

Patterns

Editor — It is timely to review a certain pattern of U.S. Army behavior toward military and civilian prisoners which has come to light over the past few years.

Item: During the Johnson Presidency it became clear from war correspondents' reports that prisoners taken by our Army units were routinely handed over to the South Vietnamese for "interrogation." This was rationalized on the grounds of language. The interrogations, according to reporters,

frequently involved torture, passively observed by our men.

Item: The My Lai massacre, a couple of years after the event, finally resulted in the trial of one man and his conviction of mass murder of unresisting, helpless old men, women and babies. He instantly became the object of a national wave of sympathy and near hero-worship, culminating in Presidential intervention for his greater comfort and promise of final overriding review.

Item: A Washington dispatch in The Chronicle April 28 reports that American volunteer witnesses have testified before Congressman Ronald Dellums that "while serving as military interrogators they routinely used" helicopter drops and other methods to torture and kill Vietnamese prisoners.

On this background, Mrs. Nixon has the unmitigated gall to complain about the treatment, usually unspecified, of American prisoners in North Vietnam.

Two questions present themselves: 1) What chance have these complaints of being heeded, so long as the above practices continue? 2) Is there no limit to the abominations which this country will tolerate as long as they are committed by Americans or their "allies"?

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