

die, obwohl sie zu den Fundamentalisten zählen, tatsächlich die Stellung der beiden obersten Kasten der Kshatriyas und Brahmanen in Frage stellen. Dieses Paradox läßt sich nur dann fassen, so argumentierte er, wenn man die gegensätzlichen Ideologien eingebettet in die gesellschaftlichen Strukturen in dieser Region untersucht. Weitere Beiträge beschäftigten sich mit dem Fall Rushdie, dem Angriff Ramaswamis auf das Ramayana, dem Einfluß der Briten auf die religiösen Gemeinschaften in einigen Teilen Indiens, der Rolle der Kasten, Klassen und Religionen usw..

Zum Abschluß der Konferenz wurde vorgeschlagen, die nächste Konferenz in Berlin zu veranstalten. Zwei Berliner Wissenschaftler, D. Reetz und J. Oesterheld, kündigten an, diesen Vorschlag in ihrem akademischen Kreis in Ost-Berlin zu erörtern.

Khushi M. Khan

### "Ho Chi Minh and the Development of Communism in Vietnam" Vietnam-Colloquium at the University of Passau, 21-23 June, 1990

From June 21-23, 1990, the department of Southeast Asia Studies at Passau-University held its Fifth International Colloquium on Southeast Asia. After earlier conferences on ASEAN, Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines, this year's focus was on Vietnam. The hundredth birthday of Ho Chi Minh provided the occasion for a new assessment of his role in the Vietnamese struggle for independence and his contribution to the development of Communism in Vietnam.

Thanks to generous support from the Volkswagen-Stiftung renowned Vietnam-experts and well-known Ho Chi Minh specialists from all over the world could be invited. Although there were some last-minute cancellations, in particular from French colleagues, the conference-program shows nevertheless an impressive list of subjects that could be discussed in the three day colloquium. The final arrangement of panels and papers was as follows:

Thursday, June 21

Opening Session: The Formative Years (1890-1925)

Christiane Pasquel-  
Rageau:

(Paris)

Chung Le-Mong:

(Passau)

Enrica Collotti Pischel:

(Milano)

Les problèmes documentaires posés par  
les recherches sur la biographie et la  
personnalité de Ho Chi Minh

Ho Chi Minh in France (1917-1923)

Nguyen Ai Quoc's Anticolonialism and the  
early Comintern

Second Session: Developments 1926-1945

Bernhard Dahm/  
Nguyen Tien Hu:

(Passau)

Cultural Factors and the Soviets  
of Nghe Tinh

Stein Tønnesson: (Oslo)	Ho Chi Minh and 'Viet Nam Doc Lap', 1941-1942
Pham Xuan Xanh: (Hanoi)	Les rencontres historiques entre Ho Chi Minh et l'époque
Dinh Xuan Lam: (Hanoi)	Ho Chi Minh et le grand tournant historique de la révolution vietnamienne

Friday, June 22

Third Session: The First Indochina War

William J. Duiker: (Penn. State Univ.)	Ho Chi Minh and the Formation of the Vietminh Front 1939-1945
David Marr: (Canberra)	Ho Chi Minh as Head of State, 1945-1946
Philippe Devillers: (Paris)	Ho Chi Minh face à l'imminence de la guerre avec la France
Dang Xuan Ky: (Hanoi)	Ho Chi Minh, le combattant lutté fermement pour l'indépendance, la liberté, la paix et l'amitié

Fourth Session: President of the DRV (1954-1969)

Wilfried Lulei: (Berlin)	Ho Chi Minh and the Question of National Unity
Irene Noerlund: (Copenhagen)	Ho Chi Minh and Agrarian Policy
Phung Huu Phu: (Hanoi)	La pensée du Président. Ho Chi Minh sur le chemin d'émancipation de la paysannerie vietnamienne
Nguyen Duy Quy: (Hanoi)	Ho Chi Minh et la Jeunesse Vietnamienne

Saturday, June 23

Fifth and Final Session: Ho Chi Minh: Man and Myth

Phan Huy Lê: (Hanoi)	Ho Chi Minh et les traditions nationales
Le Thanh Khoi: (Paris)	Ho Chi Minh - East and West
Knut Heidel: (Berlin)	Ho Chi Minh between Modernity and Tradition
Ursula Lies: (Berlin)	Ho Chi Minh and Literature
Günter Giesenfeld: (Marburg)	"Ho Ho Ho Chi Minh" - The Symbolic Value of a Historical Figure

A particular asset of the conference was the participation of no less than six professors (not party-officials) from Hanoi University, also facilitated by the Volkswagen Stiftung. Most of them had never attended a scientific conference

outside the socialist world before. Their presence in Passau indicated the growing interest of Vietnamese scholars to discuss scientific or academic matters also with their colleagues from the West. Passau provided a convenient forum for this, since good contacts have been established during the last few years between members and students of the Departments of Southeast Asia Studies at Passau University and the History Department of the University of Hanoi, which will lead, at the end of October still in this year, to a treaty of cooperation between the two universities.

Also the topic of the conference was well-suited for an exchange. The facts of Ho Chi Minh's career and his essential writings were well-known to most participants of the colloquium (among whom there were also representatives from the Vietnamese Embassy in Bonn, from the Auswärtiges Amt, from various German universities and other organizations interested in Vietnam and a great number of students). But the interpretations of the facts differ. The guests from Vietnam could see that the "Western" scientific method was not the search for a convenient dogmatic "truth", or for an ideologically acceptable consensus. Scientific exchange meant, instead, the search for alternative interpretations, exploration of the space beyond the dogmas, putting holy "truths" in question, even if they concerned the merits of a hero like Ho Chi Minh.

The beginning of the dialog with the Vietnamese scholars was tough, some were obviously having reservations to even seriously consider the findings of Western scholarship on Vietnamese developments. This was not only due to language problems, there were excellent interpreters at the conference. The major reason was rather (and this was admitted also by Vietnam-specialists of the Humboldt-University in East Berlin, whose participation was another asset of the colloquium) the difficulty to depart from the long established scientific ways of a closed ideological system, to consider new ideas, to try new research methods and to follow principles, which, so far, have been accused to serve the interest of the class enemy rather than the search for truth.

In providing a platform to scholars of different scientific traditions the colloquium thus was more than just a debate about the achievements of Ho Chi Minh. Even if some arguments could not be accepted outright, they might stimulate further discussion. In general, however, there was little disagreement. In the new assessment of the merits of Ho Chi Minh it was repeatedly emphasized that they have to be seen in the quality of his leadership, in his ability to mobilize and organize the people, in his well-timed pragmatic efforts to achieve Vietnamese independence and in his concern for the Vietnamese people rather than in his theoretical contributions to the international Communist movement. The latter are mostly forgotten, but as a national leader, Ho Chi Minh, even twenty years after his death, is still deeply revered by most of his people. This was also my impression when visiting Hanoi earlier this year.

There is as yet no arrangement to have the papers of the colloquium published. In case of special interest copies of individual papers can be ordered at Southeast Asia Studies, Innstraße 53, 8390 Passau.