

See excerpt, Nixon press conference, this file 30 Jun 72.  
Letter by Robert Gottlieb, this file 12 Sep 72.

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### French P.O.W.'s in Indochina

To the Editor:

Robert Gottlieb's Sept. 12 letter is a gross misstatement of fact. Mr. Gottlieb faults Senator McGovern for saying the North Vietnamese could be depended upon to release our prisoners as they did the French. He makes the statement that the North Vietnamese released only 11,000 of the 37,000 French P.O.W.'s.

France had virtually no French battalions fighting in Indochina. France drafted no Frenchmen for duty in Indochina. France fought there with an expeditionary corps, primarily of French (from France) officers, many, but by

no means all, French noncommissioned officers, with rankers from all her colonies and appendages, the largest number, at the end, being Vietnamese. Many were Cambodians, some Laotians. At Dienbienphu (which was the end) France had seventeen nationalities, and Frenchmen from France were a small minority. There were perhaps as many Germans.

Senator McGovern is quite correct in the statement attributed to him. Frenchmen, Europeans and Africans fighting with them were promptly repatriated. If Indochinese nationals fighting under the French flag were detained longer it is probably because (1) they preferred this cause to the one they'd left, or (2) because they were being held in forfeit for Vietminh (there was no "North Vietnam" or "Vietcong"—we contrived these identities) personnel in the hands of the Government of Vietnam. Many Vietnamese have switched sides several times.

From nothing I heard during duty there with the French, or have since read, have I seen any evidence that Ho Chi Minh's people failed to observe scrupulously the Geneva Conference agreements.

ALBIN DEARING  
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