

The Post has printed another "vicious fabrication" in T. D. Allman's allegation that the U. S. deliberately followed a "refugee strategy" in Vietnam. At a time when you're calling for an end to mutual recriminations, why revive this old canard that U. S. policy "always has rested on the deliberate production of refugees"?

The massive refugee flow was a tragic but unplanned consequence of the way the war was fought—on both sides. True, our firepower created refugees but were the Tet offensive, the 1972 Easter offensive, and the present cataclysm (long after all U. S. troops had left) the product of U. S. strategy? And the fact that almost all refugees fled to the government side has long frustrated those who would have us believe that only U.S. shoring up of our puppet governments was what frustrated popular preference for the other side.

Allman's citations of USAID, General Westmoreland, and myself are grossly misleading. Of course, we sought to attrit the VC population base; control and support of the people is what the war was all about. But the way we sought to do it was by bringing security and economic revival to the countryside, not by forcing the farmers into the cities. Forced draft urbanization was never part of our policy, regardless of what Professor Huntington wrote (and as I told him at the time). In fact, once the tide turned our way in 1969-71 after Hanoi's Tet offensive was crushed, refugees began returning to the countryside.

The Pentagon Papers contain every secret policy directive issued from Washington from 1950 through 1968. Find me a single one that called for "depopulating the countryside." We made many mistakes in Vietnam, but this was not one of them.

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How can a reader commend you for publishing such a needed, thoughtful, and balanced editorial as yours on "The Evacuation of Vietnam" on April 11, when next to it you place such a blatantly Hanoi-biased bit of propaganda as the article by T. D. Allman on "The Refugee Strategy"? Since my name was mentioned in the latter, which I look upon as a piece of shoddy, yellow journalism not worthy of your pages, I feel that I must respond to it since you saw fit to display it prominently.

The Allman piece is so filled with artful "disinformation" that I will limit myself only to the part in it referring to myself and the implications he draws from this. I trust that other Americans will respond to his calumny about them.

Allman credits me with stampeding a million Vietnamese to flee from North to South Vietnam 20 years ago. Perhaps I should feel flattered that anyone should believe that I have such persuasive powers. Instead, I am angry at his implied belittling of the intelli-



gence and strong character of the Vietnamese people. There were far deeper, more profound reasons for the flight of these huge masses of the Vietnamese people 20 years ago than a few words that any foreigner among them could say. The same holds true for the great exodus from Vietnamese homes we are seeing today.

The Vietnamese have deep roots in their homes. Anyone who has lived among them cannot help but be struck by the closeness with which they hold their ancestors. Any uprooting from their ancestral homes is a climactic experience, a separation from a most meaningful and cherished part of their lives. Only great fear, terror about harm to a family can cause a Vietnamese family to move away from what is so dear to it. Today, as they did 20 years ago, the Vietnamese refugees are not fleeing from possible bombing by Americans. There were no American bombers then. There are none today. These Vietnamese are fleeing from Communist rule. This rule is an experience that the Vietnamese have seen at first hand. After 30 years of war, they are deaf to propaganda from any side. They judge only from what they have seen for themselves. And they're running away from the Communists, not towards them.

Admittedly, the leaders in Hanoi must feel a great loss of face that their behavior towards the Vietnamese people has caused so many to flee from them when given the chance. I can understand why they have lackeys provide alibis for them in the Western press. The great flight today, as 20 years ago, is taking place in front of the whole world, not behind the bamboo curtain of their authoritarian rule where what is seen and heard is under their control.

In the face of military victories, to-

day's reaction of the Vietnamese people must be an excruciating humiliation to those who claim to lead the people. The recoiling reaction of the masses of Vietnamese people underscores the falseness of the self-appointed position of the Politburo in Hanoi and the leadership of the Lao Dong Party as spokesmen for the people. Self-appointed? The Vietnamese people have had little or no say in picking such spokesmen in the controlled and rigged elections of North Vietnam. Nor can the Vietnamese people believe that this Communist leadership stands for any values recognized as being Vietnamese. A foreign ideology and organization of society are being forced upon them by a determined group of "true believers". Or does Mr. Allman, or anyone else, actually think that Marx and Lenin, with their ideas and systems of control, are Vietnamese in origin?

The Vietnamese might appear to be hapless in the face of the overwhelming tragedy overtaking them, but they are not stupid. They might well turn upon Americans for deserting them in the agony of their desperate hour of need. Yet, this cannot be translated as meaning that they welcome Communist rule, as Mr. Allman implies. It astounds me that he tried to sell so shoddy an argument to Americans. After all, most of us are the descendants ourselves of refugees and slaves. We know how great is the longing for individual liberty among those who don't have it.

Give us honest information as we try to determine what best to do at this moment of history. We are close to our 200th anniversary as a nation. Help us be true to the principles towards which we have striven.

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