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# Bay Area Welcomes Mme. Binh

by Tara Kramer

Over 250 Vietnam-era anti-war activists, veterans, and other supporters of peaceful and normal relations with Vietnam, enthusiastically welcomed and paid tribute to Mme. Nguyen Thi Binh and her friendship delegation on their first visit ever to the United States, at a reception held at the Veterans War Memorial building in San Francisco June 25.

The reception, sponsored by the Veterans Speakers Alliance and the US-Vietnam Friendship Association to honor the delegation, was a truly historic occasion.

Binh negotiated with Henry Kissinger at the Paris Peace Conference and is widely known for the heroic role she played in Vietnam's struggle for liberation and independence. Presently chair of Vietnam's Union of Peace, Solidarity and Friendship Organizations, and head of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the National Assembly, she was accompanied by Mr. Le Mai and Mr. Tran Minh Quoc, leaders of the Viet-My Committee, which in recent years has hosted growing numbers of Americans visiting Vietnam to further understanding and cooperation between our peoples.

In her address, Binh described US-Vietnam relations since the war as a mixture of good and bad. "On the one hand, there is prejudice and animosities," she said, "and on the other hand, peace and friendship is growing between us."

"One day our relations will be normalized," said Binh, although she observed that the US government's current policy was a "continuation of policies still in place since the end of the war."

Focusing on the difficult economic situation in Vietnam today, she described the effects of the US policy of economic isolation imposed upon Vietnam.

"For over 17 years, we had to cope with a new war — this war is not as grim as the last one, but it is as complicated."

Binh said that while Vietnam was able to provide for the material needs of its population, her country still faced enor-



*Vietnam Today*  
Vietnam's friendship delegation was warmly welcomed at the reception in San Francisco. Shown above are Mme. Binh and Mr. Quoc of the Viet My Committee.

mous challenges. "In the aftermath of the devastating war, there were widows, orphans, separated families, and other serious social problems. However, since 1986, thanks to our renewal program, we were able to overcome many difficulties."

She pointed out that economic development of her country is being stepped up despite the US trade embargo. "It's our hope that our American friends will continue to stand by our side in this endeavor," Binh said, expressing deep gratitude to the veterans and friendship organizations she has been in contact with over the years.

Reaffirming solidarity with Vietnam, Beatrice Eisman, co-chair of the US-Vietnam Friendship Association, declared, "It's time to end the embargo. Seventeen years are long enough! It's time to lay the foundation for economic, scientific and cultural exchanges for the benefit of both our peoples."

"We need full normal relations," she said, "to finally put to rest — once and for all — the POW/MIA hoax which has been used to obstruct reconciliation for so many years. We need normal relations to step up joint research projects on the Agent Orange problem to help American and Vietnamese victims of the toxic herbicide, as well as Vietnam's damaged environment recover from the effects of chemical warfare." She noted that America has the responsibility to assist in Vietnam's postwar reconstruction.

## Mme. Binh ...

*Continued from page 1*

Kendra Alexander, a legislative aide to Berkeley Councilwoman Maudelle Shirek, spoke of the link between the Vietnam anti-war movement and the civil rights movement in developing her own consciousness of imperialist oppression at home and abroad. Mme. Binh's role in Vietnam's struggle for independence was a forerunner of the kind of role women should play in public affairs that concern the people, particularly in decision making positions, Alexander emphasized.

San Francisco Supervisor Terence Hallinan welcomed Mme. Binh, saying, "Things are not all changing for the worst — the path of progress is going up." He presented her with a plaque on behalf the city and county of San Francisco commending her "efforts to promote peace and friendship between our countries." Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi also sent a letter of greeting to Mme Binh.

The delegation's tour was sponsored by the Indochina Reconciliation Project, and included visits to New York to participate at a conference of humanitarian agencies working to improve living conditions in Vietnam, Washington, DC to meet with US senators to discuss normalization, and to the International Center at the University of Utah where they met with students and professors who visited Vietnam in 1991 on a study mission. They discussed future study tours and exchange programs for more cooperation between the Viet-My Committee and the Center.

During their visit to California, the delegation was also hosted in Garberville by the Vietnam Veterans Restoration Project which builds health clinics in Vietnam.

Tama Adelman, a former nurse in the Vietnam War, chaired the program which concluded with donations for medical aid to Bach Mai Hospital.

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*Tara Kramer is a contributor to Bay Area publications.*

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