengers, but while they respect his ruthlessness and his ability, they have not yet completely internalized the rules of the new order.

Legal

Finally, given the events of the last year, it is appropriate to discuss the legal legacy of the Khmer Rouge. In conformity with Cambodia’s 20-year old policy, the second and third tier ex-Khmer Rouge leaders, both those too young to be implicated in the genocide and those too unimportant to warrant national judicial attention will be forgiven and continue to be gradually reintegrated into the political life of Cambodia.

Prospects for the senior Khmer Rouge leaders are not so good. Ieng Sary sent a message to Hun Sen when his zone overwhelming voted for the Sam Rainsy Party in last year’s election. Hun Sen will now send a message back by picking off the most senior of these ungrateful people one by one, until the next generation gets the

message. His chosen weapon is a new one: the law.

Mok and Duch were arrested with nary a peep from Pailin, though this is no surprise since both were reviled within the Khmer Rouge. Nuon Paet was sentenced to life while General Sam Bith and Colonel Chhouk Rin have been charged, and we heard only the faintest bleats of apprehension from their former minions. Then we learned that ten more might be arrested in the backpacker ransom case. Hun Sen has said for a long time that one has to catch the fish before one decides how to fry them. I think his pan is smoking, and he will gradually drop them into the bubbling oil. But he will do this in his own good time, on his schedule rather than any schedule the international community may attempt to impose.

When Hun Sen was returning home from his son’s West Point graduation in June, he stopped off in Paris and gave an interview to French journalists. There the Prime Minister announced that the investigation of Mok had revealed that the genocide was carried out by a “regime,” by a “political movement,” and therefore the prosecution of Mok and Duch would not be enough to achieve justice for the Cambodian people. This certainly didn’t constitute much of a revelation for anyone even vaguely aware of modern Cambodian history. But it signaled something important about Hun Sen’s intentions.

The Chinese reacted strongly to the possibility of justice for the Khmer Rouge, pulling out all the stops to defend their former allies. Chinese officials have been actively lobbying both the Cambodian National Assembly and the Cambodian government in an effort to kill any international role in a Khmer Rouge tribunal, in favor of the Chinese vision of Asian values, where mass slaughter of domestic enemies is nobody’s business.

French lawyers — contrary to that Security Council member’s assurances to the United Nations Secretariat — proceeded to advise the Cambodian government on how to establish a domestic genocide tribunal.

Meanwhile, the United States, which had devoted significant resources and rhetoric to encouraging justice for the Khmer Rouge in recent years, was missing in action during this crucial phase of the search for genocide justice in Cambodia, distracted by the war in Kosovo. It began to appear as if this issue had dropped off of American radar screens. Even the new US Ambassador to the United Nations, Richard Holbrooke, spoke of this issue at his Senate confirmation hearing in the past tense, as if to say, ‘Pol Pot is gone, it’s over.’

But it is not over, not yet. The Khmer Rouge certainly don’t think it is over. On September 2nd, in the name of his “Democratic National United Movement,” Ieng Sary announced his “resolute support” for the Cambodian government’s plan to establish a “national tribunal in collaboration with foreign judges and prosecutors” to judge the Khmer Rouge leadership on charges of genocide and crimes against humanity. When one of the putative principal targets of a Khmer Rouge criminal tribunal endorses a plan for such a

Conference Report III

[This is the third of five segments of the report from the 9th Conference of the Forum on Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam, held in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, January 1999. The winter and spring Interchange will carry the final panel discussions.]

Addressing Social Evils at the Grass Roots.

Moderator: Jenny Pearson, VNBK

Panelists: Sam Arun

Amphayvan Vilachaleun

Kien Serey Phal

Do Nang Khanh

Cambodia: Sam Arun, Assistant Secretary of State, Ministry of Women's and Veteran's Affairs

Situation Analysis:

There are no comprehensive national statistics on women and children sold into prostitution or sexual exploitation in Cambodia, but there are figures from which we can get a sense of the problem and its scope. Based on a 1995 UNICEF report, the number of women working in brothels in that year was between 10,000 and 15,000. Population Service International estimates that there are closer to 7,500 persons involved in commercial sex work in Cambodia. The average age of girls appears to be falling as well. By some estimates close to 30% of those involved in commercial sex work are below seventeen years old, some as young as 14 to 15, though this is particularly difficult to track. Cross border traffic of women and girls is equally difficult to measure.

Trafficking of persons in Cambodia includes prostitution and forced begging as well as forced labor and construction projects. Poverty is very closely tied to trafficking of all people. Half of

rural Cambodians live below the poverty line and women and girls from poor provinces are more susceptible to trafficking. Often they are first sold into servitude by their own family or relatives. Girls are usually withdrawn from school before their brothers and are considered expendable and viewed as an economic burden. In addition, trafficking is linked to other kinds of crime and often to corruption within law enforcement. Factors that contribute to the sexual abuse of women include:

- Low level of law enforcement
- Lack of awareness in the general public
- Insufficient resources devoted to solving the problem
- Poverty
- Insufficient collaboration and coordination between agencies charged with addressing the situation.

The government particularly needs to concentrate on finding better intervention strategies.

Responses:

NGOs, IOs and UN agencies provide a variety of services including health care, social services, victim assistance, counseling and shelters and conduct research and seminars for service providers. In addition, HIV/AIDS prevention programs do out-

(Etcheson, continued...)

tribunal, one cannot help but be reminded of the culture of impunity in Cambodia, a culture which continues to corrupt that nation's efforts to build a society based on the rule of law.

Perhaps emboldened by French and Chinese urging, combined with an apparent lack of interest by the United States, Cambodia rejected the draft charter for a mixed international-Cambodian tribunal to judge the Khmer Rouge presented by United Nations experts in August. On September 17, Hun Sen told UN Secretary General Kofi Annan that Cambodia intends to proceed with a domestic criminal tribunal to judge the Khmer Rouge leaders. "Cambodia," Hun Sen wrote to the Secretary General, "will utilize this opportunity not just to find justice for the Cambodian people, but also to make a major practical step in its efforts to end the culture of impunity."

Renewed Prospects for a Trial

Then, in one of the twists with which Cambodia watchers become so familiar, the United States intervened in Cambodia's moribund negotiations with the UN, and on October 18, Hun Sen announced a US brokered compromise which would allow the formation of a mixed Cambodian and international tribunal to judge leaders of the Khmer Rouge on charges of genocide.

Will this compromise hold, and have the effect touted by the Prime Minister? Will a genocide tribunal be convened with international cooperation and help to end the culture of impunity in Cambodia? One must fervently hope that it will, for the culture of impunity is perhaps the most corrosive of all legacies left by the Khmer Rouge.

Craig Etcheson <etcheson@ix.netcom.com> specializes in accountability and reconciliation for societies torn by massive violations of human rights.

Conference 2000

The next conference of the Forum on Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam is planned for November 7-9, 2000 in Vientiane, Laos, with registration on the 6th (which includes the US Presidential Election day). The Tat Luong Festival next year will be held November 13-15. Suggestions for the conference theme, plenary and panel topics, speakers and special events should be sent to the Forum c/o FRD.

reach to prostitutes to distribute information on preventing transmission.

At the legislative level, the Law on Suppression of the Kidnapping and Trafficking of and Exploitation of Persons aims to curb the problem, and the five year plan in Cambodia's national program for children also addresses the problem, especially as it is affected by law enforcement. Recent legislation provides for Women's Centers, victim's assistance, as well as an HIV prevention and information campaign. The Ministry of Women's and Veteran's Affairs (MWVA), established in 1996, is charged with overseeing many of these programs.

The MWVA collaborates with NGOs to ensure that equality and women's agendas are integrated into the national agenda. The MWVA is also responsible for coordinating applicable external assistance and aid. The MWVA has identified a number of priority areas to address their mandate.

- Develop the human resources to equip itself as a national machinery for the promotion of the status of women
- Pro-actively assess the needs of women at the cross roads
- Research the situation of women in Cambodia to guide a plan for the improvement of the status of women
- Improve the Ministry's capacity to target trafficking of women and children.

Laos: Amphayvan Vilachaleun, Deputy Director General, Social Welfare Department, Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare, Lao PDR

Proximity to the Thai border in the Mekong provinces means that trafficking of women and children is a particular problem there, but on the whole, this is a new problem for Laos. Since 1991, a serious problem has developed of the traffick-

Tapes available of the 9th annual conference of the Forum on Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam

Videotapes of the conference proceedings are available. The tapes are 6 hours each and cost \$10.00 (including US shipping). Tapes of only one of the plenary or panel discussions (2 hours each) listed below are also available for \$10.00.

Tape One: Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam Country Plenaries

Tape Two: Non Country Plenaries

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

Plenary: Cooperation between international nonprofit organizations and host government.

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

Tape Three: Day One Panel Discussions

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

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

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

Tape Four: Day Two Panel Discussions

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

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

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

Tape Five: Day Three Panel Discussions

a) Developing curriculum to meet new national needs

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

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

ing of children for sexual exploitation and forced labor, but there has not been a national survey of the extent of the problem.

In 1995, the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare opened an investigation and found that in many cases, children cross the Thai border in search of work and are then lured into prostitution and forced labor in private factories in Thailand. In 1998, the Ministry conducted a second survey, based on which the government plans to improve counseling and vocational training for victims.

The government does not allow prostitution, but women and girls who come from rural areas into the city to find work start out in night clubs and restaurants, from which they are often forced into prostitution and lured out of Laos. A small group of such children were recently repatriated from Thailand. In addition, the ministry this year began organizing training workshops to deal with problems of child trafficking.

Usually parents are offered large sums of money for daughters by people promising good jobs abroad in a factory, when in fact the girls are taken for prostitution. Poor families often do not realize what is happening and they cannot afford to turn down the money.

Laos has a further problem with missing children, often between ages ten and thirteen who drop out of school to look for work in the market.

Government Strategies to Combat the Problem of Child Exploitation:

The government appointed the ministry of Social Work as a focal point for its strategy and provided for a coordinator of a project to combat ills including child prostitution and child labor. This coordinator works with the Ministry of Health to address the problem.

Law and Policy:

Along with the 1991 constitution in 1992 a new set of laws was adopted which bolstered the 1990 convention to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women. These laws include strong laws against child labor as well. In 1992, the National Commission on Mothers and Children was established to examine policies on all aspects of life for women and children and to facilitate improved strategies. Laos also has a national program of action for child work formulated. A CDC project in the Ministry of Social Welfare receives funding from UNICEF and another project to help resettle children repatriated from Thailand is operating with help from international donors. International donors also fund a number of projects that aim to combat the sexual abuse of children.

Laos cannot solve these problems alone, however, and must work with its neighbors to solve the problem or their efforts go nowhere.

Questions

How do villages and neighbors respond to repatriated children?

Reactions vary, but often families lost contact with the children and are relieved to see them again, especially in cases where they were lied to and did not realize until they lost contact with their children that they had been lied to.

Vietnam: Do Nang Khanh, Deputy Chief of Planning Section, Department for the Prevention of Social Evils, Ministry of Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs

Within Vietnam, the mechanism for the prevention of social evils is a network that spans national and grassroots efforts.

Prostitution

Is illegal in Vietnam and punishable. It is closely tied to other crime and the spread of HIV/AIDS. The government in Vietnam has implemented a series of measures to prevent prostitution through monitoring, advocacy, education and vocational training to reintegrate prostitutes into the community as well as a community health campaign that aims to strengthen communities. Vocational training is provided in community centers that offer social services to help women live by legal occupations.

Vietnam has specific laws against kidnapping and trafficking and uses the legal system to combat trafficking. They are also looking for other effective measures to prevent the problem.

Drugs and Narcotics

Narcotics, especially opium cultivation, are a big problem in Vietnam. Opium is a major source of revenue in some regions. The battle to eradicate drug production includes recent busts that have yielded mass arrests and tons of contraband drugs. Addiction in Vietnam is primarily a youth problem: 70% of addicts are under 30 years old and many are teenagers. Young people become addicted because they lack knowledge of the dangers of drugs.

Measures for Treatment and Rehabilitation of Drug Addicts:

Requires cooperation and communication with communities in order to upgrade existing treatment facilities, offer education programs to help villages and communes understand the dangers of drugs. The number of addicts has been increasing in years, so the problem needs added attention.

Vietnam is a signatory to the 1991 Memorandum of Understanding and Agreement on the trafficking of illegal drugs along with Laos, Cambodia, Thailand and Russia. Their fight is coordinated with that of international organizations, because drug cultivation and marketing is an international problem.

Vietnam coordinates with international organizations to control drug traffic as well as prostitution and child exploitation. One area of emphasis is prevention of drug abuse among prostitutes and school children.

Kien Serey Phal, President, Cambodian Women's Development Association

Original research conducted in Thailand, Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia and parts of China. Cambodian Women's Development Association (CWDA) was responsible for the research in Cambodia. While the laws against prostitution and trafficking of women exist in Cambodia, enforcement is weak, so the problem persists at the village level. Often, village police do not even know about new laws as they are put on the books.

Trafficking is an international problem: foreign women are brought into Cambodia, and Khmer women are taken out of the country. Corruption is necessarily a part of the problem, because cross border traffic means that passports and visas that come from government offices have to be doctored. This government official corruption is common across the region.

CWDA's work includes producing pamphlets to educate people about the problem of trafficking.

Community development programs are also important, especially to women in remote areas who are at risk. Programs that emphasize gender equality can be vital in those areas. Available research still does not cover the whole country.

Services to victims need to be more substantial. Provinces outside Phnom Penh do not offer services to women in the sex industry or respond to their needs and let them exercise their rights. Women who do not need vocational training still need counseling before they can return to their communities.

Reintegration is ineffective unless there is follow up—women go from a brothel to a shelter to a community and that final transition is the most difficult to make. In the brothel, as in a shelter, there is a close knit group of women isolated together. Former prostitutes often face discrimination, and some girls return to their old situation if they don't have support in the community.

Girls need help a month down the road. Some girls can go home, others cannot go back to their families because their families refuse them. Follow up is essential to any effective project.

Closing Thoughts

A closing comment offered by one participant was that these are human problems, and administrative solutions alone will not solve problems so closely tied to poverty. Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam, and many of their neighbors, face a moral and social crisis. Why is it possible to sell your children? That is a moral crisis and government programs do not really address the crisis of social values that allows a family to sell off its daughters.

The winter and spring issues will contain the remaining panel discussions. To order video tapes of any conference proceedings, see page 25.

RESOURCES

Landmines/UXO

Landmine Monitor Report 1999—Toward a Mine-Free World prepared by the International Campaign to Ban Landmines. This report includes information on every country in the world with respect to landmine use, production, trade, stockpiling, humanitarian demining and mine victim assistance. 1,100 pages, 44 page executive summary also available. (*International Campaign to Ban Landmines*, <http://www.icbl.org>, e-mail: lm@icbl.org. Or write Mary Wareham, Human Rights Watch Arms Division, 1630 Connecticut Ave. #500, Washington DC 20009. Tel: (202) 612-4356, fax: (202) 612-4333.

Cambodia

Dance in Cambodia by Toni Samantha Phim and Ashley Thompson, 1999. For over a thousand years, Cambodian dance has been a compelling means of artistic and spiritual expression. *Dance in Cambodia* is an introduction to the universe of Cambodian dance as it is practiced today, offering a view of diverse performance traditions in which dance plays a major role, and of the powerful creative force dance has maintained in Cambodia over the centuries. Chapters on shadow theater, theatrical and ceremonial folk dance and classical dance explain the movements, styles and performance framework of these genres while placing them in their rich cultural and historical contexts. 120 pages, illustrated, ISBN 983-56-0059-7. (*Oxford University Press*, 198 Madison Ave, New York NY 10016. Tel: (212) 726-6000, <http://www.oup.org>)

Region, General

Peace Calendar 2000 produced by the Syracuse Cultural Workers. The 29th edition continues the unique and inspirational blending of art and activism. April is a collage by Dik Cool and Karen Kerney titled *Viet Nam: Celebrate and Remember* for the 25th anniversary of the wars' end. Full color, 14x22 on the wall with quotes, poetry, people's history, lunar cycles, 13 native moons, holidays for many faiths. New Teachers Guide sold separately. LOOCW, 6+ for \$10.95 each; 3-5 for \$11.95 each; 1-2 for \$12.95 each. (*Syracuse Cultural Workers*, PO Box 6367, Syracuse, NY 13217. Tel: (315)474-1132; fax: (877)265-5399; e-mail: scw@syrcculturalworkers.org)

Corporate-NGO Partnership in the Asia Pacific edited by Tadashi Yamamoto and Kim Gould Ashizawa. Through ten cases studies, Yamamoto and Ashizawa examine emerging trends that have encouraged cross-sectoral partnerships in the Asia Pacific region—the evolution of civil society, changing corporate attitudes toward philanthropy and corporate responsibility, the impact of the Asian financial crisis, and the constraints on the public sector's ability to meet demands for social development. The case studies offer perspectives on the rationale for forging links between the corporate and nonprofit sectors. 182 pages, \$21, ISBN 4-88907-037-0. (*Japan Center for International Exchange*, c/o The Brookings Institution Press, 1775 Massachusetts Avenue NW, Washington DC 20036. Tel: (800) 275-1447, e-mail: bibooks@brook.edu)

I N T E R N E T

Landmine Survivors Media Project

Presented by the Center for Defense Information, an independent military research organization.

<http://www.cdi.org/landmines>

XUNHASABA, the Vietnamese Export and Import Book and Newspaper Company:

<http://www.xunhasaba.com.vn/content.html>

V I D E O & F I L M

Third World Newsreel

The following films and other Third World Newsreel films on a range of regions beyond Indochina are available by contacting TWN at 545 Eighth Ave, 10th Floor, New York, NY 10018. Tel: (212) 947-9277, fax: (212) 594-6417, <http://www.twn.org>, e-mail: twn@twn.org.

Born in War by Va-Megn Thoj / Third World Newsreel Workshop. 1996. This semi-autobiography traces the maker's birth on a secret CIA military base in the hills of Laos to his anti-war college years during the Persian Gulf War. Mixing archival footage, family photographs and dramatization—Thoj looks at how his life has been controlled and his identity shaped by the war. He links his personal history to Hmong history under French colonialism and during the American war in Laos. Video Rental, \$50; Sale, \$135. (9 min./Color/1996)

Hanoi, Tuesday the 13th by Santiago Alvarez with ICAIC, Cuba. 1967. Filmed in Hanoi on December 13, 1966, this documentary records the lives of people in Vietnam's capital and the surrounding countryside at the height of US bombing. Their daily activities are presented in a collage of images: building irrigation ditches, planting rice, fishing, weaving...life continued despite the shower of US bombs. During these air raids, the people formed armed self-defense units so efficient that the life of the nation was not interrupted. Film Rental, \$75; Sale \$700. Inquire for Video Rates. (40 min./B&W/1967)

Laos: the Forgotten War (La Guerra Olvidada) by Santiago Alvarez with ICAIC Cuba. 1967. This Cuban film focuses on the history of foreign intervention in Laos, first by France and then by the United States. It shows how the liberation forces of Laos, under continuous US bombing, were able to run an entire society in hidden caves and tunnels. Led by the Pathet Lao, they organized schools, cultural activities, clinics, as well as political and military activities literally underground. Film Rental, \$50. Inquire for all other rates. (20 min./Color/1967)

Struggle for Life, National Liberation Front Vietnam. 1968. This film depicts Vietnamese medical cadres working to save the lives of people in the liberated areas of South Vietnam during the war. At the front, medics carry the wounded to carefully concealed tunnels where intricate surgery

is performed with the aid of generators powered by the pedaling of bicycle wheels. These resourceful and determined people set up medical research centers in the middle of jungles that were totally mobile in the event of US bombing raids. Film Rental, \$65; Sale \$675. Inquire for Video Rates. (30 min./B&W/1968)

US Techniques and Genocide in Vietnam, Vietnamese People's Army Film, Democratic Republic of Vietnam. 1968. This film describes the use of elaborate US weapons against civilian targets in Vietnam such as anti-personnel weapons designed to kill human targets while causing minimal damage to buildings, steel pellet bombs that zigzag in all directions and the internationally banned dum-dum bullet. The film also shows the destruction caused by these and other weapons, such as napalm and Agent Orange. Film rental \$65, sale \$650. Inquire about video rental or sale. (35 min./B&W/1968)

Women of Telecommunications Station #6, Vietnamese People's Army Films. 1969. Throughout the Vietnam war, young North Vietnamese women learned skills which enabled them to take an active part in diverse aspects of the armed struggle. In this film, they operate a vital communications and relay station and defend it against attack. The film touches on the more personal aspects of the women's lives and their transformation to a role of full participation in their country's struggle. Film rental, \$40; sale, \$400; inquire for video rates. (20 min./B&W/1969)

NGO Self Profile

Friendship Foundation Vietnam announces its sixth annual Children's and Education Project in December, 1999, and January, 2000. Volunteer participants will visit Vietnam and see its historic sites, and work with various humanitarian agencies. Participants gather in Ho Chi Minh City on December 20, 1999 and work together in the city before spreading out to smaller sites of their choosing for the longer assignment. Past participants have taught English or assisted in rural hospitals and orphanages, among other projects.

Participants are responsible for their own travel arrangements to and from Vietnam, though the Foundation can help with obtaining visas and tickets. A fee of \$750 covers all travel within Vietnam, hotels, meals, service fees, translators and local travel assistants for the duration of the project.

For more information, contact the Friendship Foundation of American Vietnamese, Inc.; 1444 East Erie Avenue; Lorain, Ohio 44052. Tel: (440) 288-4544, fax: (216) 687-0779 (attention: Joseph Meissner), e-mail: ffavn@centuryinter.net.

Self profiles are provided by NGOs or adapted from their materials. We edit profiles only for style.

NEW NGO DIRECTORIES FROM INDOCHINA

Reprints now available of directories produced by international NGOs in Vietnam (318 pages), Cambodia (299 pages) and soon Laos. Each book offers a description of programs of Asian, European and North American NGOs working in the country with full contact information and listings by sector and province. Use form on page 31 to order Vietnam and Cambodia directories. Inquire for price of Laos directory which should arrive by January.

EDUCATION

Southeast Asian Studies Summer Institute

University of Wisconsin at Madison, June 12 thru August 11, 2000

Earn a year's worth of language credit in a nine week intensive language program for undergraduate, graduate and professional students. Course offerings include first, second and third year Lao, Khmer, Hmong and Vietnamese among others. Substantial scholarship assistance available to full time students.

For more information, contact the Center for Southeast Asian Studies, 207 Ingraham Hall, University of Wisconsin at Madison, Madison, WI 53706, tel: (608) 263-1755, fax: (608) 263-3735, e-mail: mjstuden@facstaff.wisc.edu, <http://www.wisc.edu/seassi>.

University of California, Education Abroad Program

Vietnam National University, Hanoi, August-December, 2000

Undergraduate for-credit course work includes 90 minutes of Vietnamese language instruction each day for the duration of the 15 week program, as well as a required seminar on Issues in Contemporary Vietnamese Society and three elective courses taught in English by VNU College of Social Sciences and Humanities faculty. Elective courses include literature, development economics and anthropology. Graduate students may also be accommodated in the program. Projected all-inclusive cost for Fall 2000 is \$5,880.

For more information, contact the EAP office on any UC campus or write the Education Abroad Program, 2431 South Hall, University of California, Santa Barbara, CA. tel: (805) 893-2958 or 893-3763, e-mail: eapucsb@eap.ucsb.edu, <http://www.ueap.ucsb.edu>.

POSITIONS OPEN

Program Associate sought by the Asia Pacific Center for Justice and Peace. The position will include developing and implementing education and advocacy programs for APCJP as well as country and issue monitoring programs, editing their quarterly newsletter, "The Asia Pacific Advocate" as well as writing articles, editorials, and op-eds for APCJP and secular, religious and alternative press. For more information, contact tel: (202) 543-1900, <http://www.apcjp.org>.

Agriculture Advisor sought by Norwegian Church Aid (NCA), a non-governmental development organisation working in Laos since 1988. The Luang Namtha Drug Supply and Demand Reduction Project aims at reducing the production and consumption of opium in the northern provinces of Bokeo and Luang Namtha, through a community based alternative development approach. The position will be stationed at the relatively remote project headquarters in Luang Namtha Province and candidates should not expect to bring dependants. For more information, contact Mr. Jens Laugen, Houixay Phone/ Fax: +856 84 312028 or Knut Christiansen, Vientiane, Phone: +856 21 413867, fax: +856 21 413450, e-mail: lao@nca.no.

Professor (Assistant, Associate or Full) sought by the Southeast Asian Studies Program at the National University of Singapore. Two positions are open for candidates who hold a PhD and are actively engaged in a research program focused on one or more countries of Southeast Asia in political economy, economics, political science, environmental studies or economic/political geography. Applications by December 31, 1999. For more information, contact Associate Professor Lysa Hong, co-ordinator, Southeast Asian Studies Programme, National University of Singapore, 10 Kent Ridge Crescent, Singapore 119260 Fax: (65) 777-6608, e-mail: seasec@nus.edu.sg, <http://www.nus.edu.sg/NUSinfo/Appoint/arts-sea.htm>.

Vietnam Country Director sought for early 2000 two year appointment by Church World Service and Witness. For more information, contact David Herrill, 475 Riverside Dr., Room 616, NY, NY 10115 212-870-2630 daveh@nccusa.org

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P.S. from the editor...

The Twenty-fifth Anniversary of Peace: What Is to Be Done?

In April 1975 a thirty year process of escalating error and miscomprehension between the US and Indochina, which became tragedy for tens of millions of people, finally ended. The conclusion was no more admirable than the preceding years, and added new layers of human suffering.

In Cambodia the victory of the Khmer Rouge demonstrated that something worse could replace the destruction wrought by the US. In Vietnam and Laos, three decades of foreign supported colonial and civil war exacted predictable costs on those who lost. Even for the victors, post-war American embargo and political hostility combined with the hubris of success to insure that consolidation of power did not equate with peace and reconciliation.

Yet, after the passage of only a quarter of a century, in formal and legal terms the process of post-war normalization is virtually complete, absent primarily the regularization of trade relations with Laos and Vietnam. This anniversary offers a logical time to reflect on how reconciliation was achieved, the problems that still need solution and what the future can hold. Answering these questions may contribute to the still unsettled national assessment of the war, and could offer insights for the solution of an analogous cold war legacy, the US conflict with Cuba.

We are not settled on the approach to recognizing the anniversary which would be most effective. One way is to issue an open call for a conversation on these topics and let all those join it who are drawn by the questions. Another would be to choose a cross section of people involved in the rebuilding of relations, including current and former government officials, non-governmental relief and development organizations, educational institutions, foundations, business, journalists and Indochina expatriates. Key people who have been involved in the process from Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia should also be invited.

Specific issues in the present relationship offer openings to consider both the past and the future: socialist economics and

values vs. free markets and globalization; national independence and sovereignty vs. universalized assertions of human rights and democracy; moral and legal obligation for war time destruction, including the health and ecological impact of defoliants; environmental preservation vs. economic development; former refugees who may have stopped fighting the war but claim a role in home country politics.

Especially valuable at this time would be an assessment of the state of educational exchange and training programs and the need and possibility for large scale expansion.

Such a conference might stand alone or be linked to a trip by Foundation staff and NGO leaders who would like to make a personal assessment of the situation in Indochina twenty-five years after the war in order to consider new or expanded involvement.

There's not a lot of time to pull this together. If you have a response to the above, or some ideas of your own, please share them by mail or to usindo@igc.org.

—J.McA.

Another Perspective on Observing the Anniversary

It would be most important for the NGO community to recognize all those who have worked so tirelessly to put the war to rest and build a new relationship between our two countries. I am sure the press will be doing a great deal to recognize and interview countless political and military leaders from both sides on the subject but fear that they will not know or be interested in those who are really the ones who struggled so hard to change US opinion and policy.

I think a special event should be put together to publicly thank and recognize those who led the way. It could be a dinner or special performance. It might even be a fundraiser.

I would be happy to contact the Fine Arts Museum in Hanoi to see if they would be interested in hosting such an event. They have expanded considerably and now even have climate control. It would make a great location for such a celebration and seems appropriate since the artists of both countries were among those leading the way to normal relations.

We have had preliminary discussions in Hanoi and HCMC about an event to recognize the artists of "As Seen by Both Sides" on the tenth anniversary of the opening of that exhibition in Colorado in 1989. The Fine Arts Associations and Ministry of Culture are very interested. Why not expand this celebration to include all those who have paved (and continue to pave) the road between our two countries? There could be a week long series of events sponsored by the various people in Vietnam whom we all have been working with over the years.

My main concern is that those outside official government circles not be left out of the larger celebration but I expect we will be. Did you know that People Magazine is devoting its April issue to Vietnam?

—David Thomas, Indochina Arts Partnership

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