

Ramparts, May 73  
(subscription copy received 3 Apr 73)

POWS

2 MAR 73  
file 3 Apr 73

The American POWs: Their Glory is All Moonshine

by Ngo Vinh Long [director, Vietnam Resource Center, Cambridge, Mass.]  
[international representative of National Student Assoc. of South Vietnam]

.....

As for the civilian POWs, almost all were operatives of the Agency for International Development (AID) and in Vietnam, AID is inseparable from the CIA. Its funds have furnished torture chambers, built prisons, supplied the Saigon police, and assassinated political opponents of the Thieu regime. These Americans are hardly innocent do-gooders. Consider, for example, Douglas K. Ramsey, whom Peter Arnett and Seymour Hersh have written up with almost obsequious reverence. He served as right-hand man to the late John Paul Vann, another American whom the New York Times has treated with deep respect.

Often described as the most effective civilian operative in Vietnam, Vann was widely considered the most cruel by opponents of the Saigon government. He specialized, among other things, in "black propaganda," which involved him in murder, forgery, and outright deception of the American press in order to discredit the NLF, in particular, and the opposition to American intervention, in general. For example, just before his fatal helicopter crash,\* Vann fed the newspapers a story about two Catholic priests said to have been executed by the NLF. When the archdiocese of Saigon protested vehemently against this lie, the New York Times printed a tiny retraction on page 8 of their May 13, 1972 issue.

In any event, Douglas Ramsey worked for Vann in Hau Nghia. He was an important operative in part because he spoke Vietnamese well (a facility he attributed to his training as an opera singer). Vann put him in charge of numerous programs, including the so-called "counter-terror" program, predecessor to the Phoenix program which resulted in the execution of 40,000 civilians, according to Saigon statistics. In this capacity, Ramsey personally led his men on nighttime raids which were intended to cause death and destruction and which might later be blamed on the "Communists." This personal involvement supposedly generated Vietnamese confidence in him and, in turn, won him the respect of the Americans. Consequently, after his capture by the NLF in January 1966, the Americans time and again sought to obtain his release. Tens of thousands of dollars were offered as a reward, and the U.S. tried repeatedly to exchange him for NLF prisoners, and even for other Americans. Ramsey's "achievements" became well-known to many Vietnamese, and he reportedly expected that he would be executed after his arrest. However he never even suffered physical abuse, although he says that "there were definite threats to make an example" of him because his captors believed that he was "a high-level CIA agent with the blood of thousands of Vietnamese on my hands." A foolish point: the NLF knew of his criminal activities whether he was a high-level CIA agent or not.

.....

\*filed CIA 9 Jun 72.