

Joy Rules on Jet With Kin of POWs

By Peter Arnett

COPENHAGEN — (AP) — As the 747 jumbo jet lifted heavily into the darkness over Kennedy Airport, the Rev. William Sloane Coffin Jr. defied the G-forces and rose in his seat to clap heartily.

The passengers strapped into the three rows of seats behind him joined in with enthusiasm as the plane banked over the twinkling lights of Long Island and headed off across the Atlantic.

"We did it, by God we did it," said Cora Weiss, a Bronx housewife, gripping the arm of thin, dark-haired Olga Charles sitting beside her.

Nearby, gray-haired Minnie Lee Gartley blinked back tears.

It was the first moments of an around-the-world journey without parallel in a decade where dramatic intercontinental trips are common.

Olga Charles, 27, is the wife of a Navy pilot shot down over North Vietnam last December and now a captive. The son of Minnie Lee Gartley, from Dunedin, Fla., was captured in North Vietnam in 1968.

They are flying into the heart of the enemy camp, to Hanoi, to personally bring their loved ones home. The journey is taking place at a time when North Vietnam is being subjected to massive American bombing.

The trip is heavy-laden with propaganda.

Mrs. Weiss, the ebullient

co-leader of the party, makes no secret of her antagonism to the Vietnam war.

It was through her, and co-leader David Dellinger, that the arrangement was made to release these first American prisoners from Hanoi in three years. Both Mrs. Weiss and Dellinger have been to Hanoi in the past.

The other members of the official party are also anti-war activists — Chaplin Coffin of Yale University and Prof. Richard Falk of Princeton University.

News Conference

But in news conferences preceding and during this first leg of the journey, and in the conversation among the group on the plane, it is not politics but joy that predominates.

"I don't think of politics," said Mrs. Charles, who is from San Diego, looking down from the jet at the twisted coast of Norway under the left wing. "I think of meeting Norris so soon, and bringing him home to our daughter."

She married the 27 year old Navy lieutenant, Norris Alphonso Charles, five years ago. She has received recent letters from him and has seen him on television.

Minnie Lee Gartley, mother of 28 year old Navy Lt. Markham Gartley, was so excited on this her first trip outside the United States that she spilled her dinner wine twice. "Politics no, love yes," she observed.

Call From Navy

Mrs. Charles said that U.S. Navy authorities had telephoned her in New York and asked her to reconsider her journey.

"A liaison Navy captain phoned on Tuesday and asked if I was aware of the possible physical dangers of the bombing, and the probability that we would be used for propaganda," she said.

"He was very nice about it, the Navy has been very good to me. I told him that I was a little scared of the bombing, but that nothing could hold me back now."