

The Negro movement, has not yet found adequate leadership and Martin Luther King simply cannot personally provide guidance to the nation's 11 million Negroes. Even the labour movement has been accomodating by refraining from any major strikes in recent months.

Americans are basically still isolationists and want to be left, to themselves. They are not disturbed by foreign events unless they threaten immediate effects. Thus, the Dominican fiasco hardly caused a ripple in the public apathy (except for the

intellectuals, who were very much opposed to the Administration's actions. Indeed, it is doubtful that anyone would care much if the United States made the Dominican Republic a colony in name as well as in fact. Vietnam has struck closer to home, but the situation will have to grow worse, as seems to be likely, before the public discontent (perhaps confusion is a better word) will get out of hand. Right now, it is a small but vocal group of legislators who have managed to get the facts about Vietnam, a difficult task in itself, and the intel-

lectuals and students who are urging the Administration to restrain itself. The prospects for their success seem to be slim at the present time. Foreign pressure, which is officially discounted, may have 'some effects on the Administration. Thus, America is faced with a paradox. Its foreign poicy has been a total failure with *no* prospects for improvement, while the domestic record of the Administration has been excellent, and more progressive legislation seems to be on the horizon.

- Philip G Altbach

## BOOK REVIEWS

# Vietnam and China

Subhash Chandra Sarker

**Communism in North Vietnam by P J Honey; Ampersand Ltd, London, 1965; pp 206, Price 7s 6d.**

THIS is a study of the policies of the Vietnamese Communist Party (officially known as Dang has Dong Viet Nam, i.e. Vietnamese Workers' Party) during the decade following the final Vietnamese victory over France in 1954. However, the major part of the book deals with developments between 1957 and early 1968 with particular reference to the relations of the Vietnamese Communist Party with the Communist Party of China and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. The author's approach is that of an analyst, who does not have any sympathy with Vietnamese aspirations but who wants to understand the broad delineations of Vietnamese Communist policies with a view to suggesting an appropriate course of action on the part of the western powers, particularly the United States of America (this is however, nowhere made explicit in the book itself; the author's stated objective is to determine the position of Vietnamese Communist party in the Sino-Soviet dispute.)

Honey's antipathy to the Vietnamese Communist Party is reflected in his assessment of the role of Ho Chi Minh. He writes: "The consequence of Ho's decision was involvement of both the 'United States and Communist China in the Indo-Chinese war, thereby increasing the scale and significance of the conflict and causing more bloodshed, suffering, and damage to the Vietnamese people." Whatever may be Honey's faults, sympathy for Vietnam and the Vietnamese is not one

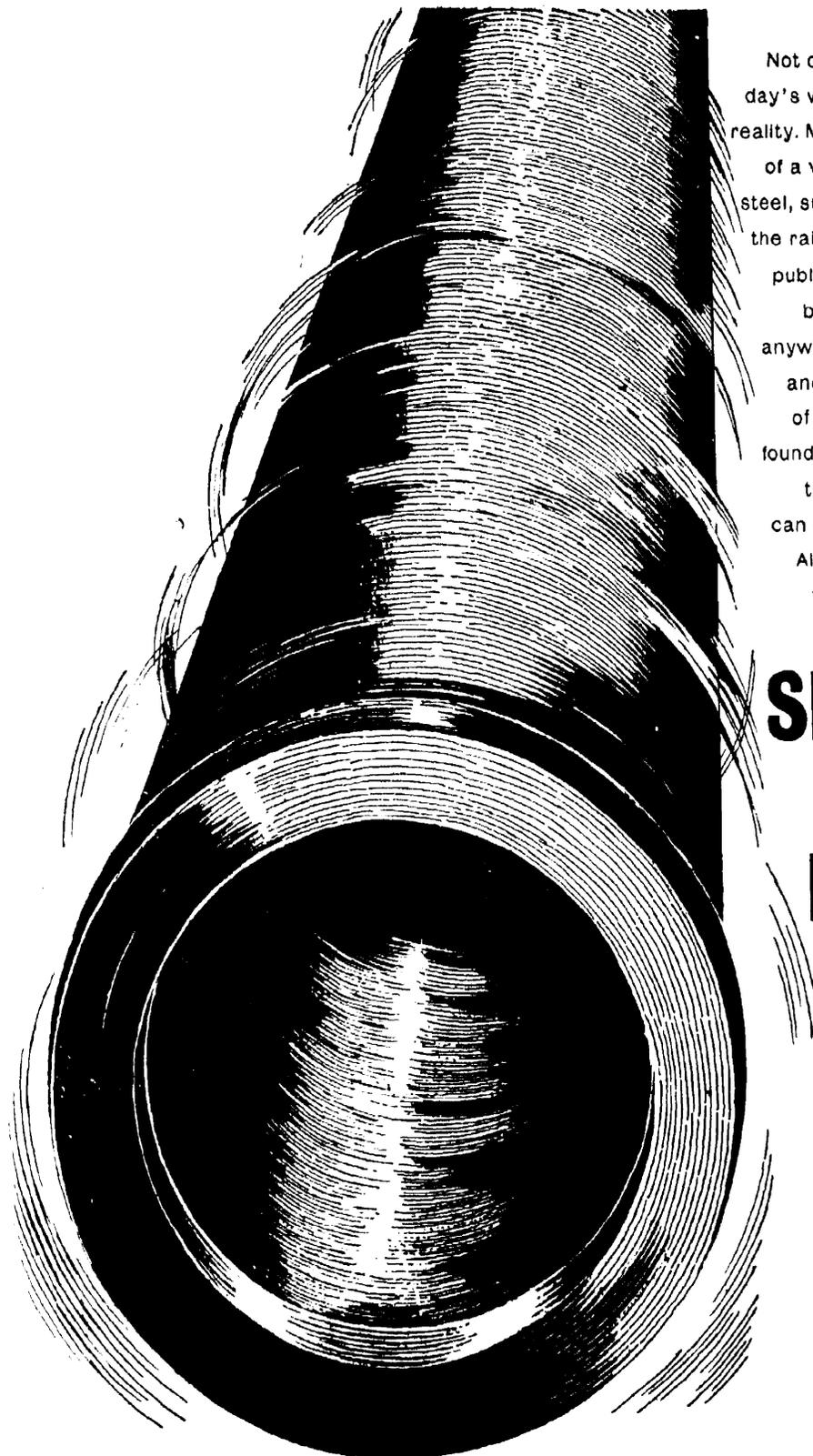
of them. Yet in a peculiar way this avowed antipathy is not without its merit; For it ensures that any positive statement about the Vietnamese Communist Party in his study need not be doubted and can be accepted as fairly accurate and approximate to truth.

### Vietnam IN Nobody's Pawn

Read in this light, the book is of particular relevance to Indians who have yet to comprehend the true significance of the struggle in Vietnam. After the traumatic experience on the India-China border, many Indians view the U S involvement against Vietnam's struggle for independence as a guarantee against Chinese expansionism. Much as these Indians feel sorry for the suffering of the Vietnamese people they, nevertheless, consider this historically inevitable and, under the circumstances, also justifiable to a considerable extent. Nothing, however, could be more misconceived. Those who are acquainted with Vietnamese history know that the history of the past several centuries in Vietnam has been one of struggle against China. A measure of friendship and understanding was achieved between the Chinese and the Vietnamese during the anti-colonial liberation struggles against western colonialism. But that was nothing more than what grew between the Chinese and the Indians (who sent a medical mission to China fighting against Japan) or between the Indians and Indonesians. In their fight against the French

colonialists the Vietnamese had of necessity to seek some Chinese help (which was indirect all through the war against France); the Vietnamese are understandably grateful to the Chinese for this help. But it is utter misreading of events to view the Vietnamese Communists as the instruments of furthering any possible Chinese designs in Vietnam or any other Asian country. On the other hand, the Communist leaders of Vietnam have constantly endeavoured to uphold and strengthen their independence of action *vis-a-vis* not only France and the USA but also China and the Soviet Union. Honey's study establishes this fact beyond any dispute.

Honey writes: "The attitude of virtually all Vietnamese toward the Chinese is so complex and difficult to describe... Nevertheless the overriding emotion of the Vietnamese is dislike (stories of the greed, the duplicity, and the terrible cruelty of the Chinese rulers during the two periods of Chinese domination abound in Vietnam and are recounted as though the events of history had taken place only recently) and that is why communist campaigns stressing 'historical friendship' between the peoples of Vietnam and China had to be abandoned hurriedly when they encountered so much ridicule in North Vietnam. It is interesting to note that many of the new factories and industrial undertakings in North Vietnam have been named after Vietnamese heroes venerated because of their victories



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over Chinese invaders, and that (he anniversary of Emperor Quang Trung, who not only defeated a Chinese army but also laid claim to territory in Southern China during the eighteenth century, is celebrated annually by the Communist authorities".

**Neutral in Sino-Soviet Conflict**

It is again of no little significance that the Vietnamese Communists have consistently refused to side with the Chinese Communists in the Sino-Soviet controversy, despite considerable Chinese pressure.

For understandable reasons the Chinese have "sought to align the Vietnamese Communists with their policy not only with regard to the Soviet Union and the United States of America but also with regard to various political, economic, social and military issues. Honey has given a number of instances of Chinese overtures seeking Vietnamese alignment with China. The Vietnamese have always refused to identify themselves unreservedly with China — a refusal the significance of which certainly goes very much beyond involvement in the Sino-Soviet dispute which provided (he pretext for the decision, in view of the geographical proximity of China and the considerable dependence of the Vietnamese leaders on Chinese goodwill and support in order to meet the very real U S threat to Vietnamese independence, Vietnamese neutrality in the Sino-Soviet dispute must be regarded as an extremely courageous action which speaks eloquently of the desire of the Vietnamese Communist leaders to pursue a course of their own making and in accordance with the national interests of the Vietnamese people to maintain friendly relations with all countries.

The zigzags in Vietnamese policy towards the Sino-Soviet dispute in which they at one time seemed to favour China and at another time the Soviet Union, never irrevocably committing themselves to one side, have to be interpreted in the light of this overriding desire to retain freedom of action. Honey writes: "North Vietnam could afford no such indulgence (of siding with either Soviet Union or China) because she badly needed all the economic assistance she could obtain from every quarter. To antagonise any communist country would be tantamount to inviting that country to cease supplying and... Consequently, Ho Chi Minh found himself in mid-1961 more heavily committed than ever before to his policy of re-

maintaining on good terms with all Communist countries, of avoiding any participation in the Sino-Soviet dispute and of using any means at his disposal to bring this dangerous conflict to an end".

**Ho Chi Minh's Role**

The Sino-Soviet rivalry in Vietnam and the latter's response to the chal-

lenges of the two giants throw interesting light on the various tactics employed by the contestants in pressing their, peculiar carrot and stick policies. Displeasure or pleasure would be shown by taking hold of the most flimsy of pretexts. For example, When in 1963 the Soviet Union was favourably disposed towards Vietnam it devoted "many times more publicity

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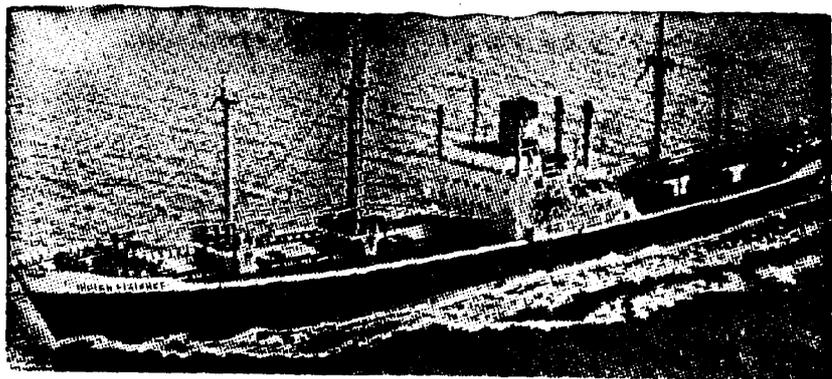
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than in the previous year to the thirteenth anniversary of the establishment of North Vietnamese-Soviet relations on 30 January and eulogising the Lao Dons Party on the occasion of the thirty-third anniversary on 3rd February." while China, vexed at the effusion of Vietnamese-Soviet cordiality, ignored the occasion completely, although it had devoted much time and space to the thirty-second anniversary a year earlier. The Vietnamese likewise resorted to publication and suppression of events and actions of China and the Soviet Union to show approval and disapproval.

Vietnam is contiguous to China and has in recent years received considerable help from China. The Vietnamese Communists in particular owe over a good deal to the Chinese communists for their victory over France and for their success in economic reconstruction in Vietnam. It is not surprising therefore if a section of the Vietnamese communists should see in greater Vietnam-China co-operation a belter future for Vietnam; the history of resistance to China again ensures that this pro-China tendency will be contested by others. Honey believes that an eruption of the fighting between these two diverging elements within the Vietnamese communist party has been put off only by the presence, of Ho Chi Minh, who, at 77, enjoys undisputed supremacy over the party and the people in Vietnam. His pursuit of a Vietnamese policy independent of China is firmly supported by the confirmed anti-Chinese Vietnamese Minister of Defence, General Vo Nguyen Giap. Apparently in late 1957 the pro-Chinese elements sought to capture power but had to yield to Ho Chi Minh eventually. What course the future will disclose will depend considerably on the outcome of the struggle of the South Vietnamese people, who have so far found only China to be genuinely concerned at their suffering and, unless there is a change in the attitude of other Asian Governments to the war in Vietnam, may in the event of their victory over the Americans (which cannot be very far off) find themselves obliged to turn to China for support and sustenance. The communist leaders in North Vietnam would not, in that case, be able to withstand the two-pronged pressure of the Chinese from the north and the south Vietnamese from the South and would be pushed to a closer identification with China (irrespective of the consequences of such an identification).

## Case-Pleading History

Ashok V Desai

**A Basic History of Germany** by Hubertus Prince zu Loewenstein; Inter Nationes, Bonn, 1963; price not stated.

THE purpose of this book is "to acquaint other nations with the basic facts of German history as a part of occidental mankind, and to demonstrate that in our modern world freedom is supranational and indivisible". Thus, it is meant to be a case-pleading type of history. The ease to be pleaded is that the idea of freedom and democracy are immanent in the entire German history.

Actually, the thread is quite lost in this book; it compares not so much with *grand ligne* historical treatises as with a common school text. It is a string of dates, names and moves; one looks in vain for the accidental mankind in it.

If the book has a point of view, it is strictly nationalistic; since one hears two voices from Germany nowadays, those of the Federal Republic and of the Democratic Republic, one had better call it federal-nationalistic. There are memorable quotations which presumably warm German hearts: Frederick the Great saying, "Every thing is lost. I shall not survive the downfall of my country"; von Stein saying, "My God, here I lie prostrate while they are lighting in Poland!"; Frederick William proclaiming, "I have placed myself and my people under the honoured banner of the German Reich". Bismarck prorogued the Prussian Parliament in 1863 to avoid having to get its approval for the budget, he thereby saved the state from disintegration. When the French and Belgians occupied the Ruhr in 1923, the Germans replied with passive resistance. But passive resistance also had to be broken off "if Germany as a nation and as a free republic was to be saved".

This line of argument is unlikely to influence the unconvinced. While it is no (rime to be a nationalist, in is a sign of incompetence if a historian with a case fails to convey it.

The idea of this book — to inform foreigners about Germany and to make propaganda at the same time is misconceived. There is much in German history that can interest an

ignorant foreigner. It has such a fairy tale quality. Take King Otto III, born in 980 and in his grave at twenty-two. Apparently, he became king at the age of three, defeated the Danish-Norwegian fleet at the age of fourteen and thereby established dominion over Germany, Italy and Burgundy; appointed his aunt Matilda as Governess of Germany and relired to salubrious Italy at the age of fifteen. There he helped his cousin, Bruno of Carinthia, to become Pope, and then had this twenty-four year-old Pope, Gregory V, put Charlemagne's imperial crown on his head. About this exchange of honours, Loewenstein says, "It 'rust have been one of the great dramatic moments of history. A chiliastic fever of hope, fear and exaltation swept across the occidental world at the end of the first Christian millenium. Christ's second coming was by many hold to be imminent. During this period, when people in all countries prepared themselves for the Awful Judgment, the reins of the world's government were held by two glowing youths, both tilled with highest ideals and conscious of the exalted position of their respective offices. The complete harmony between the spiritual and the temporal orders must have appeared as a hire-shadowing of the coming of the Kingdom." Truth here is more entertaining than fiction if properly told.

If, however, propaganda must be made, modern Germany is a much better advertisement of itself than Germany at any other lime in its history. West Germany is prosperous, powerful, democratic and 'also quite generous in its own penny-wise way. Some material help together with some modest self-advertisement can win it many friends. The insistence, on the other hand, that Germany's friends should share its enemies, that they must be its comrades in ideology, is the worst propaganda it could make for itself. There is something pathological about: the way West Germany counts petty diplomatic victories and hectors its friends: as in our own case, this is the mark of a nation that seeks verbal consolation in its impotence against international problems.