

Commentary

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Forum: 'Big Lie' lives in Vietnam

Communist Vietnam's "President" Nguyen Minh Triet's viscid propaganda op-ed piece, "Vietnam and America common interests and values" (The Washington Times, Page A-17, June 25) showed a lack of creativity: It is almost word-for-word his full-page ad on Page A-19 of the June 21 edition of The Washington Post, "A Letter from President Nguyen Minh Triet of Vietnam."

Thomas Jefferson would roll over in his grave knowing Ho Chi Minh used his immortal words from the Declaration of Independence of the United States — "All men are created equal; they are endowed by their creator with certain inalienable Rights; among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness" — as the opening for the Vietnamese communist's Declaration of Independence. This is the same Vietnamese communist regime responsible for the murder of more than 1 million Vietnamese.

Although Jefferson's immortal words may be in Vietnam's Declaration of Independence, there they are but hollow words. Vietnam tolerates no challenges to its communist one-party rule. Extrajudicial killings continue, and in a recent spate of repression, "the worst in 20 years," the regime locked up and sent to prison more than 20 religious freedom, democracy and human-rights activists, while tightening its grip on the media and enforcing strict Internet restrictions.

Religious leaders and followers across the spectrum, Buddhists, Christians and believers of other faiths are continually harassed and arrested. More than 350 Christian Montagnard political prisoners remain incarcerated.

To Jefferson, being a president meant becoming so through free and fair elections by the populace, not by appointment as one by the Communist Party comprised of only 4 percent of Vietnam's population as Mr. Triet was. One U.S. congressman said, "Since Triet was not elected in a free election, he shouldn't be called president. ... Rather he is more comparable to a godfather ... of a repressive and deadly regime."

In his article, Mr. Triet wrote, "Bilateral ties are built on the two countries' common interests and concerns: commerce, culture, science and technology, education, regional peace and stability, the fight against terrorism." However, the Vietnamese communist regime's terrorism against its own people is not in the United States' "common interests," and it has done little to stop the trafficking in women and children for prostitution.

At their White House meeting on June 22, President Bush told Mr. Triet, "In order for relations to grow deeper, it's important for our friends to have a strong commitment to human rights and freedom and democracy." Mr. Triet rebuked Mr. Bush afterward in an AP interview saying his country does not need to improve its human-rights record. "It's not a question of improving or not. ... Vietnam has its own legal framework, and those who violate the law will be handled." Mr. Triet's so-called lawbreakers include, but are not limited to, religious leaders and adherents of all faiths, human rights and democracy advocates, labor lawyers, and ethnic minorities.

Rather than to Jeffersonian principles, Mr. Triet adheres to Joseph Goebbels' "Big Lie" postulate — people will believe a big lie sooner than a little one; and if you repeat it often enough people will sooner or later believe it.

The Vietnamese regime's creator was not God as Jefferson wrote, but Ho Chi Minh. Far from being Jeffersonian, Mr. Triet and his repressive band do not practice what they preach in their Declaration of Independence.

Rather than "all men are created equal, Triet's regime is closer to George Orwell's satirical allegories of communism in "Animal Farm" where some are more equal than others.

MIKE BENGE

An advocate for human rights and religious freedom in South East Asi