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Concerning Carlyle Thayer's below the belt strike in commenting on Mr. Ton That Thien's writings (*Ho Chi Minh and the Comintern*, and *The Foreign Politics of the Communist Party of Vietnam*) in Internet of December 16, 1992.

It is surprising how low academics can fall today! Instead of pointing out factual inaccuracies or inconsistencies in Ton That Thien's writings, as any self-respecting scholar would do if he disagrees with the author's writings, Thayer tries to prevent other people from reading Mr. Ton That Thien's writings by invoking arguments which no self-respecting academic would invoke: the high price of the book, (are not all books expensive today?) or the difficulty of getting them (the monograph *Ho Chi Minh and the Comintern* can be got from Information and Resource Center, 6, Nassim Road, Singapore 1025, and the book *The Foreign Politics of the Communist Party of Vietnam* from Taylor and Francis/ Crane Russak, in London, New York, Philadelphia, Washington – a big publishing house and not some small firm located in some back street --!)

Like all good communists and fellow travelers, Thayer wants to impose a monopoly of information and views, and seeks to prevent people from getting information and reading views which contradict the communist line. Is not Thayer aware that History (always with a capital H in communist thought) has pronounced its verdict on "socialism" by thunderously sending Socialist Russia and the other European socialist states to the dustbin of history, and others, "Socialist" Vietnam among them, will inevitably join them there?

Thayer is entitled to dispute Ton That Thien's views, but he should use academic criteria to tell readers where Ton That Thien has erred in his writings, instead of simply smearing him by calling him a propagandist. Is he, Thayer, not also a propagandist? All those who write are *ipso facto* propagandists, and there is nothing objectionable about it in a democratic society. On the contrary. And if Thayer can fail Ton That Thien for a Ph.D. Ton That Thien can also do the same to him, for Ton That Thien has been educated at the best Western academic establishments (he is a graduate from the London School of Economics and a Ph.D. from the Graduate Institute of International Studies, Geneva, and this latter institute does not grant Ph.Ds. to anyone who can just wield a pen!).

And if there are people like Thayer who try to belittle Ton That Thien's writings, there are others, and quite respectable scholars from respected Western academic establishments, who do not share Thayer's views. Take, for example, Professor Ralph Smith, from the London School of Oriental Studies, London. He has this to say about Ton That Thien's book *The Foreign Politics of the Communist Party*.

"Ton That Thien is concerned... above all with the relationship of the Vietnamese Communist Party (and its antecedents) to the international Marxist-Leninist movement and with its role as a "vanguard" promoting revolution in Southeast Asia. Ho Chi Minh is a pivotal figure in this analysis, and much of the book is devoted to his activities before and during the August Revolution of 1945. Indeed, the most interesting and successful chapters are those which examine Ho's strategy during the years 1944-46 in dealing simultaneously

with the Americans, the French and the Chinese Nationalists which contributed to the subsequent American faith in his “nationalist” credentials. Professor Thien was able to show that, in reality, Ho’s tactical agility and capacity for multiple deception were responsible for that impression, but that his true political motives and affiliation were rooted in the history of the Comintern. In an opening chapter, the book traces Ho’s career still further back still, to show his early acceptance of the basic principles of the Comintern as defined by Lenin in the early 1920s.”

(Oxford University Press, 1992, *The Pacific Review*, Vol.5, No.1, Book Review)

Obviously, this is what Thayer does not want people to read because it contradicts what he has been peddling in his own writings!!! But this is a compelling reason for all those interested in Vietnam to seek out Ton That Thien’s writing and compare them with Thayer’s writings, and judge for themselves who is right and who is wrong, and which of the two is a real scholar, especially in the light of what has happened in the world in recent years.