

16 Mar 73

Courts-Martial Possible

MAR 16 1973

War Critics Coming Home

By Seymour M. Hersh
N.Y. Times Service

Washington

At least eight of the enlisted men scheduled to return from Hanoi today are known to be bitter critics of the Vietnam war. Their refusal to participate in camp life in North Vietnam provoked deep hostility among their fellow prisoners, according to military sources.

The eight formed what a top-ranking officer described as "the peace committee" in North Vietnam and refused all orders given by senior officers of the highly organized prison camps.

Military sources said that they expect court-martial charges to be filed by some returning officers against the men as soon as the remaining prisoners are freed from Hanoi.

SOURCES

The eight enlisted men, the military sources said, were captured in South Vietnam, but then were marched north to a separate camp near Hanoi, some time in 1970. All of the 27 military men scheduled to be returned from Hanoi today had been captured in the south.

At various times, as many as 15 enlisted men and officers captured in the south have signed the same anti-war statement. The most notable was a message to Congress in June, 1972, urging the legislators to "exercise your constitutional power to force the administration to return to Paris to negotiate" an end to the war.

Tito Is Up for the Nobel Peace Prize

Oslo

The Norwegian Nobel Institute here confirmed yesterday that Yugoslavian President Tito has been nominated by a Soviet body for this year's Nobel Peace Prize — an award for which President Nixon is also a contender.

Institute Director August Schou confirmed a report in the Soviet Communist newspaper Pravda that Tito had been nominated by the Soviet Peace Committee for his fight against fascism and his ever-ready readiness to promote peace and cooperation be-

tween nations.

Pravda said Soviet backing for Tito followed support for his candidacy "by numerous political figures and men of letters in various countries."

The prize-winner is picked by a select group of representatives from the Norwegian Parliament known as the Nobel Committee.

The Peace Prize was last awarded in 1971 to West German Chancellor Willy Brandt. There was no award last year.

Agence France-Presse

Many of the returning pilots, however, are known to be especially furious at the eight members of the "peace committee," whose anti-war messages have been harsh in tone.

In July, 1971, for example, according to a broadcast on the Hanoi radio, Army Specialist 4 Michael P. Branch, who is scheduled to be returned today, described himself as a deserter and said:

"I have disassociated myself from the military. I have taken it upon myself to desert and cross over to the side of the South Vietnamese people on May 4, 1968." Army officials said that Branch, of Highland

Heights, Ky., had been captured by the Viet Cong in May, 1968.

Other messages broadcast from Hanoi and reportedly made by Branch called on American troops fighting in the south to desert their units and to "refuse combat and just botch up all your operations."

According to a 1971 tape recording, an Air Force staff sergeant, John Young of Waukegan, Ill. and Chicago, told President Nixon: "I no longer want to fight for you or anyone like you. In fact, I won't ever fight for your kind of American people."

"I cannot support the killing of innocent Vietnamese men, women and children, or the destruction of their beautiful country," the tape went on. "My conscience tells me it is wrong to kill — the Bible tells me it is wrong. Most important, my mother and father have taught me it is wrong to kill or harm anyone."

Pentagon sources said

that the anti-war enlisted men had apparently shared quarters at various times with some of the pilots who were shot down and captured in the North. The pilots, many of them senior officers, immediately clashed with them.

"The GIs were advised to knock it off," an officer said, adding that they had refused. Another source said that at least one officer "attempted to pull rank on the enlisted men — they didn't take to it."

The reported activities of the eight have angered many senior military officials in the Pentagon who tant to discuss the prisoner issue over the last few weeks.

INTERVIEW

One officer complained during an interview that the White House had refused to let the Pentagon make a public statement condemning the activities of the "peace committee," he said have generally been reluc-

the apparent reason was a fear that adverse publicity on the prisoner issue would erode congressional support for the administration's proposed multi-billion-dollar aid program for North Vietnam.

Another officer noted that the eight men were trouble-makers "before they got in there," meaning in the prison camps. While in prison, he said, "they were seen fraternizing with guards."

"Some of them were even getting out of camp to take tours of Hanoi," he said.

He further accused some of the enlisted men who lived with other prisoners of "giving away vital camp secrets," such as details of how prisoners maintained communications among themselves.