

“Western” lawyer loves Vietnam

(PLO) – At a meeting of organizations operating in the judicial support sector held by the People’s Committee of Hanoi on March 21, lawyer Thomas J. Treutler of Tilleke & Gibbins left a special impression.

It was special not only because he speaks fluent Vietnamese, but also because he revealed that he has had a connection with Vietnam for 22 years and has a constant desire to contribute even more to Vietnam’s judicial sector.

“I love Vietnam and I married a Vietnamese woman!”



Lawyer Thomas J. Treutler with Vietnam’s Minister of Justice Ha Hung Cuong

Thomas J. Treutler is an American lawyer, but he is very dedicated to the development of the Vietnamese legal profession. Destiny brought him to Vietnam, but his law career came about quite randomly.

“I came to Vietnam in 1993 under a cooperative educational program. At that time, I studied at the Hanoi University of Foreign Languages, while also teaching classes. After that, because I could read and speak Vietnamese, I got a job as a legal translator for a foreign law firm in Vietnam,” Treutler begins his story.

However, back then, Treutler never expected that his law career would follow him, or that Vietnam would become his second homeland.

He recalls: “The first work I did in the legal field in Vietnam was when a Japanese company, Toyota, was preparing to invest in Vinh Phuc province. They wanted to learn about Vietnam labor laws and at that time Vietnam had just passed the Labor Code. I remember that back then new laws were often published in *Nhan Dan* [The People] newspaper and on my very first day of work, my boss gave me the *Lao Dong* [Labor] newspaper, which included the Labor Code, about 60 pages long, and told me to translate it as soon as possible. I worked like crazy, overnight, and finished in 4 days”.

That first work on the first day made Treutler interested in law. He shares: “I study languages so I really like the combination of language and laws. At that time, I was just an employee doing translation work, not yet a lawyer, and I only played a very small role, but after that when I saw that Toyota had invested in Vietnam and contributed greatly to the economic development of Vietnam, I was very happy.”

Afterward, Treutler decided to return to the United States to attend law school and get his lawyer's certificate. However, after just a few years of practicing law in the United States, he decided to "come home" to Vietnam (in his words – reporter) to connect his life with a Vietnamese woman. Treutler proudly shares: "I married a woman from Nha Trang. My wife is singer Ngoc Thuy, who used to work for the Hai Dang Music group. We have two children, ages 16 and 12."

His love for his family and his homeland in Vietnam always pushes him to contribute even more to the development of the legal profession in Vietnam.

Treutler is especially interested in enhancing the law practicing skills of law students and young lawyers. In addition to attracting many students from the Hanoi Law University and the Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam to do internships at the Hanoi branch of Tilleke & Gibbins, he is also actively involved in sponsoring Vietnamese students to participate in moot court competitions overseas. He says:

"Our branch always focuses on on-site training by making it possible for Vietnamese staff to participate in short-term and longer-term courses on intellectual property, law and economics". He himself often lectures in intellectual property courses held by the Diplomatic Academy in Hanoi and courses in English for lawyers organized by the Hanoi Judicial Academy. In particular, he very actively participates and shares his experience in presentations to Vietnamese lawyers on international integration.

When learning that the Ministry of Justice of Vietnam had been appointed to act as the legal representative for the Government in resolving international investment disputes, he was delighted. He says: "In my 22 years living in Vietnam, I have witnessed Vietnam's accession to the WTO and the modification of Vietnam's laws. I have also seen that the legal profession in Vietnam has really grown. As a branch of a foreign law firm in Vietnam, we have the opportunity to protect the interests of a number of Vietnam enterprises overseas. We are always ready if the Ministry of Justice requires our support to protect the interests of the Vietnamese Government resolving international investment disputes as well as protecting the interests of Vietnam enterprises overseas."

Speaking about Treutler, lawyer Kien Trung Trinh, who has worked for Tilleke & Gibbins in Hanoi for 20 years, says: "Regarding Thomas J. Treutler, we can say this is a man who is devoted to the development of the legal profession in Vietnam. With his fluent Vietnamese, he can communicate easily with Vietnamese people and this allows him to lecture or present in Vietnamese at training courses in intellectual property law or seminars for Vietnamese lawyers on international integration. With colleagues, he is always willing to share his experience as a colleague and does everything he can so employees can complete their work. As the managing director, he always knows how to create a professional but very friendly working environment, which motivates and encourages employees to devote themselves to our law firm as a team. Employees come to him not only to ask for instructions, but to share and get advice about both work and life."

Thomas J. Treutler is the managing director of both branches of Tilleke & Gibbins Consultants Limited in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City, and practices law in Vietnam as a registered foreign attorney. He is also a U.S.-qualified lawyer specializing in patents and trademarks.

He is a lawyer with extensive knowledge of patents and trademarks, and has been named by *Chambers Asia Pacific* (2008-2015) as a leading lawyer in the field of intellectual property and was also honored by *The International Who's Who of Life Sciences Lawyers 2012*. He has extensive experience in handling infringements in the field of intellectual property and has ensured the success of many large transactions of foreign investors operating in the field of life sciences and technology.

Lawyer Thomas J. Treutler also assumes the roles of advisor for the USAID trade promotion program; Chairman of the Intellectual Property Rights Sector Committee of EuroCham Vietnam; and the local expert for Vietnam for the European Commission's ASEAN IPR SME Helpdesk.

