

# P.O.W. HAILS NIXON, SCORES WAR FOES

FEB 28 1973

## Says Protesters Prolonged

### Conflict and His Captivity

NYTimes

Special to The New York Times

OKLAHOMA CITY, Feb. 26—Antiwar demonstrators in the United States prolonged the Vietnam war and the release of American prisoners for from one to two years, a senior Air Force P.O.W. who was among the first to be released said here tonight.

"I feel beyond any doubt that those people kept us in prison an extra year or two," said Col. Robinson Risner, "not just the people demonstrating, but the people who were downing or bad-mouthing our Government and our policies."

Colonel Risner, who spent seven and one-half years in a P.O.W. camp in Hanoi, said that, despite a constant flow of propaganda about antiwar demonstrations back home, American fliers had never lost faith in their country.

#### Anger and Dismay

He said that he and his fellow prisoners felt only anger and dismay at the protesters and draft-dodgers and were willing to stay imprisoned years longer if necessary to gain peace with honor.

Colonel Risner, who has not been completely debriefed and cannot discuss his imprisonment, granted an interview on the antiwar movement only to make clear his feelings that the movement provided momentum to the Communists.

Colonel Risner was one of many captives to whom statements condemning United States war policies were attributed by the North Vietnamese.

Asked about these statements Feb. 15 at a news conference at Clark Air Base in the Philippines, where he had been flown after his release, Colonel Risner avoided saying flatly whether he had made them, but said:

"Sir, in all sincerity I would like to say that I think we should consider the source of those statements. By this I mean the source from which they came — in other words they were made from the prison in North Vietnam."

He denied that he had ever been against United States war policies.

The 48-year-old fighter ace said tonight that the pilots had been kept well-informed by their captors on anything bad about the United States.

"Anything that was against our Government, our policy or our way of life came to light

immediately," he said. "We heard the voice of Vietnam twice a day — Radio Hanoi."

But he said that the fliers had never trusted the Communists or believed their propaganda.

"We know that the most effective use of propaganda is to put an element of truth in it to build upon," Colonel Risner said. "We don't trust them. We don't believe them."

He said that he personally was "very angry" with the demonstrators.

"I have said that I was fighting for the freedom of the right of people to dissent, and I was, but it did not keep me from being angry or resentful because I feel beyond any doubt that those people kept us in prison an extra year or two."

#### 'Comfort' to Communists

"There is no doubt in my mind that the Communists took great comfort and heart from the people who demonstrated and bad-mouthed our Government."

"It was very evident to all of us that the Communists' spirit or morale went up and down along with the amount of demonstrations, protests and antiwar movement back in the States," Colonel Risner said.

"We were extremely surprised, when we heard that Senator McGovern had won the Democratic nomination and we could not believe that he could ever win the Presidential election."

"Our motto of our organization was 'Return With Honor.' We did not feel that we could carry that out if Senator McGovern had been elected President."

"I could not see stopping aid to the countries that I knew needed aid, Colonel Risner said. "I could not see abandoning our friends and allies. Nor could I see the Vietnamese ever keeping their promises to a person who would come and beg for the prisoners."

"That's when he lost us—when Senator McGovern said, 'If necessary, I will come to Hanoi and beg for the prisoners,' because we know the Vietnamese would only have taken advantage of him and I think we would still be in prison."

Colonel Risner said that President Nixon's policies—including stepped-up bombing and the B-52 raids against the Hanoi-Haiphong area last Christmas had proved effective.

"On the 18th of December—I think that was the first night of the B-52 raids—there was never such joy seen in our camp before," Colonel Risner said.

"We knew they were B-52's and that President Nixon was keeping his word and that the Communists were getting the message."

"We saw reaction in the Vietnamese that we had never seen under the attacks from fighters. They at last knew that we had some weapons they had not felt, and that President Nixon was willing to use those weapons in order to get us out of Vietnam."