

# POWs Spurn U.S. Aid in Moscow

Associated Press

## Moscow

Three U.S. airmen freed by North Vietnam turned down an American government offer yesterday of a bed for the night, medical attention and transport home.

They told United States Charge d'Affaires Adolph Dubs, during a tense 20-minute meeting at the Moscow airport, that they wanted to go home with the escort of anti-war activists who arranged their release.

Navy Lieutenants Mark Gartly and Norris Charles and Air Force Major Edward Elias reached Moscow late yesterday on a long flight from Peking. They were released from a POW camp September 17 with the understanding they would take civilian aircraft to

America.

Gartley told Dubs, "We'd better proceed in this way for the safe release of the other POWs."

## PLANS

Elias added, "I feel the same way, and I don't want to jeopardize the guys we left behind. If we don't carry out our plans, we'll be failing in respect to those we left behind."

The pilots and their escort of anti-war advocates were scheduled to leave Moscow for New York this morning with a stopover in Copenhagen.

When the pilots arrived and were led through a service entrance into the airport customs hall, it appeared doubtful Dubs would even have a chance to extend the government's offer of help.

Blocking his way were

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David Dellinger, the Rev. William Sloane Coffin and Richard Falk, of the Committee of Liaison With Families of Prisoners Detained in North Vietnam.

## BEWILDERED

In an unlighted corner behind them, Cora Weiss, another committee member, shielded the pilots, who stood bewildered in the swirl of newsmen, customs officials and curious passengers in transit.

Falk at first said there would be no meeting between the pilots and the man instructed to offer them official help.

Dubs didn't try to force his way past. And as he withdrew, Mrs. Weiss shouted into television microphones pointed her way, "Stand back! Stand back Give us some room!"

After some more discussion it was decided to arrange the meeting in an Aeroflot office at the terminal. Aeroflot is the Soviet airline.

Dubs told them he would make the ambassador's residence available to them for the night, said the embassy doctor was on hand to treat them if needed, and said an Air Force medical evacuation plane would be ready in Copenhagen to fly them to New York.

Each man in turn refused. They said they would spend the night in a Moscow hotel, were in good health and preferred to fly home on commercial aircraft.

## GREETINGS

Soviet and North Vietnamese officials attended the

meeting, and heard Dubs, as he later recounted, greet the airmen and "welcome them on behalf of all our country."

Before he left the pilots, Dubs gave them each an American passport.

The pilots' decision to turn Dubs down was made before they arrived in Moscow.

When the plane from Peking landed in a snowstorm at Irkutsk earlier in the day, an urgent message from In-tourist in Moscow informed the party that American officials would be waiting for them in Moscow.

## LAWYER

Falk, a lawyer, said the pilots were not legally bound to obey direct orders from their military superiors and didn't have to follow instructions of embassy officials.

The airmen decided to adopt Falk's reading of the law. But when it came down to refusing, they turned down an invitation, not a military order or a formal ambassadorial instruction.

Gartley's mother and Charles' wife met their men in Hanoi and are making the trip home with them.