

his evaluation of Ike. He had his limitations, especially in the realm of domestic affairs where perhaps he felt uneasy because of his lack of training.

Parmet's study is certainly revisionist in its appraisal of the Eisenhower years. And in its revisionism probably the most important point that is made is that this much maligned President gave most of the American people precisely what they wanted. He perpetuated tranquility by keeping a low profile and, most notably, by keeping the United States from engaging in any wars during the decade. He exuded a warmth that Americans of both major political parties responded to and this very much aided him in his two great electoral victories. And while he did not particularly like ordinary partisan politics, he was the very real head of the GOP.

Praise of this volume, however, must be tempered with criticism and a question. First, the writing style is uninspired, to say the least. A book such as this should be read by people outside of academia but few will have the patience to plod through the unexciting and often dull prose. The question has to do with Parmet's interpretation. While he did utilize the best available sources for his study, one cannot help wondering whether his interpretation is a reaction to the cataclysmic events of the 1960s. That historians, among others, have been overreacting to the upheavals of the past decade and thus upgrading Eisenhower as a President is the tenor of much of the criticism of the new Ike image. However, in this reviewer's opinion, Parmet has not overreacted in forming his judgments. As he has explained, "The more one probes, the more complex the questions; the closer one looks at the General who occupied the White House during those years, the less possible to be glib about an 'Eisenhower doll'" (p. x).

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Fire in the Lake: The Vietnamese and the Americans in Vietnam. By FRANCES FITZGERALD. (Boston, Little, Brown and Company, 1972. xiv + 491 pp. \$12.50)

Fire in the Lake is a sweeping and passionate interpretation of the modern and contemporary history of South Vietnam. The focus is the part played by the United States government since 1954. The theme is that everything undertaken by the United States was wrong in principal and practice and the result of all such undertakings has been dust and ashes—both literally and figuratively. The method is social psychological and anthropological in a rather romantic style. The technique is journalism at its best. The result is a book of brilliance and passion that no person, scholar or not, with a serious interest in the subject may avoid.

The book is divided into two parts of about 200 pages each, plus a conclusion of 40 pages. Part I is an interpretation of the political history of Vietnam based on such social psychological sets as attachment to the home place, susceptibility to the influence of concrete moral symbolism, and the relativism of duty and obligation. This sort of interpretation is applied to the effects of French colonialism, the regime of Ngo dinh Diem, and the methods of the National Liberation Front.

Part II is concerned with the U.S. effort to control events in South Vietnam after the overthrow of Ngo dinh Diem and the collapse of his house of cards. The story of the intervention is presented as an ironic tragedy of a political Prospero. In the events, the tremendous power of the United States, moved by naive goodwill but blinded by psychological colonialism and racism, corrupted and brutalized those among the Vietnamese that it would help and destroyed the physical, social, and moral basis necessary to the objective ostensibly sought.

Frances Fitzgerald has used her sources honestly, although she has, without regret, subordinated them to her interpretation. This interpretation, while plausible, is too strong to be entirely reasonable. Since the author predicts that the corrupted people of South Vietnam will at some time shift dramatically from "individualism" to revolutionary discipline the future will have to tell us how right she is.

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