

'WEEK OF CONCERN' FOR P.O.W.'S OPENS

Nixon Policy Under Fire—
Hearings Due in Congress

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WASHINGTON, March 22— A "national week of concern" for the American prisoners of war and servicemen missing in action in Indochina opened here today amid growing Congressional feeling that an alternative to President Nixon's policy on the prisoners must be found.

About 125 members of Congress, including the House Speaker, Carl Albert, attended a Capitol Hill reception this morning for the officers of the National League of Families, which says it has 3,000 members representing about 80 per cent of the missing men and the captured men.

Tomorrow, a House Foreign Affairs subcommittee is scheduled to open two weeks of hearings on the situation of prisoners. Some 250 resolutions have been introduced, ranging from demands that the Paris peace talks be broken off until the prisoners are released to a call for "proportional repatriation."

That plan would call on the Administration to attempt to negotiate a gradual release of American prisoners as United States forces are withdrawn from Vietnam.

The Defense Department said that 462 men were believed to be held captive as of mid-March, compared with 460 at the end of February. There are 1,182 listed as missing, an increase from the 1,145 at the end of last month.

339 Captives Listed by Hanoi

The North Vietnamese gave out in December a list of 339 fliers captured in North Vietnam. But they have given no word on American prisoners taken in South Vietnam, Cambodia or Laos.

The reception this morning was arranged by Representative John B. Anderson, Republican of Illinois and chairman of the Republican Conference, and Representative Olin E. Teague, Democrat of Texas, the chairman of the Democratic Caucus.

Mrs. Kenneth W. North of Wellfleet, Mass., chairman of the National League of Families, said that the week of concern was necessary to keep the prisoner issue alive in the public mind.

Mrs. North, whose husband, an Air Force major, was shot down over North Vietnam in 1966, said that every Congressman "who voted for the Tonkin Gulf Resolution has a very real and direct responsibility to do everything he can to get those men out of there."

The Tonkin Gulf Resolution, which was rescinded last year, was adopted by an overwhelming vote in 1964 after a naval action off North Vietnam. It was used by President Lyndon B. Johnson to justify the bombing of North Vietnam and the direct intervention by American ground forces in Vietnam in 1965.

Nixon Seeks Full Release

President Nixon called last fall for an immediate and unconditional release of all prisoners on both sides. The North Vietnamese have said they were ready to discuss the question if the United States would set a firm date for complete withdrawal of its forces from South Vietnam.

Both Administration and Congressional sources said that the Congress and large segments of the public had become aware of the Administration's difficulties over the prisoner issue. One source on Capitol Hill contended that "Vietnamization doesn't do a thing for the prisoners."

Those officials said that Vietnamization, which contemplates a continuation of the war, with the South Vietnamese doing the fighting supported by a residual force of American soldiers, would not bring about the release of the prisoners so long as the North Vietnamese insisted on a political and military settlement of the war first.

During the hearings before the House subcommittee, which is headed by Clement J. Zablocki, Democrat of Wisconsin, Administration officials are expected to try to hold the North Vietnamese responsible for the impasse over the prisoners.