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Captain Heck, War Criminal



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THE AIR FORCE has been investigating Captain Michael Heck, the B-52 pilot who refused on the day after Christmas to drop any more bombs on Hanoi and Hai-phong. The question is why.

Captain Heck is guilty. Everybody knows that.

The Captain, himself, freely admits he refused to obey orders. His only defense is that he felt there had been "enough suffering" in Vietnam.

Never has a guilty man offered a more specious argument. It has never been up to the soldier or airman in the field to determine when the enemy has suffered enough. That decision is made by older and wiser men in Washington—Senators, Cabinet Secretaries and Presidents. Everybody knows that.

Moreover, the Captain implied he felt guilty about killing Vietnamese with his bombs. Here, surely, is guilt bordering on the paranoiac. Killing people with bombs is something to be proud of, not ashamed. The pilots in the Dresden fire raids, the crew of the Enola Gay, were decorated as heroes. Everybody knows that.

Furthermore, the Captain was in no way responsible for the people his bombs killed. He was carrying out orders. A soldier who carries out orders is in no way responsible for the people he kills. Everybody knows that.

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PRESUMABLY, the Captain received his orders from the Major who briefed him on his specific flight plans. But the Major is, of course, not guilty as he was acting under orders from the Colonel who planned the mission. Nor can we blame the Colonel for doing what the Generals told him to. And they, in turn were merely obeying the orders of the President, which is their sworn duty. Everybody knows that.

Some might like to blame the Presi-

dent for the people the Captain's bombs killed. This is grossly unfair. No American President has ever killed a Vietnamese. True, more than a million have died this past decade as the result of our Presidents' policies. But our Presidents have simply been trying their best to prevent a bloodbath and protect American lives. That is their sworn duty. Everybody knows that.

You might as well blame every American for the people killed by the Captain's bombs. After all, the Presidents who ordered the bombings were our chosen representatives. We elected them under the law. But it's our duty to vote. Everybody knows that.

It's true that each of us contributed taxes to pay for the bombs the Captain used to kill people. But we certainly can't be held responsible for that. The law orders us to pay our taxes. It's a crime not to. Everybody knows that.

Thus, we see that nobody—nobody at all—is responsible for killing Vietnamese. We, the people, the President, the Generals, the Colonels, the Majors were merely doing our duty under the law. We were merely carrying out orders. Everybody knows that.

So Captain Heck must understand the nature of his crime: In war, it isn't a crime to kill people; it's a crime not to kill people. Everybody knows that.

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THUS, he's clearly guilty as charged. He committed a crime in time of war. He is a war criminal. An example should be made of him.

What if everyone refused to pay his taxes, do his duty, obey his orders? What if everyone refused to help kill his fellow man? A race composed entirely of criminals could not long survive.

Everybody knows that.