

Looking Back, He Wasn't So Bad

The Last of the Mandarins: Diem of Vietnam, by Anthony Trawick Bouscaren (Duchesne University Press. 174 pp. \$3.95), castigates as politically naïve correspondents of the American press who were influential in the removal of the late Vietnamese president. John M. Allison has been Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs and American Ambassador to Japan, Indonesia, and Czechoslovakia.

By JOHN M. ALLISON

MORRIS WEST's novel *The Ambassador* left one with a sneaking feeling that Diem, or Cong, as West called him, was really not such a bad man and that perhaps the Americans had been somewhat hasty in getting rid of him. Now comes Anthony Bouscaren's short biography of Diem, which is dedicated to proving this thesis up to the hilt. Not that Professor Bouscaren says in so many words that it was the Americans who got rid of Diem but he makes it clear that the generals would never have acted without at least tacit American approval.

Unfortunately for his thesis, the Professor oversimplifies his story and ignores important factors such as the strength of regionalism and the desire of the influential and largely non-Communist groups of Buddhists, students, and younger military officers "to find and assert a Vietnamese identity," as George Carver points out in the April issue of *Foreign Affairs*. Carver makes a good case for the claim that the groups just mentioned were against Diem, as much, if not more, because to them he represented a foreign system and a foreign religion as because of his alleged repressions and police-state methods. Diem and his essentially foreign-style government would have had to go eventually, implies Carver; the generals, with alleged American backing, merely hastened the day.

In spite of its deficiencies, however, Professor Bouscaren's book serves a useful purpose and reminds us of factors we often forget in thinking about foreign affairs and particularly the tangled situation in Southeast Asia.

We see again the tragic stubbornness and short-sightedness of the colonial powers in dealing with their subject

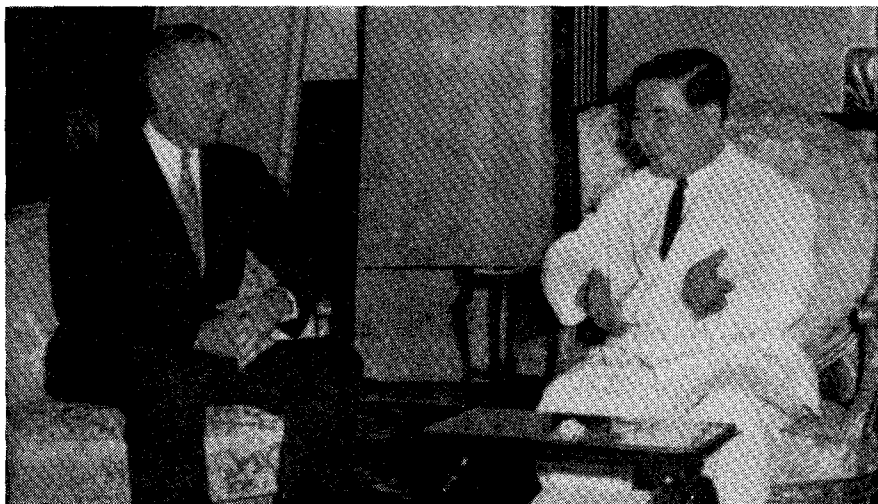
peoples. Diem consistently refused to cooperate with the French while they insisted on maintaining tight control, but this book makes clear that he would have cooperated with the French had they been willing to give the Indo-Chinese states Dominion status similar to that which the British had given to India and Pakistan. While this would eventually have probably led to complete independence outside the French Union, there might well, it seems to me, have been sufficient time to build up a strong, stable Vietnamese régime which could have had a good chance to resist the Communist subversion of today. But no, the French insisted on keeping all, and, as did the Dutch in Indonesia, ended by losing everything. A strong case can be made for the assertion that the French and the Dutch have done more to advance the cause of Communism in Southeast Asia than either Moscow or Peking.

PROFESSOR Bouscaren's chief villain is the American press or, rather, that part of it represented by young, idealistic, and politically naïve correspondents such as David Halberstam of the *New York Times*. The anti-Diem campaign indulged in by these young men is credited by the author with giving strength to a State Department group who were influential in getting policies adopted which resulted in getting rid of Diem. The young correspondents did not understand the difficulty, if not the impossibility, of setting up a modern, American-style democratic government among the illiterate peasants and the

authoritarian-minded élite, to whom the French had given no experience of representative government.

The exaggerations of the press, which appeared to give substance to the charge that Diem's Buddhist opponents were waging a religious rather than a political war, are detailed and castigated. Bouscaren claims that all the agitation about the closing of the Buddhist pagodas was the result of the closing "of about a dozen" out of some 4,000. The Buddhists have been infiltrated by the Communists, according to the author. Professor Bouscaren also implies that Thich Tri Quang, who has been one of their chief leaders, is, if not a card-carrying Communist, at least a strong sympathizer. His brother is said by the French to be working in Ho Chi Minh's headquarters in Communist Vietnam where his duties are the direction of subversion in South Vietnam. And much stress is laid upon the fact that after the anti-Diem coup, the war in South Vietnam took a decided turn for the worse.

Whatever the truth may be regarding such matters, the author does succeed in persuading the reader that Diem was a personally honest, intelligent, and dedicated Vietnamese patriot who had the long-term interests of his people at heart. It is not claimed that he was a true democrat but instead that he knew enough about his country and people to realize that what the author calls "the little-comprehended idea of democracy" was too weak a weapon with which to beat Communism. For Diem, the defeat of Communism came first; democracy could come later. Only history will tell whether he was right, although Professor Bouscaren's book attempts to give the answer now. He is not completely convincing but his book is worth reading for what it tells about the dangers of letting emotion and prejudices take the place of understanding, sympathy, and firmness in dealing with peoples of Southeast Asia.



—U.P.I.

President Diem talks to General Taylor—"democracy could come later."

Romantic Visions of Destruction

The Track of the Wolf: Essays on National Socialism and Its Leader, Adolf Hitler, by James H. McRandle (Northwestern University Press. 261 pp. \$4.95), seeks to answer some of the questions about the Fuehrer that have defied more than thirty years of analysis. Henry C. Wolfe's books include "The German Octopus."

By HENRY C. WOLFE

DESPITE all that has been written about Adolf Hitler, from his unpromising youth in Austria to his melodramatic end in the *Führerbunker* in flaming Berlin, we know comparatively little about his psychological motivations and the inner influences that led to some of his often inexplicable actions.

In *The Track of the Wolf* Dr. James H. McRandle, former Fulbright scholar in Germany and now assistant professor of history at Purdue University, sets out to answer some of the questions about Hitler that have defied and frustrated more than three decades of probing analysis. The resultant study combines a psychograph of the Fuehrer and an examination of the philosophical background of the Germany that he inherited and revolutionized.

The title of the book has its origin in Hitler's addiction to a symbolism based on astrology and Germanic myth and folklore. "Wolf" was "Hitler's party nickname in the early days and later recurred in the code names of several of his headquarters: *Wolfschanze*, *Wolfschlucht*, and *Werewolf* for example." His first name, Adolf, is "derived from the Teutonic word meaning 'fortunate wolf.'"

The paradoxical Fuehrer, at once creative and destructive, tried to build an image of himself as a "world-historical personality," and, toward the end, "could even toy with the notion that he was the reincarnation of Frederick the Great." In creating the system that was, in effect, an extension of his psyche, he demonstrated "truly monstrous capacities for destruction."

Of the five essays that compose this book perhaps the most illuminating is "Warrior and Worker," with its World War I setting. Those of us who served on the Western front and later saw Germany in the early postwar years can appreciate the emphasis the author

places on the influence exerted by the *Frontkämpfer* (front-line fighter). He had marched off to war a romantic, "decked with flowers"; but as he settled down to the endless dehumanized existence of the trenches he became a "barbarian with a complete command of modern technology." He gradually acquired the point of view that "war is not the end, rather it is the jump-off point of violence." Hitler was proud to have served as a *Frontkämpfer*.

As these veterans returned to the chaos of postwar Germany, it was difficult for "many of them to grow out of the mood of 1918." Indeed, the *Frontkämpfer* "had found a moral equivalent of peace." Some German writers strove to put together a synthesis of the *Frontkämpfer* and the worker. One even wrote of the *Frontkämpfer* as the "wage earner of the battlefield."

As the National Socialist movement picked up momentum during the Wei-

mar Republic, the Nazis sought to forge a bond between the warrior and the worker. Along with inflation, unemployment, and bitterness about the peace treaties, this warrior-worker propaganda helped foster in Germany the climate of desperation and hope that enabled the Nazis to come to power. Once in control of the government, they could claim that "they had created a society of workers."

The Nazis knew what they were doing; their opponents were divided and groping. "Hitler's talk of a true people's community, his romantic visions of renewed ties with the soil, and his promise to restore national vigor all held their attraction for the German of that day." The author does a good job of integrating the forces, physical, political, and psychological, that made possible Hitler's triumph.

Dr. McRandle's provocative essay on Hitler's end is somewhat less convincing. Like the rest of the book, it is impressively documented and lucidly presented; but in this reviewer's judgment the author goes to undue lengths to explain Hitler's suicide. Has he not overlooked the simple fact that the macabre scene in the bowels of doomed Berlin was of a piece with the whole bloody history of Nazism?

Toward a United Africa

From French West Africa to the Mali Federation, by William J. Foltz (Yale University Press. 235 pp. \$6.50), and ***South Africa: A Study in Conflict***, by Pierre L. van den Berghe (Wesleyan University Press. 371 pp. \$8.95), provide enlightenment on a turbulent group of nations that share the same continent. Charles Miller frequently assesses African studies.

By CHARLES MILLER

PAN-AFRICAN union and South Africa's racial conflict have yet to remove Vietnam from the front pages, but both are certain in time to wield incalculable influence, for good or evil, on the course of world affairs. Two new books furnish useful guidelines to better understanding of these subjects and their significance for the future.

While few friends of African progress dispute the desirability of a continent-embracing United States of Africa (or at least tropical Africa), not all see the goal as attainable. Even among those who regard pan-African unity as more than an exercise in wishful thinking,

there is considerable difference over the means of hastening the process of amalgamation. This writer happens to belong to that school which holds that federations or similar linkage systems among groupings of African countries with common ethnic, cultural, or economic bonds can do much to set down a firm foundation for the ultimate edifice. Among the many who think otherwise is William J. Foltz, associate professor of political science at Yale and author of *From French West Africa to the Mali Federation*, an engrossing study of a federal fiasco.

The Mali Federation, composed of the former French colonies of Senegal and Sudan, officially came into being in January 1959. Twenty months later—as leaders of the two states denounced, deposed, or arrested one another while military commanders jockeyed for control of the army and gendarmerie without being entirely sure of who was on whose side—the experiment in unity passed into history. (Only the name remained, when Sudan's leaders decided to call their country Mali to associate the national image with the great West African empire of the Middle Ages.

Initially, the two nations were drawn