

**Dịch Anh - Việt**

**VIETNAM: VIBRANCY REVIVED**

*By Frederik Balfour*

As our Boeing 747 United Airlines flight from San Francisco touched down in Ho Chi Minh City's Tan Son Nhat airport recently, I contemplated how much things had changed since my first visit there 12 years ago. Back then, Vietnam was still under a U.S. economic embargo, there were no taxis, Internet, mobile phones, five-star hotels, or flights on U.S. carriers.

Apart from a handful of American carpetbaggers on the streets, Australian, Taiwanese, French, Russians deals,... were clinched in the bar of the only four-star establishment, the Saigon Floating Hotel, a barge that had been towed all the way from the Great Barrier Reef in Australia to the banks of the muddy Saigon River. Everywhere you went, the city was buzzing with how Vietnam would become the next Asian tiger economy.

But when I arrived in Ho Chi Minh City in late March as preparations for the 30th anniversary of the city's "liberation" on Apr. 30 were under way, the mood definitely felt upbeat. "Even the most hardened cynic will say things are better on almost all fronts, and I should know, because I am one," said Milton Lawson, a lawyer with Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer, which has operated in the country for more than a decade.

Everywhere I went, the city seemed to glow with economic well-being. The restaurant at the Sheraton Hotel on Ho Chi Minh City's Dong Khoi Street was packed with Vietnamese and foreigners wolfing down Easter brunch. The hotel's slot machines and blackjack tables were doing a brisk business, as were its boutiques selling Prada, Louis Vuitton, and Armani.

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**VIỆT NAM: SỨC SỐNG HỒI SINH MẠNH MẼ**

Trong lúc chiếc Boeing 747 của United Airlines, cất cánh từ San Francisco, đáp xuống sân bay Tân Sơn Nhất, tôi nhẩm tính đã có bao nhiêu thay đổi ở Việt Nam kể từ lần đầu tiên tôi đến 12 năm trước. Khi đó, Việt Nam vẫn chịu lệnh cấm vận của Mỹ, không có taxi, Internet, điện thoại di động, khách sạn 5 sao hay các chuyến bay thẳng nối Mỹ với Việt Nam.

Những thương khách Australian, Taiwanese, French, Russians,... ngồi chật kín quầy bar ở khách sạn 4 sao duy nhất - Saigon Floating Hotel, cái sà lan được kéo từ Australia về bờ sông Sài Gòn. Đi đến bất cứ nơi đâu, bạn cũng nghe thấy người ta bận rộn nói về việc Việt Nam sẽ trở thành con hổ kinh tế mới của châu Á.

Nhưng khi tôi trở lại thành phố Hồ Chí Minh cuối tháng 3 này, khi thành phố chuẩn bị kỷ niệm 30 năm giải phòng, bầu không khí nhộn nhịp khác hẳn trước. "Thậm chí những người hoài nghi nhất cũng phải công nhận rằng mọi thứ, mọi mặt đã tốt hơn", Milton Lawson, luật sư làm việc cho Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer hơn 10 năm qua ở Việt Nam, nói.

Ở khắp những nơi tôi đến, thành phố dường như sáng choang lên nhờ kinh tế phát triển. Nhà hàng trong khách sạn Sheraton trên đường Đồng Khởi chật cứng khách Việt Nam và ngoại quốc tới ăn mừng Phục sinh. Các máy slot bàn chơi bài đông đúc, cũng giống như không khí trong các cửa hàng bán đồ hiệu Prada, Louis Vuitton, và Armani.

Nhớ lại lần đầu tiên tôi đến, xe hơi ở đây chỉ có loại duy nhất nhập từ Nga, giờ thì Mercs đậu đầy bãi xe cạnh bar Q nơi lúc nào cũng chật cứng khách tới uống. Để tránh lặp lại những bước đi sai lầm trước kia, đất nước này một lần nữa lại nhóm lên niềm lạc quan của các nhà đầu tư, thu hút họ dù họ là Việt kiều hay người nước ngoài.