

The Return Home Of Three POWs

THE CHARGE OF "doublecross" levelled at one of the three returned prisoners of war by a member of the peace group that escorted the fliers home from Hanoi spilled the beans on how POWs are selected for repatriation.

Mrs. Cora Weiss took no pains to hide her chagrin when Major Edward Elias said it felt good to be back in uniform and went off to a military hospital without a murmur.

At Kennedy Airport, Mrs. Weiss also described the homecoming as "a recapture scene, replacing one incarceration with another."

Nonsense.

Under the most trying of circumstances, the three fliers behaved well. They kept their heads screwed on throughout the long journey home and their emotion-torn arrival. They accepted that they are soldiers and did not forget that soldiers must follow orders—even in the face of weeping mothers and wives. Indeed, their arrival must have been as heart-rending as their leaving to go to war.

THE ARRIVAL was marred, we think, by the Pentagon's insistence the men go immediately to military hospitals. In the absence of a more compelling reason than the need for physical examinations, the three should have been permitted to spend a few days with their families before checking in at hospitals.

One of the fliers noted that the way to free all POWs is to end the war. That's the accepted procedure for every war. The men said they would have to catch up on current events before making any statements. They acted and said what any honest men in their position would do and say — and that they remained so calm while many around them seemed in danger of losing their heads is a tribute to them as men and as American soldiers.

Mrs. Weiss' angry comments tell us much about how prisoners of war are being used in an attempt to affect the war's outcome and U.S. internal politics.

The strong implication of her outburst is that POWs are singled out for return if they appear to go along with the antiwar activists' politics when interviewed in a North Vietnamese prison camp.

SAYING ANYTHING to get out of a POW camp is the same as digging a tunnel to get out — the important thing is the escape. Not the method.