

'Winter Soldier' Investigation to probe Vietnam war crimes

Paul Eberle

More than 2000 American veterans of the Vietnam War are sponsoring an event that will attract international attention. It will be called the "WINTER SOLDIER INVESTIGATION." It will take place in Detroit and in Windsor, Canada on January 31st (the tenth anniversary of Tet), and on February 1st and 2nd.

It gets its name from the quote by Thomas Paine, which is a reference to the summer soldiers and "sunshine patriots" in the American Revolution who left during the winter- as opposed to those who stayed on during the winter at Valley Forge, and continued to build the Revolution.

There will be a large number of Viet Nam veterans testifying on methods of torture employed by United States Military Forces, massacres, and other war crimes that are committed on a regular basis in Vietnam.

The Vietnam veterans take the position that the time they served in Vietnam was the easy part of their service. The difficult part comes now, when they come back and, as a matter of conscience, tell people what they did, what they saw, and what American national policy really means in Vietnam.

Across the Detroit river, in Windsor, will be a number of Vietnamese who are survivors of the massacres and the war crimes that the GPs will be testifying about. They will be connected, in their hall in Windsor, with the American veterans in their hall in Detroit by closed circuit television. There will be some dialogue.

At the end of the third day, the veterans who are testifying, and all others who are there, many of whom, when they last saw Vietnamese were shooting at them, will cross the river in large numbers and will join the Vietnamese for dinner, and they will then sign a peace treaty, a symbolic peace treaty on behalf of the Viet Nam veterans and the victims, of the massacres. And that's how it will end.

There probably will be a panel dealing with prisoners of war and it is hoped, in fact, that one person who was a prisoner of war at least, will testify, and it will be pointed out, through the testimony of others, that there are American servicemen who are being brutally treated, harassed, starved, and some actually murdered while in jail- BUT- they are in AMERICAN stockades, and

American brigades in West Germany, in Vietnam- particularly the Long Binh jail for example- and in the United States, and an effort will be made to de-mystify the prisoner of war issue, because obviously the Administration is cynically maneuvering around this issue and it is quite plain that they have little concern for the prisoners of war.

"We DO have concern for all of the American servicemen who are prisoners of the North Vietnamese or prisoners of the United States," Mark Lane, one of the participants in the event told the Free Press.

"John Van Dyke, who is known as the authority on treatment of American prisoners in Hanoi-- that is to say, he is the only person who has interviewed all nine of the prisoners who've returned to conduct the investigation into all charges- has said that the American prisoners of war in Hanoi are being treated better than any prisoners of war on any side, in any war in the last hundred years. Which means better than WE have ever treated any of our prisoners of war- which, of course, we know to be true," Lane said.

"We know how we are treating prisoners. There will be testimony about prisoners being thrown out of helicopters. Just today, I spoke at San Fernando Valley State College, and when I finished speaking, about six veterans came up and talked to me, and they said, 'It's worse. It's worse than anything you said!'"

"One guy was there in 1961- another guy was a prisoner of war interrogator who saw prisoners of war, who were being interrogated, being killed. He said the standard procedure went like this: three people were being questioned. Their hands were tied behind their backs. One was a North Vietnamese officer, or so they believed, one was a peasant who knew nothing, and the other was someone from the NLF. (National Liberation Front).

"They walked up to the peasant who knew nothing, and held a .45 to his head and blew his brains out. And then they asked a few questions of the guy from the

National Liberation Front and then blew his brains out. All three men were tied together.

"And then they started questioning the other guy, and, of course, he began to talk.

"And he said this was the standard procedure and that he saw it happen at least five or six times.

"So there's another guy we found today. And, of course, we are checking everybody's credentials very carefully.

"But there is no shortage of guys. They are in every city of America. They are on every college campus. In every small town in America there are guys who have witnessed war crimes.

"And our effort is to publicize this so they can come forward and they will know that there is a place for them to testify.

"The Army has a psychiatric group put together studying what they call the "post Vietnam syndrome" because so many guys have come back crazy, out of their heads, after this war- unlike any other war- because in previous wars it has not been our national policy to massacre women and children and defenseless men, which is what the policy in Viet Nam is and has been for years. And we're really not able to do that kind of thing and not have it affect us.

"And the guys who are coming forward find that it is the greatest therapy possible for them because it gives them a chance to expiate their guilt. And the guys who are working on the Winter Soldier Investigation are the healthiest-minded guys I've ever met. And this is a plea to others to come forward.

"Every time you talk to a veteran, you learn more things about the war. For example, Al Hubbard who was the national executive secretary of the Vietnam Veterans Against The War, was in the Air Force twelve years, has a hundred

per-cent disability, was wounded has the Air Medal and all that... I learned from him something I had not learned before. He was flying planes into Dien Bien Phu dropping French nurses and French soldiers in 1954, in American Air Force planes with the insignia painted off the plane. He was getting civilian clothing to wear, and the government issued a passport to him- he was not allowed to have any military identification.

"They were there in 1954. And I said that on a radio program the other day, two-way radio, and a guy called up and said, 'I was in the Air Force twenty years and I can beat that story by one year. I was piloting "flying boxcars" for the French in Vietnam in 1953.'

"I knew that we were financing and equipping the French, but I didn't know we were there," Lane said.

Veterans who are interested in testifying should write to:

Winter Soldier Investigation,
967 Emerson St., Detroit, Mich.
48215.