

He Felt His Talents Were Needed

The Motives for

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About the only conclusion that can be drawn from the riddle of Jimmy Hoffa's aborted mission to Hanoi is that prison did not break the tough little Teamster's spirit.

As president of the Teamster's Union, Hoffa was used to telling, not asking, and that went not just for trucking companies but Senators and Congressmen and anyone else who crossed his path. And so it seems that when he decided his talents were needed in Hanoi, he simply told the United States' government that he was going and the North Vietnamese government that he was coming.

Hoffa's motives for making the trip are easy to divine. He has been bored since Richard Nixon sprang him last Christmas eve.

BOARDS

He is accustomed to being at the heart of the action, and if he succeeded where others had failed in negotiating the release of the prisoners, he might expect the full pardon that would enable him to retake the driver's seat of his 2-million man union.

He roared through two parole boards, one in Detroit and one in Washington, and



MR. AND MRS. JAMES HOFFA
Documents were from North Vietnam

also through the State Department's Passport Division. Maybe all hands routinely grant permission to go to North Vietnam, or maybe they just assumed, as did the mystified world when it first heard of it, that Hoffa was traveling with the blessing of President Nixon, his benefactor.

It took the secretary of state, William P. Rogers, to step out and flag down Hoffa's speeding truck.

Until that moment, the bewildered bystanders thought that Hoffa, as a White House emissary, would come back and tell the President all he wanted to hear about the "barbarous" treatment of

Hoffa's Trip

American prisoners of war, who are cited as the real reason for continuing the war, which is also said to be over.

The weakness in the theory was quickly exposed. How could the administration have arranged the invitation from the Hanoi Labor Council, which Hoffa told the parole boards and the State Department had come to him?

PRISONS

The other theory, equally short-lived, was that the North Vietnamese might have asked him because they had read Hoffa's critique of American prisons, offered in testimony before a house committee last June. Possibly in the back of their minds was the hope that they could show him American POWs in jails that would provide a favorable contrast to the "hell-holes" he had known during his four years and four months of detention in the United States for mail fraud and jury tampering.

The weakness there was that Hoffa would hardly have wanted to affront his benefactor, President Nixon, by bringing home contrary views.

That speculation was squashed in Paris when the North Vietnam delegation denied any trade union had invited Hoffa.

Former Attorney General Ramsey Clark, who served in the Justice Department when Robert Kennedy was

looking for ways to get Hoffa behind bars, told his north Vietnamese hosts last month that they should invite more Americans to inspect the damage wrought by American bombs and the prisons where Americans are held. He did not have Hoffa in mind. He had suggested university presidents and religious leaders.

The Administration was in a fix. It did not wish to offend Hoffa, whose former union has endorsed the President for re-election. On the other hand, it has always strenuously maintained that private negotiations imperil the negotiations which have been stalled in Paris for the last four years.

EFFORTS

Rogers, who has been denouncing Clark and Pierre Salinger for their efforts, could hardly have countenanced the dispatch of a convicted felon, who would be seen as a presidential representative no matter what was said.

Hoffa, who doubtless saw himself recapturing glory as a negotiator, particularly if he brought back some prisoners with him, has gone back to Detroit instead of on to Hanoi.

A party of anti-war leaders will take off this week for North Vietnam to escort home three prisoners already designated. Hoffa has to put his truck back in the garage after an impressive test run which showed that he can still gun the motors with all his old force.