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Some information about Günter Giesenfeld and the Vietnam activities of the VFA

Born 1938, studies at several universities of Germany and France, since 1972 Professor at the Philipps-Universität Marburg (German Literature and Mass Media), visiting professor in Salzburg (Austria) and Austin (Texas USA). Emeritus since 2003.

My Vietnam activities began during the US-war in Vietnam: Demonstrations, Flyers (1968 ...). In 1972, I produced a documentary film about a psychological field project of the Pentagon, together with Prof. Erich Wulff who had knowledge about it in Hue in the sixties. In 1976 I founded, together with other representatives of the anti-war movement in the Federal Republic of Germany, the Vietnam Friendship Association (VFA), his first president was Erich Wulff.

In 1981 I published a book "Land der Reisfelder", a concise history of the three Indochinese countries (Vietnam Laos and Cambodia) from the beginning. This book had his third enlarged edition in 1988.

Since this I was several times elected president of the Friendship Organization, as I am in the present since about ten years.

In 1976 I travelled to Vietnam for the first time and I filmed the first encroachments at the Vietnamese-Chinese frontier at Dong Dang. These records (including an interview with Xuan Thuy) were broadcasted immediately in the German television's Prime time News Magazine (ZDF). From then on I filmed eventually in Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos reports and documentaries for television about different issues, f.e.: agriculture and cooperatives, re-education camps, culture, agent orange, Catholics a.s.o. The last films I made were about Doi Moi (1995) and water puppet theatre (1997). I had the cooperation of Vietnamese television and documentary studio with Nguyen Lung Duc as a cameraman. I had the occasion to interview Vietnamese statesmen like Pham Van Dong, Vo Nguyen Giap, Xuan Thuy, Nguyen Co Thach, Nguyen Thi Binh, Trinh Ngoc Thai and others.

During the activities of our Friendship Organization I came acquainted with Vietnamese intellectuals and writers, under others Nguyen Khac Vien, Huu Ngoc, Che Lan Vien, Nguyen Dinh Thi, Pham Tien Duat, Nguyen Huy Thiep, Ke Minh Khue and the Vietnam Writers organization, the Vietnam literature Institute and others. I began to translate and edit books on Vietnamese History and Literature: so Nguyen Khac Vien's "Viet Nam, a long history" (German edition at Gai Phong Publishers, I was one of the translators and redactor-in-chief), and Poems of Che Lan Vien (bilingual co-edition of our Friendship Organization and Xunhasaba Hanoi, printed in Vietnam). This book was extraordinarily successful, so we had to print a second edition this year. Other books are in progress with poems of Nguyen Dinh Thi (to be published in August 2006), short stories of Nguyen Huy Thiep and Le Minh Khue a.o.

In 2000 we invited a delegation of Vietnamese Writers to come to Germany and present their works. We had about 20 public meetings in more than 15 German cities, in cooperation with the Goethe Institut. I was the permanent attendant (and driver) of the delegation and I published for this occasion a special edition of our periodical "Viet Nam Kurier" with short stories and poems of the three invited writers: Pham Tien Duat, Y Ban and Nguyen Huy Thiep. This delegation was organized with the help of Vietnam Writer's Union and the Ministry of Culture and Information.

I am the redactor in chief of the Friendship Organization's periodical *Viet Nam Kurier*, which is published four times a year. On behalf of the Friendship Organization I organize our study trips to Vietnam for our members. Very often I am invited to events or TV-shows about Vietnam, and Vietnam TV interviewed me in March 2002. I attended the Congress of VUFO in March 2003.

The VFA on its own was the attempt to reunite all people and organizations which had been working for Vietnam during the war and who would continue the solidarity with this land after the victory of 1975. In the beginning there were more than 2000 members and we started our activities on a broad level: magazine, travels, delegations and public events. But the interest for Vietnam decreased in this time very fast, because the war was over, and switched to other issues: Nicaragua, South Africa and others. To that day, we have still about 500 members and subscriptions for the magazine. Since about two years, our membership has been stable. So we can organize and finance our activities in a consolidated basis.

Besides the mentioned activities we have an accent on cultural and literary projects. We publish books and booklets with literary texts and we invite Vietnamese editors and distributors of books every year to participate at the Frankfurt International Bookfair. We pay them a stand so that they can expose their products and make business with partners from all over the world. We have a Website (www.fg-vietnam.de) and a newsletter service. We sent one average travelling group every year and we do help in a humanitarian way to some small projects (school of hearing impaired children, friendship village for Agent Orange victims, schoolchildren scholarships a.o.).

In these days we are participating to establish a network of European friendship organisations, whose first issue is the help for the Agent Orange victim's intended lawsuit against the producers of Agent Orange and dioxin poison. Later on the activities of this network will embrace other issues. Several times we brought financial help to the friendship Village.

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