



U.S. OFFICERS IN PRISON NEAR HANOI: Comdr. Robert J. Schweitzer of Navy watches volleyball pass by Lieut. Col. Edison W. Miller of Marine Corps at prisoner

of war camp in North Vietnam. This photograph and others on Page 18 were taken for The Times by Michael Maclear of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation.

Hanoi Allows Interview With 2 P.O.W.'s

The following dispatch was written by Michael Maclear, a Canadian who is the London correspondent of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, after interviews on Christmas with two American prisoners in a North Vietnamese camp.

Special to The New York Times

HANOI, North Vietnam, Dec. 25—Seven American prisoners of war were seen and two were interviewed by this reporter today in a small prison camp on the outskirts of Hanoi.

They indicated the conditions of captivity had improved in the last two years, since the cessation of sustained United States bombing in North Vietnam, and they spoke calmly but with obvious feeling about the war and of their concern for its impact on America.

The prisoners each appeared to this correspondent to be alert, physically fit, well clothed

and not apparently underweight.

[In Washington, an official said that the camp where the interviews took place was the "Hanoi Hilton," the show-place camp where numerous other journalists have had controlled visits with selected individuals, including the two officers who spoke with Mr. Maclear.]

The interviews with the prisoners followed a conversation today with North Vietnam's Premier, Pham Van Dong, who said that the recently released names of 339 American servicemen represented a "full and complete" list of all those now held captive in North Vietnam. He added: "I swear to you that these men are well treated."

The tape-recorded interviews with the two prisoners were approved, it was said, by the North Vietnamese Politburo, the policy body of the Communist

party. The interviews were granted on the basis of certain conditions, including the censorship of the transcript.

Only four sets of questions were allowed. These had been agreed to in consultation with army officers and were submitted to the prisoners a day in advance.

The questions covered the prisoners' identities, mail privileges, daily routines and personal feeling about the war. No subsidiary questions were allowed.

Except for polite exchanges, only two of the seven prisoners made available were permitted to talk. Answering the questions were Comdr. Robert James Schweitzer of Lemoore, Calif., and Comdr. Walter Eugene Wilber, who said his family lived in Pennsylvania [the lists disclosed by Hanoi gave his hometown as Virginia Beach, Va.]. Both men said they

were Navy pilots who were captured in 1968.

The five others were First Lieut. Paul Gordon Brown of Newton, Mass., of the Marine Corps; Lieut. (jg.) Markham L. Gartley of Greenville, Me., of the Navy; Lieut. William John Mayhew of New Manchester, W. Va., of the Navy; Maj. Roger Dean Ingvalson of Sanford, Me., of the Marine Corps, and Lieut. Col. Edison Wainwright Miller of Santa Ana, Calif., of the Marine Corps.

Present also for the interview, which took place in a large room in one of four barracks buildings in the camp, were newsmen from the Algerian television agency and from Nihon Denda (a leftist-oriented Japanese newsfilm agency), and a North Vietnamese Army officer.

The first set of questions

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asked for names, ranks, when and where the prisoners had been captured, what families they had and how many missions each had flown over North Vietnam.

Commander Wilber said he was shot down in June, 1968, in Nghean Province after 20 missions.

Commander Schweitzer said his wife and two sons lived in California, his parents in Pennsylvania. Like Commander Wilber, he did not mention specific communities. He said he had flown 11 missions before being "shot down on the fifth of January, 1968, actually just outside Haiphong."

Question About Mail

The second prearranged question was: "What letters and parcels do you regularly receive, what do the parcels contain and what letters do you send?"

Commander Wilber replied: "We get letters about every month, packages about every two months, and my packages contain candy, various food items, special little snacks like peanuts, and sometimes some underwear. Small items, chocolate candies and things we appreciate all the time."

"And of course," Commander Schweitzer interjected, "our wives send the usual underwear, handkerchiefs, socks. We don't really need any clothing, but you know what wives are."

The men send out one letter a month on "a regular form letter which both our families and we use," Commander Schweitzer explained. Commander Wilber added that other letters were sent "for Christmas, Mother's Day, special occasions. And we make many radio messages each year—many."

Commander Wilber went on: "If we have a special occasion, an anniversary, children's birthday, all we've got to do is say we want to send a message and it's transmitted. I understand these things go through Cuba."

Full Details on Routine

The third question asked for full details of daily work, duties, routine, meals and health. "I'll start off," Commander Wilber said, "by saying we eat three meals a day and we rise about sunrise, have exercises, get our room cleaned up and have breakfast. We usually play volleyball or have other sports in the mornings, then have our noon meal. However, in addition there's music programs and the like, and I'll let Bob continue on."

Commander Schweitzer said: "We observe the Vietnamese siesta in the afternoon. The volleyball court and the basketball facilities are available to us all day. We also have a great deal of literature, notable among which are many books by American authors."

Among these he named "Vietnam, Vietnam," "The Limits of Intervention," "I Protest," "Vietnam, the Unheard Voices," and "Crisis Now."

A reference at this point in the interview to the number of films the prisoners saw annually was later censored from the transcript.

"Many of these are Vietnamese films," Commander Schweitzer said. "For instance, we saw the Folk and Art Ensemble tour of Europe, which is a very lovely film."

Commander Wilber added: "And we saw the student festival at Sofia, a nice colored film of the youth festival."

Commander Schweitzer mentioned that he saw a Russian production of Shakespeare's "Twelfth Night" a week ago, and said, "Just recently there has been available to us in English the complete works of Shakespeare, which I enjoyed very much."

"Of course," Commander Wilbur added, "the problem is that the Vietnamese are limited in what they have available in English, but they try and make many books available to us, and magazines. And I might also mention we have made several trips into Hanoi to see the museums—the historical, the army, the art museums, and we had a chance to see the cathedral at Christmas time."

Commander Schweitzer amplified on the point. "Last Christmas Eve," he said, "we visited the Roman Catholic cathedral in town for the midnight mass, which is a very enjoyable and very moving ceremony. The place was tremendously crowded with Vietnamese."

Courts Near Building

The volleyball court and basketball court mentioned by the two men were just outside the barracks where the interview was held. The seven men had been out on the compound exercising when we arrived.

The fourth set of questions was: "Do you talk to each other about the war? What are your feelings on this? What might you want to say directly to the American people?"

Commander Schweitzer began: "We discuss the war very much because the war is very close to us here. We are all involved."

The military censor later ordered about one minute of commentary to be erased from the tape recording at this point. The gist of the censored remarks by Commander Schweitzer was that he was not afraid

for himself, but rather for his country. I suppose that in our country, we don't normally give much thought about. But here we definitely do. I feel all of us do. We talk about it at great length."

The censored remarks here and at other points in the interview seemed to this correspondent to be of no particular significance, but rather arbitrary, such as military censors are apt to make as a matter of course in a war situation.

Following the censored remarks, Commander Schweitzer went on:

"We discuss this at length. I know I've had the deepest discussions I've ever had in my life with my fellow prisoners here. We've had to go to the very core of a number of things—loyalty, what it is, where does it lie; and morality, legality, things that in our affluent, rushed life

we don't normally give much thought about. But here we definitely do. I feel all of us do. We talk about it at great length."

'Got to Stop This Thing'

Commander Wilber then said: "The answer of course is that the war must be ended, and must be stopped now. We've just got to stop this thing. We've got to grip the facts as they lie and stop the war. And of course we must withdraw our troops to stop the war. That's a condition we have to face. Then the Vietnamese can solve their own problem, I'm confident of that. Stop the war, get our troops out. That's what we've got to do. That's what the big job is."

Commander Schweitzer picked up the point: "I of course agree. As I say, I'm terribly concerned about my country and I feel that the future of our country as well as Vietnam and Indochina cannot be served by the prolongation of this war, whatever the reasons and causes. I don't feel that it's necessary even to rake over the old reasons of who was wrong, who was right. It has been proven as far as I'm concerned."

Commander Wilbur concluded the interview with these remarks: "This war is bad, it's bad. Given our situation or the Vietnamese or Indochinese peoples' situation, we've got to get out and let them solve their own problems. We've got our own problems to solve."

90 Minutes at the Camp

We then shook hands and parted. The interview had lasted approximately 15 minutes, though I spent about 90 minutes at the prison camp, most of it in meetings with officials before and after the interview.



Marine Corps Maj. Roger D. Ingvalson, one of five men who were seen but not interviewed, in a picture released by North Vietnam some time ago.



Michael Maclear, C.B.C.

Lieut. Col. Edison W. Miller of Santa Ana, Calif., with copy of "Vietnam, the Unheard Voices" by Don Luce and John Sommer. Book was given to the Marine Corps officer along with additional reading matter by the North Vietnamese.

which was filmed as well as recorded.

Parts of the prison camp itself also were filmed. The camp is about a 10-minute drive from the center of Hanoi, and a casual passer-by would hardly notice it.

It is hidden from a main road by a cluster of poor homes whose sloping straw roofs rise to the level of the 15-foot-high prison walls, which are topped by two strands of barbed wire.

The camp consists of five single-story buildings grouped around a spacious grassy area, which has as a centerpiece a concrete-lined pond overhung by willow trees. On the opposite side of one of the buildings are the volleyball and basketball courts.

Four of the buildings, which resemble army barracks perhaps dating from the French period, which ended in 1954, are apparently the living quarters of the

prisoners. Each of these is divided into 6 to 10 rooms.

Lavishly Decorated Tree

The fifth building contained a communal hall with a concert or lecture platform at one end. The platform was aglow with colored bulbs, tinsel and a lavishly decorated Christmas tree. On one side, a veranda with latticed bamboo curtains faced the park-like area. On the other side, which faced on the playing courts, were six rooms with iron-barred, wooden-shuttered windows.

In addition to this building, where the interview took place, our inspection tour was limited to one of the four barracks buildings.

The rooms in these buildings had bars on the windows and bolts in the doors, but could not be described as cells. Each was about 20 feet long and 12 feet wide and contained three beds set apart, not tiered. Only two of the beds in each room were made up, with two blankets on each.

Newspapers on Walls

Small low benches completed the furnishings. There were family pictures, crayon Christmas drawings and religious messages on the walls of some rooms. In one room, North Vietnamese newspapers were pinned on the walls.

Books were generally evident, but not such articles as ashtrays, glasses, paper and pans or tossed clothing. Though few personal possessions were to be seen, there were boxes and baskets in the rooms and these could have held such items.

Depending on how many men share each of the rooms, there could be 80 to 120 prisoners in the camp. Though this correspondent saw only seven prisoners, a newsmen for Nihon Denpa, the Japanese agency, said he had filmed a Christmas Eve dinner at the camp and had seen about 30 prisoners.

The question remains open whether the clean and well laid-out camp we inspected was actually a prisoner of war camp.

Instructions for Official

However, Commanders Schweitzer and Wilbur seemed familiar with it, referring occasionally to its facilities. At one point, they showed an official from Hanoi how to latch the shutters of a window in the room where the interview was conducted.

Wearing gray-green fatigues and sandals, they sat with their backs to the Christmas tree, facing this correspondent across a wide table. Throughout the interview, they ignored a pack of Vietnamese cigarettes placed near them.



Comdr. Walter E. Wilber, one of two Navy pilots who responded to correspondent in tape-recorded interview.

Commanders Schweitzer and Wilbur appeared to have thought out precisely what they wanted to say in response to the interview questions. They spoke easily, articulately and with little trace of embarrassment.

Camp Termed Showplace

By CHRISTOPHER LYDON
WASHINGTON, Dec. 27—A

United States Government official said tonight that the North Vietnamese camp where Michael Maclear had interviewed American prisoners of war was the "Hanoi Hilton," the showplace camp where numerous other journalists have been permitted controlled visits with selected individuals.

Commander Schweitzer and Commander Wilbur, whom Mr. Maclear quoted in his dispatch, have been interviewed many times before by visiting reporters, the official said. "These are two men in a group of four or five who've been interviewed over and over again," he said, referring specifically to recent reports by Swedish television crews and Japanese newsmen.

The content of the interviews, the official suggested, is repetitive. In their remarks, he ex-

plained, Commanders Schweitzer and Wilbur are consistently "not critical of their treatment; there is no adverse criticism of North Vietnam; and they are for peace in a general way without directly attacking the United States."

"It sounds to me," the official said, as if Mr. Maclear "got the standard treatment."

Earlier Visits Reported

"He has been taken to the 'Hanoi Hilton,' no question about it," the official continued. "That is the showplace camp."

In 1967, he said, David Schoenbrun, then on the news staff of the Columbia Broadcasting System, visited the same camp and reported on it. In the spring of 1967, the official said, Life magazine printed pictures of the camp. Since then, he said, it has been visited by numerous European journalists and American peace groups.

"It has all been photographed and visited before," he said, "according to the same procedure. You see a few prisoners but talk with only two of them—under restrictions."

The concrete-lined pond, he said, is the distinguishing feature of the "Hanoi Hilton," the detail that everyone who has been there reports.