

Choir of Ex-POWs

Singing That Brought Some Tears

Clark Air Base,
Philippines

The tuning fork was a teacup top; the choir comprised just-released prisoners of war. More than one singer blinked back tears as he sang.

The 17 men performed at the Clark Air Force Base television studio yesterday, two days after they stepped off planes that brought them from Hanoi, where various members of the group had sung together for years in prison.

The full choir had sung together for only three weeks, said the director, Commander Kay Russell of Corsicana, Tex. He said they had de-

rived great pleasure and support from their singing while in the hands of the Communists.

He started off each of the four songs they sang here with a tap on the white porcelain top provided by Commander Charles E. Southwick, who said he acquired it just after he was shot down six years ago.

Asked what note the top sounded, Russell said, "We aren't sure. We think it's somewhere around C or middle C."

The choir opened with "The Lord Is in His Holy Temple," then sang "I Believe," "The Lord's Prayer" and "This Is My Country."

At the end, Russell was blinking away tears, and members of the choir laughingly held out handkerchiefs to him. Other members of the group also were wiping their eyes.

The performance, a rehearsal before newsmen and photographers before the songs were recorded for television, was under studio lights and the men stood in three rows.

Before taking their places, several of the men combed each other's hair. "Gotta look sharp," one remarked as he offered a friend his comb.

Because there was no music available in Hanoi, all

the songs were done from memory. Words were the most difficult part, Russell said, and in some cases several men contributed to putting a song together.

"The accuracy of the lyrics is not guaranteed," Russell added.

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