

NYTimes

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# Letters to the Editor

## Of Prisoners, Torture and the Antiwar Movement

To the Editor:

Our fervent hope and prayer is that all the antiwar zealots, like George McGovern, Jane Fonda, Ramsey Clark and Dr. Benjamin Spock, have the courage and the conscience to listen carefully to the poignant stories being told by our returning P.O.W.'s about their incredibly cruel and brutal torture by their fiendish Communist captors.

It is very doubtful whether such naive and misguided souls will ever be able to accept the painful and ugly reality of the testimony that their numerous visits to Hanoi resulted in beatings and torture for those of our P.O.W.'s who refused to cooperate or meet with them, or that their antiwar activities protracted rather than shortened this war.

An unremitting conscience may well be their only punishment, but in some cases that could be justice enough.

ROBERT HOHL  
Laurel, Md., April 6, 1973

To the Editor:

It is, of course, devastating to hear the P.O.W.'s stories of torture. It is also sad to hear these same men say "no amnesty" whatsoever for draft dodgers on the grounds that they gave aid and comfort to the enemy.

What of the P.O.W.'s who will never return because they refused to give information to the enemy under torture? Will their families feel that some of the returning P.O.W.'s gave aid and comfort to the enemy?

No one person or circumstance is ultimately responsible for peace. Without the protesters to awaken the country to the nature of the war we were waging, we might have gone on in a hundred years' war. In a way, the P.O.W.'s can thank the war critics for their part in gaining their freedom.

JANE C. FULTON  
Scarsdale, N. Y., April 3, 1973

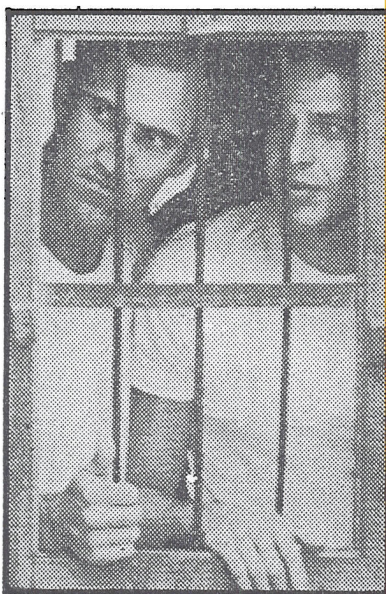
To the Editor:

We are justified in being outraged by the mistreatment of American P.O.W.'s, and we certainly all have great sympathy for the victims. Nonetheless, it would be tragic if

Americans forgot that those men were more fortunate than the women and babies shot in cold blood by Lieutenant Calley (and those were only "suspected"; no one knew if they were friend or enemy); more fortunate than North Vietnamese P.O.W.'s shoved out of helicopters to persuade their surviving companions to "talk"; more fortunate than the prisoners in our ally's "tiger cages."

When I point this out to some of my friends, they reply: "Well, they did it too, didn't they?" That's exactly my point. The war was degrading to all armies and nations that had any part in it, our own included.

ROBERT C. BOARDMAN  
Hastings-on-Hudson, N. Y.,  
March 30, 1973



To the Editor:

I endorse the analysis of Prof. Robert Jay Lifton concerning the psychogenic ramifications of the reception we are extending to our returning prisoners of war (Op-Ed March 28).

The remarks made concerning the prisoners and the war by President Nixon in his recent national address serve to confirm the presence of the social schizophrenia sketched in Professor Lifton's observations. The Presi-

dent spoke only in terms of "honor": of the peace that had been achieved with honor and of the dishonor that would be done to the men who had served with honor if an amnesty were to be granted.

He spoke only to those who supported his position. The rest of the country was consciously excluded from his audience by the phrasings that he chose. He called upon his supporters to continue believing that they were as right as they had always believed they were. He concluded by attempting to tie this in with faith in God, our country and ourselves.

I believe that the President is doing the nation a grave disservice by making this kind of partisan appeal. Unless we get our collective head on straight and see the imperative need for mutual forgiveness for all by all involved with the war, I fear for the health of our society.

(Rev.) ROBERT NEWTON BARGER  
The Newman Foundation of Illinois  
Champaign, Ill., March 30, 1973

To the Editor:

I read Captain Stockdale's April 1 Op-Ed article, in which he credits his philosophic studies with helping to sustain him through the dark hours of his imprisonment in Vietnam.

I noted that it was certainly a cut above the ordinary in literary quality and, as a teacher, I was pleased by his appreciative remembrance of his philosophy professor. However, there must be something wrong with a philosophy, no matter how beautifully described, which enables a man to come to terms with raining bombs on innocent civilians—and to emerge with his "self-respect" intact.

I am glad that Captain Stockdale's philosophy helped to sustain him in prison. I might wish that it had prevented him from engaging in the indiscriminate killing of people he did not even know. Those people never had the luxury of indulging in the philosophy of Epictetus. Nor will they ever have their individuality realized, a right Captain Stockdale urgently claims for himself.

MILTON S. GROSS  
New York, April 1, 1973