

A Policy of Resistance

POWs' Forced' Torture

Washington

One of the senior American officers in the North Vietnamese prison camps said yesterday that the prisoners "forced" their captors "to be brutal to us" by resisting their demands to the last possible point of human endurance.

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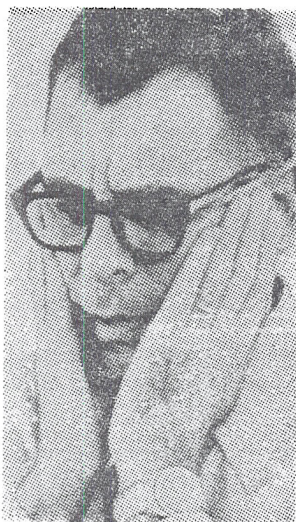
Navy Captain Jeremiah A. Denton, who has been nominated for promotion to Rear Admiral, said the policy of resistance was designed to provoke a public outcry against the North Vietnamese and put pressure on them to improve camp conditions.

Those conditions improved dramatically in October, 1969, and many observers give the credit to protests mounted by the government and the families of the prisoners.

Denton's comments came as more former POWs elaborated on charges of torture and brutality made by other prisoners Thursday.

There were these additional developments concerning prisoners of war:

- Thirty-two former prisoners left Clark Air Base in



AP Wirephoto

CAPTAIN DENTON
Cruel Memories

the Philippines for home. The remaining 116 in the final group will leave over the weekend.

- A Pentagon official said that "reports that some of our men were dying" helped lead to te unsuccessful raid on the Son Tay prison camp near Hanoi in November, 1970.

- In Saigon, American officials said they were convinced that some Americans were still being held captive by Communist troops in South Vietnam.

- The first description of prison conditions in Laos came from Ernest C. Brace, a civilian pilot, now in the Philippines. Brace, one of only nine prisoners to emerge from Laos, said he had been buried up to his neck for a week after he tried to escape from the Pathet Lao. More than 300 Americans are still listed as missing in Laos.

RELATIONSHIP

Denton's comments about prisoner attitudes added a new dimension to the complex relationship between captor and captive that existed in the prisons of Indochina.

In an interview Denton noted that when he took command of a North Vietnam prison compound known as the Zoo, in October, 1965 — the senior officer in each camp automatically assumed command — he got tough with his own men.

"When I learned that

some men were writing biographies and military information due to mere intimidation from threats, I put the policy out that they were not to succumb to threats but must stand up and say no," he said.

"I tried to put out involved orders saying that you should die before giving the enemy classified information," he added.

Denton's comments hinted that the torture of American prisoners resulted partly from their own attitudes. Other information indicated that conditions varied widely in different places, at different times, and among different prisoners.

The worst treatment was reserved for senior officers like Denton who encouraged the policy of resistance. In one case he was shackled in a darkened room for a week and at the end, he said, "I was like an animal. Not even a healthy animal, like a crippled roach. I was pretty much of a vegetable."

Younger men apparently did not suffer quite so badly, and after 1969, life improved for everyone.

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