

The 'Cultural Shock' Awaiting U.S. POWs

San Diego

When American prisoners of war return home from Indochina they will have a difficult time adapting to the social changes that have taken place, according to a military psychiatrist.

For that reason, Captain Raymond C. Spaulding Jr., chief of psychiatry at San Diego Naval Hospital, hopes welcoming ceremonies will be delayed for a while after their arrival home.

Spaulding says the POWs, some who have been in captivity for eight years, face a potentially traumatic cultural shock.

"Those guys are going to be very confused," Spaulding said. "Can you imagine being seven years over there and coming home to find your wife in a mini-dress and no bra out in public? Or your kids with long, scroungy hair?"

"They don't know what's happened. We don't know how they are going to handle all those overwhelming so-

cial changes. But we are convinced it would be better to introduce them to it gradually."

Spaulding made his comments in an interview with the San Diego Tribune.

Spaulding, 51, was head of the six-man psychiatric team which worked with the men from the captured spy ship Pueblo. They spent a year as prisoners in North Korea.

"I was very much against the precipitous return of the Pueblo people," he said. "It was a psychological crime. Crewmen later told me they didn't know if they'd be stoned in the streets or taken to a federal prison. They certainly didn't expect the heroes' welcome they received."

The Pentagon is working on a contingency plan for the return and care of POWs. Although the North Vietnamese government has given no indication when POWs will be released, the Naval Hospital here is expected to be a center for rehabilitation on their return.

"I would say it's going to take a minimum of four weeks for the POWs to say things like 'go to hell' or to express anger or a negative feeling," Spaulding said.

Other problems which he

says returning POWs may encounter:

- Getting along with other people after years of near isolation. This includes the man's own wife and family and probably will require family therapy.

- Physical ailments and sexual impotency caused by the long confinement and malnutrition.

- Learning to readjust to simple amenities of life such as furniture. "They may not have sat in chairs for years. What are you going to do when an ex-POW comes into your office and squats on his haunches?" Spaulding asked.

Associated Press