

## P.O.W.'s as War Weapons

To the Editor:

The tragedy surrounding the helpless American prisoners-of-war and their anxious families is that the Nixon Administration seems to be following exactly the wrong course of action, although the President and his advisers are obviously sincere in their concern about the welfare of our men in Hanoi prison camps.

Yet, by renewing the bombing, the U.S. has given the North Vietnamese a special opportunity for sharp retaliation. Where can the Hanoi Government hurt us most? By a continued and perhaps accelerated maltreatment of prisoners.

Our Government seemingly refuses to understand that the Hanoi Government regards their hold on American prisoners as a powerful weapon of war. Time and again we have had evidence that the North Vietnamese (especially in Paris talks) will use the prisoners as a weapon to fight for their best national interests, to return like for like, to return outrage for outrage.

The more we bomb the North the more we endanger our helpless prisoners. An even greater tragedy is that commando raids for liberation jeopardize the very lives of all our men who survive in prison camps. Indeed, such raids might well (as former Hanoi prisoners here argued convincingly) result in the wholesale slaughter of our men by North Vietnamese guards.

Can there be any doubt that such a massacre would take place if the guards were given a choice of allowing the prisoners to be rescued or to be killed? Can there be any doubt that we cannot possibly surprise the Vietnamese on a rescue operation when our last raid was based upon such faulty intelligence that we found only empty barracks?

What, then, is the solution to this agonizing dilemma? We must end this ill-considered war that is so injurious to the best interests of the United States of America and our military forces overseas. We must at once arrange for the safe return of our prisoners in a peace settlement. But how can we do any of these things when the Nixon Administration is once again escalating the war?

WILBUR R. JACOBS  
Professor of History  
University of California  
Santa Barbara, Calif., Nov. 28, 1970

## Empty-Handed From Hanoi

To the Editor:

Secretary Laird contends the prisoner-of-war raid was a great success. This assertion can be confuted I think by his own (and the President's) earlier criteria of victory. No rice, as in the brilliant Cambodian foray, was brought back.

JOSEPH MCG. BOTTKOL  
South Hadley, Mass., Nov. 24, 1970