

### **3 Pilots Freed by Hanoi Reported Leaving Today**

HANOI, North Vietnam, Aug. 1 (Agence France-Presse)

—The three United States pilots freed by North Vietnam July 3 will leave tomorrow for Vientiane, Laos, aboard the regular International Control Commission flight, a reliable source said tonight.

The three — Maj. James F. Low, Maj. Fred N. Thompson and Capt. Joe V. Carpenter — will be escorted by three American pacifists. The pilots were handed over to the pacifists at a ceremony July 18, the source said, and have since been living in the Thong Nhat Hotel in Hanoi.

The source said that the pacifists — Stewart Meacham of Philadelphia, Mrs. Anne Scheer of Berkeley, Calif., and Vernon Grizzard of Cambridge, Mass. — had delayed their departure from Hanoi because the United States authorities in Vientiane tried to intervene in their affairs.

They decided to take the Control Commission plane tomorrow after receiving information that the United States Government would not put pressure on the pilots to travel from Laos in a United States military medical plane, but would allow them to go as they choose.



Bronson Clark

July 5, 1968

Stewart Meacham

## My trip to Hanoi

During the evening on July 3 I got a telephone call from Rennie Davis in Chicago asking me whether I would join with two or three others and go to Hanoi to bring the flyers out who are being released by the North Vietnamese government. Rennie said that others who were being invited were Vernon Grizzard, a former Swarthmore student and active in SDS, and also Judy Collins, the folk singer. (Later I have learned that Judy Collins probably will not be going but possibly Joan Baez will go.)

I tried to get in touch with you but you apparently had already left, and since you had told me you were going to be on your boat in Chesapeake Bay, I have assumed there is no way to reach you. Steve, of course, was in jail. I talked with Mike. I also talked with Lou Schneider. I also called Colin and talked with Colin, asking for his general reaction to the idea and his judgment. I also talked with Duncan Wood in Geneva and finally succeeded in reaching Gilbert White in Rome. Without going into the details of these various conversations, all felt approving of undertaking the mission. Everyone seemed to feel that it was something that we had to respond favorably to and that very possibly it might be a help to us with respect to other things that we hope may move forward. I have been in touch with Roger Frederickson and he has given me a briefing on the medical mission efforts.

In general these seem to me to be the main guidelines for this project as things now stand:

1. Regarding publicity, I will be identified as the Peace Education Secretary of the AFSC. Jim Weaver is in communication with Rennie Davis regarding coordinating any publicity relating to me and to my relationship to the mission. I feel that the publicity should not include references to AFSC's own medical mission project. I think Roger agrees with me, and also Jim Weaver, that publicity regarding my participation in the prisoner mission should be focused entirely on AFSC's humanitarian concern, its traditional humanitarian interest, and the humanitarian opportunity that this prisoner mission entails in and of itself.

2. I will go to Paris and on to Phnom Penh and Hanoi well briefed on the AFSC's medical mission and watching for the best opportunity to make inquiries regarding it. Roger and I agree that I should be as careful as I can be not to mention it or raise any question about it if there seems to be an even chance that the response would be negative. On the other hand, I should look for every opportunity to refer to it and to raise it where the opportunity seems propitious. I will have to exercise the best judgment I have on that but I feel, and Roger feels the same way, that if in the end the response from the DRVN on the medical mission is to be negative it would be much better on all sides if that came about through the regular process of consultations now under way than as a result of a collateral contact. We both feel that the very fact that an AFSC person has been involved in the prisoner release mission may in and of itself be the strongest influence on the DRVN with respect our other concerns. It may not be a mistake to let the impact of this sink in in a subtle way rather than being too obvious about it. What I am really trying to say is that I will fly by the seat of my pants and hope that I can tell the difference between having the plane upside down and right side up.



Memo to Brenson Clark

July 5, 1968

3. Both Roger and Lou raised the question with me as to whether I would want to get in touch with Frank Sievert at the State Department before leaving. I discussed this with Rennie Davis and he felt that it might be hazardous to the mission from the North Vietnam point of view if I did go to the State Department here before leaving for Paris. Roger pointed out that there would not be any necessity for the North Vietnamese to know about this. I agree that this is true. And I would not feel that there was any particular subterfuge involved in talking to Frank Sievert and not telling the North Vietnamese. One does not have to tell everybody everything. On the other hand, I feel that during these next three weeks I need to maintain for myself the best balance that I can of poise and moral confidence so that I can react well and be rightly led in the various situations, expected and unexpected, which will arise. I have recalled Roland Warren's talking about how he dealt with the two sides in Germany, always talking with one as if the other were in the room. I feel that my own moral confidence would be enhanced if I undertake that same course in this situation. I will lean over on the side of being as open as I can in all things. I realize that in this case one might ask whether it is "open" not to tell the State Department ahead of time what I am about to do. Moral choices are never entirely simple and unambiguous. As I have thought about this, it seems to me that we have every assurance both from Harriman and Sievert that their primary concern in matters of this sort is not political propaganda but getting prisoners released. I think that it would be quite easy to go to Frank Sievert and to Harriman after my return and say to him that we had discussed coming to him (Sievert) before I had left and that I had felt in the way that I have stated here and thought that it would probably be their preference not to be told if I felt that it would put me in a position of some moral discomfort with respect to others with whom I would be dealing on an issue as delicate as this prisoner issue. I go quite willing to anticipate this kind of conversation with Frank Sievert when I return.

4. It is my intention in Paris to raise the question there with the North Vietnamese and others engaged in the mission as to the rightness of dealing with Harriman before departing for Hanoi. I will have to follow my best judgment on this in Paris.

5. I am planning to go through Geneva enroute to Paris for briefings with Duncan on his time in Paris recently with Wolf.

6. I have planned to phone Steve on the afternoon of Tuesday, July 9 from Paris to bring him up-to-date on what is happening there.

I am sorry that the timing on this has been of such a character as not to have had the benefit of your judgment and wisdom on it. I have given very careful thought to what I think you would have wanted me to do under the circumstances and I believe that I have done that. I believe also that we have come out at the point that you would warmly approve.

I don't know how long you are going to be on your explorations of Chesapeake Bay so I say bet back before you get a chance to read this. If not, wish me well.

cc: Lou Schneider, Frank Bunt, Jim Weaver, Jim Estes, Steve Cary, Charles Read,  
Roger Frederickson



MEMORANDUM

AMERICAN FRIENDS SERVICE COMMITTEE  
160 North Fifteenth Street  
Philadelphia, Pa. 19102

July 5, 1968

To: All Peace Education Secretaries, All Regional Executive Secretaries,  
Members of the Peace Education Division Committee

From: Stewart Meacham

Subject: Trip to Hanoi

This is a very hurried and far too brief memorandum to tell you that about twenty-four hours ago (this is being dictated on the morning of July 5) I was asked whether I would join one or two others in going to Hanoi to receive the American flyers who are being released by the North Vietnamese Government. Accompanying me will be Vernon Grizzard, who is active in SDS, and also, possibly, a very well-known American folk singer.

I spent a somewhat crowded twenty-four hours reaching all and sundry who could be reached and who needed to be consulted. Unfortunately, Bronson was just off on his vacation cruising in Chesapeake Bay and completely out of touch and unreachable. So I couldn't talk with him. Steve is still in the Washington jail. I talked to Lou, who is on vacation but was reachable, and he gave his approval and suggested that I try to reach Gilbert White who is in Europe, and if unable to reach him consult with Henry Beerits, who is Vice-Chairman of the Board. I called Geneva and learned that Gilbert was in Rome and got the name of the hotel. I was finally able to reach Gilbert and he gave his approval. In the midst of all this I also discussed the matter with Colin seeking his general wisdom and judgment on the merits of undertaking this. He was approving. Also, of course, I talked with Mike Yarrow, who also was approving.

I shall go having been well briefed by the International Services Division on continuing efforts which they have been making to carry forward discussions with the North Vietnamese regarding a medical mission to North Vietnam and also to the NLF. I will also take along with me all the information that they have regarding various American flyers held by the North Vietnamese.

The main purpose of this trip, of course, is the humanitarian act of being an enabling agent in the release of three prisoners. A question might be raised as to why North Vietnam is releasing the prisoners in this way. Several explanations suggest themselves:

- (1) Since the North Vietnamese do not work with the International Red Cross, there would be a need for some other entity to assume responsibility for prisoners they were releasing.
- (2) If the North Vietnamese in releasing the prisoners wish to identify this act as a "peace initiative" as well as a simple act of humanitarian kindness, it would be quite natural and appropriate for them to make this emphasis by turning the prisoners over to persons identified with the peace movement in the United States.



In any event, no matter how one assesses the motivations, it seems to me that this type of peace propaganda is exactly what we are seeking to encourage on every side and in our own hearts as well. Also, it seems to me that facilitating the release of prisoners has the same inherent validity that is completely beyond all political considerations as has any other form of binding up the wounds of war.

So it is in this attitude and spirit that I go, hoping that at least we may perform well our function of freeing people now in jail. If beyond that we can also free the minds and hearts of people from the confinement and prison house of war (and I believe that this type of release is what is symbolized here) then, of course, we have been richly blessed.

Wish me well.

SM:ss

cc: Bronson Clark

Steve Cary

Lou Schneider

Frank Hunt

Division Secretaries and

Department Heads



## The Release and Escort Mission

### for Three American Pilots.

A report to the American Friends Service Committee  
by Stewart Meacham

#### Dates:

Left United States Saturday, July 6, 1968  
Arrived Hanoi Friday, July 12, 1968  
Left Hanoi Friday, August 2, 1968  
Arrived New York August 4, 1968

#### Members of Mission:

Vernon Grizzard, Boston  
Anne Scheer, Oakland, California  
Stewart Meacham, Philadelphia

Preliminary note: This report will deal with the actual release of the pilots, and the escort mission. A second report, or possibly several reports, will deal with observations, impressions, and information about conditions in North Vietnam including such matters as health and medical services, social organization in the war situation, industry and agriculture, attitudes of the people, war damage, etc.

### The Invitation

Some time around the end of June, during a phone conversation with Dave Dellinger, he mentioned that he had received a cable from Xuan Oanh, Permanent Secretary of the DRVN Peace Committee, who is presently in Paris with the Vietnamese Delegation to the Paris talks, asking Dave to come to Paris. Dave said that he was uncertain whether he could go. He said that he thought that the purpose was to discuss a possible release of some captured pilots. /Dave had been involved in arranging an earlier release last February, when Father Dan Berrigan and Professor Howard Zinn had gone to Hanoi for this purpose and brought three pilots as far as Vientiane, where they were taken in charge by the U.S. authorities under circumstances which Father Berrigan characterized as high-handed./

Several days after the phone conversation with Dave, I got a phone call from Rennie Davis, who works closely with Dave Dellinger. He said word had come from Paris to the effect that they wanted three Americans, active in the peace movement, to come to Hanoi to escort three flyers back to the United States. He asked whether I would be willing to be a member of the escort team. This was on the evening of July 3. During the next 24 hours I made numerous phone calls to various colleagues in the AFSC and to Gilbert White who was in Rome. There seemed to be general approval of my going. It was clear that I would identify myself as the peace education secretary of the American Friends Service Committee. The project developed quickly. On July 5 I called Rennie Davis and told him I would join the mission, and on July 6 I left for Paris via Geneva.



Interview in Paris with Ambassador Harriman and his aide Frank Sieverts

In Paris the members of the mission met first with a Mr. Vy and Xuan Oanh, of the DRVN Mission to the Paris talks. Mr. Vy told us that the released flyers would be turned over to us in Hanoi by the Political Department of the Military High Command. They wanted the pilots to return with us to their families in the States "in accordance with the humanitarian motives" of the North Vietnam government. He said that in turning the flyers over to the representatives of the peace movement the Vietnamese were responding to the growing peace movement in the United States.

On the following day we met with Averell Harriman and Frank Sieverts at the U.S. Embassy in Paris. Frank Sieverts had taken the initiative in arranging the meeting, apparently at Harriman's behest. The meeting lasted about an hour. The main point we raised with Ambassador Harriman had to do with the mode of return of the pilots. We told him that while the Vietnamese had put no conditions on the releases (which, incidentally, had first been announced when Mr. Thuy had told Mr. Harriman several days before that the releases would occur, timing the announcement to coincide with the U.S. Independence Day observances), we felt that it was clear they were doing this as a humanitarian gesture of good will toward the American people and that they hoped the U.S. authorities would not respond to their peace gesture with a military gesture. We said we thought that if the flyers were permitted a choice as to their mode of return, and if they chose to return with us, it would enhance the likelihood of future releases. We said that the Vietnamese had not told us this, but that we felt this to be the case. Harriman was rather impatient with this line of reasoning and brushed it aside. He said U.S. Ambassador Sullivan in Vientiane would talk with the pilots when they arrived there. He said that they would be told what their rights and duties were, and that there would be military transport to take them quickly to a place of adequate medical attention if they needed it; and also to take them to their families. He said we could travel with them on the military aircraft if we wished. He said, however, that if the pilots chose to come with us they would be free to do so, and this too would be explained to them by Sullivan. He said we would have had "several days in Hanoi to work them over" and it would be Mr. Sullivan's responsibility to give them a more balanced perspective. When we told Mr. Harriman that he was being insulting he quickly apologized and withdrew the remark about "working them over," but it was clear that the U.S. authorities did not approve of the pilots coming back by commercial plane with us and that they would make this clear to the pilots even though they would not give outright orders to the pilots forbidding them to return with us. At the same time Mr. Harriman was strong in his expressions of appreciation to us for going to Hanoi to facilitate the release. That these were not empty words had already been indicated by the fact that Frank Sieverts had intervened a day or so before to get a quick 30-day passport for Vernon Grizzard, who could not quickly get a birth certificate.

Thus the State Department seemed from the start to be ambivalent toward us. On the one hand they wanted the pilots released and they realized that we were an element in the process. On the other hand they were irritated that this was in the hands of peace movement people; they wanted to get in on it.

We left Paris on July 10, after a press conference at Orly Airport, and arrived in Bangkok on the following afternoon. There the U.S. Embassy had a car meet us at the plane and gave us valuable help in getting Laotian visas and



transferring baggage, etc., to the Royal Laotian Airline, which took us to Vientiane that same afternoon.

Interview in Vientiane with Ambassador Sullivan--July 12

We were in Vientiane overnight, and on the following morning James Murphey, Third Secretary of the U.S. Embassy, came to our hotel to help us get the approvals and the clearances needed to get on the ICC plane that same night for Hanoi. At Murphey's request we went to the U.S. Embassy at 3 p.m. for a meeting with Ambassador Sullivan. He and I had met at an AFSC weekend conference at Capon Springs, Va., several years ago, and he recalled this.

Mr. Sullivan started the meeting off with a frank, crisp statement of what he intended to do when we returned to Vientiane with the pilots. He said he would have three U.S. military planes on the ramp when we arrived on the ICC plane. There would be one plane for each pilot to take each by the fastest and most direct means to his wife and family. The pilots would be told of the availability of these planes and also that they were under military discipline and that it was, as Sullivan put it, "the considered preference" of their branch of the armed forces that they return to the States by military aircraft rather than by commercial transport with us. On the other hand, he said that the men would be told they were free to return with us, if they chose, and they would not be penalized or disciplined if they did so. We asked whether putting it this way, the men actually would have a free choice. Mr. Sullivan thought they would have.

He then said he would like to prepare for all contingencies, and he asked whether we would be willing for Murphey to return to the States with us in the event the pilots should choose to come back by commercial plane. We said that would be agreeable with us. We then said that while we did not want to give him advice or tell him what course he should take, we felt it would be a more appropriate response to the humanitarian gesture of the Vietnamese, and would enhance the possibility of future releases, if he did not put pressure on the pilots to return by military aircraft. He, as Harriman, did not see it that way at all. He said the Vietnamese were trying to make propaganda. We asked whether this gesture by the Vietnamese did not challenge the United States to respond with initiatives of its own, indicating humanitarian concern. He insisted that it was his duty to place the men back within the military context at the first opportunity. We said the timing of this could be deferred, at least until the men reached their families in the States, without placing the United States and its interests in peril. Sullivan could not see it that way, and we left him with some misgivings about what he intended to do.

Initial Plans for Return with the Pilots. Hanoi.

We arrived in Hanoi on the evening of July 12 and were met at the airport by a group of seven or eight representatives of the DRVN Peace Committee, including two interpreters, a permanent secretary, a general arrangements organizer, a photographer, and two drivers. During the first two days we were there, little was discussed about the pilots. Rather we were taken to see various things in and near Hanoi and to meet with representatives of various activities. Also there were musical and film programs arranged for us in the evening.



On July 14 we had our first extended discussion of the actual releases. At that time the remainder of our schedule was mapped out with the intent clearly stated that we would be leaving with the pilots on Friday, July 19, one week after our arrival.

At the July 14 meeting the representatives of the Peace Committee asked us whether the U.S. authorities would pick up the pilots in Vientiane as had been done at the prior release in February. We told them that we could not be certain that they would but that we thought it was most likely. We gave them a brief summary of our talks with Harriman and Sullivan, and we said that while we were disappointed by the attitude these men had shown, we did not believe that the meaning of the gesture by the Vietnamese would be lost on the American people. We said that we would protest if Sullivan acted in the way he had said he was going to act, and that we would make a public statement on the spot in Vientiane. We said that we felt the release of the pilots was well worth while regardless of the action of the U.S. authorities, that we were glad we had come on the mission, and that we hoped they felt the same way. They indicated full agreement, and we proceeded to discuss plans for the release itself and our departure with the pilots.

The schedule they presented to us was roughly as follows:

July 17. An evening meeting at the Detention Camp in Hanoi. We would meet with Army authorities responsible for the Detention Camp, and then we would have our first meeting with the pilots.

July 18. In the morning there would be a meeting, which we would not attend, at which the pilots would be formally turned over by the Army to the newly-formed Committee for Solidarity with the Progressive American People. (This new committee apparently was formed simultaneously with our arrival to act in certain ceremonial ways vis-a-vis Americans. Its work seems to be done by the Peace Committee. We gently raised some quiet questions with our Vietnamese friends about the name of the committee, feeling that in American ears it will sound like something out of the 1930s. They seemed to understand what we were saying, and they indicated from time to time that they were trying out other names. But in the end the name remained as above. Apparently this is to bring the name into harmony with similarly named committees oriented toward friendly nations such as the Committee for Solidarity with the Soviet People, etc. In the case of the U.S. the adjective "progressive" seemed to be necessary, from their point of view, and also the word "solidarity." Such are the semantic difficulties which impulses of good will from either side confront in a sloganeering world.)

In the afternoon.

First there would be a public meeting at which the Committee for Solidarity with the Progressive American People would formally turn the pilots over to the American peace movement representatives. We would respond to their statement of release, and then the pilots would be given an opportunity to



make statements. The press would not be present at the July 17 meeting at the Detention Camp, but would be present at the afternoon ceremony on July 18.

Second, there would be a brief time for conversation and tea between us and the pilots immediately following the ceremony formally turning them over to us. The press also would be present for this.

Third, we would then go back to the hotel, and there we would have our first opportunity to meet with the pilots alone. They would be moved from the Detention Camp to the hotel and would stay there overnight prior to our flight to Vientiane on the evening of July 19.

July 19. At noon, a farewell luncheon with members of the Peace Committee and of the Committee for Solidarity with the Progressive American People.

In the evening, departure from Hanoi via ICC plane.

We agreed to this schedule.

On the morning of July 16 we left Hanoi via two automobiles and spent two days touring provinces. We returned early in the evening of July 17, just in time for the initial meeting with the pilots at the Detention Camp. Meanwhile we had been given the names of the pilots and also the names and addresses of their wives. We sent cables to the wives on the morning of July 15, informing them of the selection of their husbands for release and stating that we would inform them later regarding specific arrival plans in New York. We said we would be leaving Hanoi on July 19. These cables were turned over to the Peace Committee people, who actually took care of sending them.

(I might say at this point that we had brought with us 42 letters to flyers thought to be held in Hanoi. We gave these to the Peace Committee the day after we arrived and asked them to turn them over to the proper authorities for delivery. They agreed to do so, and so far as we know they were delivered. We also suggested that in addition to the pilots being released we would be happy to take back to the States with us letters from pilots being held. We also mentioned specific names of a few pilots regarding whom relatives had asked one or another of us to make specific inquiries. As it turned out we were given no information about the total number of pilots being held "a state secret", nor were we told the names of any pilots other than those being released and some 50 other men whose letters to relatives were handed to us shortly before our departure for delivery in the States. We got no information regarding the pilots about whom we had made specific inquiry.)

July 17. Evening meeting with pilots at Hanoi Detention Camp

This was our first meeting either with the Detention Camp authorities or with the pilots. We went to the Detention Camp, which was located in a large walled compound in the central part of Hanoi, with very mixed emotions. How would we feel toward the pilots? How would they feel toward us? How could we



help then truly to understand our motivations? How could we sense and understand their motivations? What would be their mental and physical condition? To what extent would they be able to trust us? How would we react to their trust or lack of trust? Would the Vietnamese have any expectations as to what this initial meeting would accomplish? What unanticipated problems would we face and how should we prepare ourselves to deal with such problems?

Before our first meeting with the pilots, Anne, Vernon, and I had discussed five guiding principles which I had hastily drawn up:

1. We will tell the pilots when we talk with them that what they tell us is in confidence. We will not report on what they tell us.
2. We will tell the pilots about the significance of their release, and about the choice they will make as to whether they will return with us or via military plane. But we will tell them not to tell us their decision before the plane has left Hanoi.
3. Regardless of the decision of the pilots, we will express our hope that we can talk again after they have had time with their families.
4. If the pilots choose to go with us we will have one task: to escort them to their families in New York. There will be no demonstrations, and press conferences only if the pilots themselves agree.
5. If Sullivan brings pressure on the pilots in Vientiane we will make a press statement immediately.

Frankly, I was not sure that my two colleagues would agree to all of these as guiding principles. I had not at that time gotten to know them as well as was the case by the time we had completed our mission, and with the generation gap that exists today I did not know whether the whole idea of a set of principles of this sort would seem unnecessarily stuffy to them, or downright wrong. I was greatly reassured by their response. They felt as strongly as I did that these should be the basis of our dealing with the pilots, and they never once wavered on this. As a matter of fact, though there were many points at which I and they would express ourselves differently (pacifism, religious belief, political participation, etc.), when it came right down to decisions about how we would deal with specific situations involving basic respect for persons I never once felt that we were at odds, and in almost every instance we obviously were in full agreement. This, of course, was a source of great reassurance to me and, I believe, also to them.

With these basic principles or guidelines in mind we went to our first meeting with the pilots, not entirely without preparation but with many unanswered questions nonetheless.

After a brief preliminary meeting with the Detention Camp authorities when we first arrived, we went into an adjacent room where tables had been arranged in the form of a large square with one side open. We were seated along the side of the square, Vietnamese officials were along the bottom of the square to our right, and places were left for the pilots along the top of the square to our left. The room was brightly lighted for photographers who were present. (We were told that these were official photographers, not the press.) After



we of the escort mission and the Vietnamese officials had been seated the three pilots were brought in. They were dressed in grey pajama-like garb, and they seemed to be in good health though a little pale.

Before they could take their seats (stools rather than chairs) Anne, Vernon and I got up from our chairs and went to them, introducing ourselves and extending our greetings. They responded with obvious warmth. Immediately we were on a first-name basis with each other, and strangely unaware of the cameras, the bright lights, and those who were watching. It was a much more emotional experience than I had imagined it would be. As we took our seats I started in by telling them something about who I was, the work that I do, and why I had come to Hanoi. Anne and Vernon followed, and then the pilots told us something about themselves. For a while the conversation centered on parts of the country where we had grown up or had lived and worked. Then it shifted to the presidential campaign, and finally to sports and baseball. An hour went by almost before we knew it. I think we each realized that we had made emotional contact with each other and that the apprehensions we had had earlier had quickly disappeared. I had a sense of feeling sorry for the pilots and wanting to protect them and reassure them. I was relieved but not surprised to sense as the hour went by that they were mentally alert and emotionally stable.

After about an hour one of our Vietnamese friends suggested quietly to me that perhaps we should bring things to a close. This we did, and the pilots were led from the room. We remained briefly with the Detention Camp official, a civilian, who seemed to be in charge of the releases. He asked us how we felt about this first meeting. We told him we felt it had gone extremely well. We said we believed we had established an excellent basis for further communication with the pilots. Vernon, quite gently but clearly, raised a question about the stools for the pilots while the rest of us sat in chairs. The Detention Camp official said that while the military is willing to deal with the pilots in a humanitarian way it does not look on the pilots in the same way as it does the American people generally who are opposed to the war. He said that the Vietnamese people call the pilots air pirates, that they are criminals. Even so, as a gesture of response to the anti-war movement in the United States the DRVN is willing to release them to the peace movement. But it cannot and will not extend to the pilots the same expressions of friendship and the same courtesy that it extends to anti-war Americans. He was quite explicit and direct.

#### The Public Release Ceremony - July 18

On the afternoon following the evening meeting with the pilots at the Detention Camp, we were taken to a large public hall where many press representatives and photographers had gathered from practically all of the Communist countries, and also from France, Japan and Australia. Possibly there were also one or two other non-Communist countries represented.

The American escort team was seated at a table in the front of the hall together with representatives of the Committee for Solidarity with the Progressive American People. The pilots, dressed in open-necked white shirts and brown slacks, sat toward the front of the hall. There were a hundred or so spectators in addition to the very large press corps present. There were many pictures and much rushing from one place to another by the press to take



pictures and ask questions. (It seemed to me that the press people of the Communist countries are, if anything, even more disruptive than those of the West.)

There was first a brief statement in Vietnamese by one of the Peace Committee people. Then Madame Cam of the Solidarity Committee (a very distinguished and aristocratic-appearing woman of mature years, a lawyer) made a brief statement. This was followed by a brief statement which we had prepared and Vernon read. Then each of the pilots expressed his appreciation for his release and for the treatment he had received, as well as his hope for peace.

The Solidarity Committee statement made it quite clear that the pilots are considered by the DRVN to be war criminals and that the war is considered to be a criminal war involving genocide. Despite this the pilots have been given humane treatment, the statement said, and the hope was expressed that we would not be hampered in our task of bringing the released men home to their families. The statement ended with expressions of good will toward the American people who are opposed to the war.

In our statement we expressed our gratification at being able to play a role in the release of the pilots, and our recognition of the humanitarian motives and the national strength which had inspired the release, and we pledged to fulfill our task of making the meaning of the releases clear to the American people.

Then each of the pilots spoke briefly along the lines indicated above. The pilots spoke clearly and without manuscript or notes, in quiet, confident tones. I was impressed with their poise under the circumstances which had included the meeting the night before, the release ceremony at the camp that same morning, and now this public meeting.

Following the public ceremony we went with the pilots into an adjacent room for tea and more photographs. Then we all left the hall. The pilots were taken to the same hotel where we were and they were put up in three rooms at the opposite end of the long corridor on which the three of us also had rooms.

After an hour or so we had our first private meeting with the pilots in their suite.

Before that, however, there had been an incident in the hotel which at the time did not seem too significant but soon was to become significant. We had been with some of the Peace Committee people in the lobby of the hotel and we were shown a copy of an AP wire service dispatch with a Vientiane date-line stating that on the previous day Ambassador Sullivan had announced publicly that he was going to have a military medical evacuation plane on the ramp at Vientiane on Friday night when the ICC plane arrived and that the pilots would be flown directly from there to Udorn Air Base in Thailand. This is a U.S. base from whence Vietnam is being bombed every day. The Peace Committee people were quite obviously upset over this announcement. My own reaction was that Sullivan was acting in a stupid way but I was not surprised and I did not see what could be done about it except to protest on the spot and make the protest as public as possible. My mind began to run in the direction of a small demonstration before the Embassy in Vientiane with signs which might get the story across more clearly than a more sedate press release.



I mention this at this point in this report because, later that same day, just before we were to go to talk with the pilots in their suite following the release ceremony, Hieu, our interpreter, mentioned quite casually to us that there was a problem about our reservations on the ICC plane the following night. He said we may have to stay longer in Hanoi than had been originally planned. This was something of a shock, but we gave no sign except to say that we hoped the problem could be cleared up. Hieu said they were trying to arrange something by an alternative route.

#### Our First Private Meeting with the Pilots, July 18

Late that afternoon we went to the pilots' suite by prior arrangement. They had three rooms. In the first Vunh, a Vietnamese civilian connected with the Detention Camp administration stayed. Fred Thompson and Joe Carpenter were in the middle room, and Jim Low was in the third. When we went to see them for this first visit, and subsequently, we sat around a table in the middle room.

They wanted to know about our contacts with officials of the U.S. government. We told them in some detail about our meetings with Harriman and Sullivan. (We did not at this time mention Sullivan's press announcement about the plane to take them to Udorn. Nor did we mention Hieu's hint about the possibility that we were not going to leave on the following day as planned.) We discussed the problem of mode of transport home. We described the issues as we saw them but we asked them not to tell us their choice until we were airborne out of Hanoi. We suggested that they ought to discuss this amongst themselves. Fred asked us whether we had received written orders from the Vietnamese military releasing them to us. We told them that we had no such orders and that we did not know whether such orders existed. They asked us about the expenses of going back by commercial air transport. We told them that we had sufficient funds for their tickets. They said they could probably turn in vouchers, recover the costs, and reimburse us. They also asked about getting clothes, shoes, etc. We said that we thought that could be done in Vientiane or Bangkok. We were with them for about an hour and most of the conversation had to do with the question of mode of transport home and the practical problems related to it.

#### The First Postponement of Our Departure from Hanoi

Later that same day as we were finishing dinner, we were joined by Hieu. He told us that the plane apparently was filled for the following night (June 19), or, at least, six seats were not available. He said that we would not know the situation for certain until the following morning.

On the following morning as we were finishing breakfast we were joined by Hieu, Van and Toan. Van was the spokesman with Hieu translating. Van told us that it now appeared that there was very little chance that we could leave on the ICC plane that night. He said that since six seats are required and since the plane is already heavily booked it looked as if we were going to have to remain in Hanoi a little longer. I said that it was most important if at all possible for us to leave on the plane that same night. I said that the morale of the pilots could only be adversely affected by delay, and that delay would raise questions which it would be difficult for us to answer. Van said that he



realized this but that we would need to deal with the situation as well as we could.

We asked how this news would be broken to the pilots. We pointed out that it would raise all kinds of fears and anxieties for them. Van said that they would explain matters to the pilots. We said that we would like to reassure them. Van said that it would be best for us not to plan to see them until the following day. We asked about sending cables to the pilots' families. Van said it would be best to wait until the following day to send them, adding that at the last minute on Friday we might be able to board the plane after all.

Van also said that possible alternative routes were being explored. We asked what the alternative routes were. Van was vague in reply and said nothing specific.

For the next two days we were in a strange situation. On the one hand we did not believe that the basic project was off the tracks. But obviously it was encountering delay, and it was difficult to believe that the reason was entirely one of getting space on the plane. At the same time we were clear that we should not indicate any lack of confidence in our hosts although we were beginning to feel that for some reason not apparent to us they did not feel able to take us fully into their confidence. If they had told us frankly that they were slowing down the schedule of things because of Sullivan's press announcement we could have understood that. It is one thing to proceed with a plan which one suspects another will upset. It is quite a different thing to proceed with it when the other has made a public announcement that he is going to upset it. We could understand that, though we might (and probably would) have argued for keeping to the original time schedule in any event, had they taken us into their confidence.

Perhaps at this point I should state the reasons why I think we would have argued for keeping to the original schedule even though by now it is water over the dam, and quite speculative at best. But this is important to understand if one is to sense the inwardness of our situation at the time. First of all, the pilots had been turned over to us. This was mainly ceremonial and symbolic, of course. We had no legal authority over them. But even so we found ourselves with three human beings who had been in prison and were being set free because we had agreed to come to Hanoi and leave with them. Now unexpectedly our departure with them was delayed. The thought occurred that if you can miss one Friday you can miss them all. Furthermore, if Sullivan's announcement was the reason for the delay what did this mean? Would the release become a matter for negotiation between Thuy and Harriman? If it did (and it had seemed to us that Harriman possibly was trying to get in on the release) would that lead to further contingencies and further delays? If delays became indefinite and extended, what would we do? Could we just say to the pilots, sorry, and then take off? Or were we not in a very real way bound to stay with them until we had succeeded in getting them home to their families? And if this were so, how long would that take? These were some of the questions that began piling in upon us and made our situation far more difficult and perplexing than would have been the case if it had been a simple matter of trying to outwit Sullivan and the State Department. It was the fact that men's lives and their freedom were at stake and we had a commitment to them. Possibly, we thought, the alternative route idea may prove to be the most practical solution.



One other major consideration in our minds was the effect on the pilots of the unexplained, or the not convincingly explained, delay. What fears would this raise with them? What anxieties? They seemed stable enough but how could one really know? Where would we be if one of them began to come apart at the seams?

It was considerations, possibilities, and questions of this sort that would have caused us, I think, to have argued against any delay had we been consulted. At any rate these questions were very much in our minds at the time.

As it was we could only compose ourselves and hope for the best. The situation was not without its absurd aspects. An elaborate farewell luncheon on our departure day, July 19, had been arranged for us by the Committee for Solidarity with the Progressive American People. Our Peace Committee friends suggested that we go ahead and go through with the luncheon, not mentioning the delay, since all plans had been made. We did this, but with a sense of the unreality of the scene.

During the morning of July 19, before the "farewell luncheon," Vernon, Anne, and I discussed our situation and we agreed that if it were at all possible we should get the Peace Committee to take the six of us to the airport that night prepared to board the plane even at the last minute if space should become available. After the luncheon we met with Van and Hieu and Vernon made this proposal. Van said that he realized the need of the pilots and of us to get on our way but that going to the airport would not help. I inquired whether it would help if we went to the ICC office and asked them directly about space on the plane. Van said that it would be best for us to leave these matters to the Peace Committee. I then asked about sending cables to the States. Van said that it would be necessary to discuss the content of the cables so that the peace movement in the States would not misunderstand the situation. I said that it wasn't the peace movement, it was my wife. I had told her that I thought that we would be returning after a week in Hanoi. I needed to let her know the reason for the delay. Van said that in war people are sometimes separated from their wives for two years rather than two weeks. I got the message. Van then added that "though we trust you completely and you and we are one there are some things that you must leave to us,--things that we cannot tell you." We then asked about alternative routes. Van said that they were trying to find a better route, but again was not specific.

#### A Circus and a Question of Religion

That evening, instead of catching the plane to Vientiane, we went to a circus. It was a delightful event with the highly skilled performers doing their acts on the large stage of a large auditorium. Ordinarily I would have enjoyed it immensely. As it was I was extremely uncomfortable. My mind continually went back to the pilots; I felt that I had an obligation to them that was not being fulfilled. It came to me toward the end of the first half of the circus performance that it would be a great release if it were possible to have a meeting for worship with the pilots in the manner of Friends. During the intermission of the circus performance Van remarked that he did not believe that I had enjoyed the circus. I had not realized that my distress had shown in my outward demeanor. I had tried to appear to be in good spirits. I replied that I had enjoyed the circus. Then I asked Van, "Have the pilots been talked to?"



He told me that the Detention Camp authorities had talked to them at some length late that afternoon and had explained to them that there would be some delay, that they would go at the right time. He said that the military people said that they had accepted this. I said that I was relieved to hear this.

I then said that I am a Quaker and that we have a very simple form of worship which we engage in on Sunday. I described how we go about it. I asked whether I might invite the pilots to join with me in such a meeting for worship on the following Sunday. Van said, "We are not religious but we respect religion and the religious people." He said that in the Detention Camp the prisoners do not ordinarily have religious meetings, but if the pilots wanted to have such a meeting with me that would be all right. But it should not be forced on them, he said. I said that I fully agreed, and I said that there was nothing private in what I had in mind. I said that I would be glad to have him and any other Vietnamese friends join us if we had such a meeting. Van seemed to relax when I said this. He said that he and Hieu are not religious but that one of the Vice-Chairmen of the Peace Committee is a Christian. He said that he knew about Quaker worship having seen Horace Champney, Betty Boardman, Phil Drath and others of the Phoenix engaged in this form of worship. He said that I could invite the pilots.

My mind was eased and I felt lifted in my spirit.

Van again said something about not being religious. I said that I was not sure that I agreed with him on this. I said that by some definitions I felt that he and Hieu were quite religious.

He said that he felt religious when he was shooting at American planes which were trying to destroy innocent people. He said, "If we could talk to the pilot and reason with him or appeal to his moral feelings we would do so. But if not we shoot him if we can. If that is your definition of religious then I am religious."

I did not reply because I simply did not know what to say. I think I know something of what non-violence implies for me in my situation. But I have no ready formula to offer the Vietnamese.

#### Second Private Meeting with the Pilots, July 20

Anne, Vernon and I next saw the pilots on the afternoon of July 20 at three o'clock. We took with us a variety of reading materials including Peace in Vietnam, an issue of I.F. Stone's Weekly, a recent issue of Time, a copy of Ramparts, a copy of the Far Eastern Economic Review, and a few other things. The pilots had been told that we were coming. They seemed to be poised, but tense and somewhat apprehensive. They began by asking us questions about the delay--questions which we could not answer. The best we could do was to try to make them understand that we too were not clear about all of the factors involved, but that the release was still very much on the tracks, and that a little more delay had become necessary. We said that the best thing to do was to remain calm and confident that all was well. Otherwise they would get themselves into all sorts of upsetting speculations and apprehensions. They seemed reassured.



The pilots at one point said that they had wondered whether we were still in Hanoi, or had gone to Vientiane without them the night before. I assured them that we were not going to leave without them. They seemed to accept this and to relax. We talked about sending new cables to their wives, and we drafted the text to be used and checked it with them.

During this meeting I talked a little about Quaker meetings for worship and I asked them whether they would like to have such a meeting on Sunday, the following day. They said that they would but I was uncertain whether this response was anything more than a matter of being polite.

When we left them I felt that both they and we were considerably more relaxed about the delay in departure than we had been before this meeting. As we were leaving the pilots' rooms one of them said, "Don't leave without us." We again assured them that we would not.

#### My Meeting with the Pilots on Sunday, July 21

As agreed, I went to the pilots' rooms at 3:00 p.m. with the thought in mind of joining with them in a meeting for worship. I described again what a meeting involves. They listened but I did not feel that they really were drawn toward what I was describing. Since one of them was smoking it gave me an excuse not to suggest going immediately into silence. So we talked. Then another would light a cigarette. And so it went. We never did have the meeting for worship. I suppose after so much earlier feeling and discussion about this I should have felt somewhat rebuffed, or at least had some question as to whether I had followed true leadings. Actually I have not had this feeling. I felt rightly led at the time and if it did not turn out as I had thought it might, that too is acceptable. Much in life turns out differently from what we expect.

These were some of the questions they asked:

1. Could we get reservations made straight through to New York from Hanoi? (The answer was that we could not. We would do this in Vientiane.)
2. Could we get cables sent to their wives about actual arrival time soon enough so that their wives could make it to New York in time? (We felt that we could.)
3. Again the question of clothes en route.

#### The Next Ten Days

The situation regarding the timing of our return remained basically the same for about ten days. During this period we of the escort team had numerous interviews with different people, were entertained in a variety of ways, and on several occasions went to places outside the hotel with the pilots (film showings, a trip to the Hanoi zoo, etc.). The pilots could not leave their rooms without prior arrangement, though their door was not locked and often Vunh who lived with them would leave for awhile and no one would be with them.



Gradually things relaxed and we would go to see them in their rooms without prior notification to the Vietnamese. We became quite easy with each other. We saw them on an average of once every two days during the last half of our stay in Vietnam. We talked quite freely. I have been asked since our return whether the room where we talked with them might not have been bugged. Of course it might have been. But we did not think so. We talked, and I believe the pilots talked, without considering whether we were being listened to.

The Vietnamese who stayed with the pilots, Vunh, was an attractive person. He has good English, plays the cello in the Hanoi symphony orchestra, and looks forward to visiting Philadelphia one day and hearing our orchestra. He is a gentle and sensitive person, quite different from the stereotype of a prison guard.

Surprisingly, we talked very little with the pilots, considering the amount of time we spent together, about the war or the peace movement. We felt inhibited by the fact that the pilots could not feel free until they were in the air out of Hanoi. And then they would not feel entirely free once Sullivan appeared on the scene in Vientiane. So they were men who could not easily find for themselves an opportunity for genuinely free discussion on such matters, either in Hanoi or later. They did tell us of their experiences at the time of capture, something of what it was like in the Detention Camp, and once or twice we got into discussion of the tactics of war and the use of such weapons as anti-personnel bombs. They asked that we not quote them on things said in these conversations and we of course agreed.

We talked a good deal about the American political scene. Their interest was somewhat casual rather than really involved and concerned. They at times expressed the hope that the war in Vietnam would come to an end but nothing that would suggest that they were planning an actual withdrawal from military service for reasons of basic conviction.

#### Alternative Routes

Several times our Vietnamese friends spoke of possible alternative routes back to the States. The most explicit discussion of this occurred on July 25, the day before our second Friday when again we hoped we might be able to leave on the ICC plane. In this conversation Van came very close to an explicit statement that Sullivan's announcement was the root cause of the delay. Van started off by saying that the fact that we had cooperated together was significant, that they had been thinking about how the pilots might be handed over to the American people rather than to the military. He pointed out that the three previously released pilots had been taken by the military in Vientiane and that they had remained in the Air Force. The Vietnamese had heard nothing from them since then. Therefore they had been thinking about other ways to turn the pilots over to their families. This would make the project we were engaged in more significant. If the pilots returned home with the military the result would likely be the same as before. Even so, he said, it would be significant. The point of view of the Vietnamese was clearly stated at the release ceremony, he said. They demanded that the United States not do the same as it had previously. If there were no alternative but to go through Vientiane it would still be important to do the best we can. But he felt we should consider another possibility.



He said that in suggesting an alternative route to the States common agreement would be necessary, and that the opinion of the pilots also must be consulted. He then said we could go to Vladivostok by freighter from Haiphong and then from there to Moscow by air, and from there to New York. He estimated that the entire trip would take about ten days including seven days on the ship. He asked how the American people would feel about this, and also how the families of the pilots would feel. He asked whether we would give tentative agreement to this alternative so that they could explore it with the Soviet authorities pending further consideration.

We agreed to these explorations tentatively, contingent upon the consent of the pilots. Van had said that a Soviet ship was leaving on the following day and the implication was that we might be able to board that ship. We still held to the expectation that if we failed to make that ship we could go on the ICC plane. Otherwise, according to Van, another Soviet ship would be leaving on the following Monday or Tuesday.

#### The Second Departure Delay, July 26

Considering the discussion of the alternative route we were not greatly surprised when we learned late in the day on July 26 that again we were not going to leave by ICC plane that night. Even so we were distressed that for a second time this word had come only at the last minute. Again we were told that the plane was filled, and this time it seemed really to be the case as there was one large delegation in our hotel which was intending to leave but some of its members stayed over because of lack of space on the plane. Even so we felt that if the desire had been strong our friends could have gotten us aboard. But, as I say, our reaction was not as strong as earlier for we knew of the alternative explorations and we hoped they would quickly lead to something. But Van asked us not to discuss this alternative plan with the pilots until the way was clearly open.

We met with the pilots that same night, July 26, after they had been informed that we would not be leaving that night. They were plainly annoyed, upset, and suspicious. They charged that their belongings had been searched during their absence on a visit to a museum; they asked us if we were willing for them to tell us their decision regarding the return trip; they asked whether we had tried to make contact with the Canadian representatives on the ICC; and they said that they were convinced that they were not actually free but still were prisoners. Also they said that Van had told them that alternative routes to the U.S. were being explored. Also they showed us some gifts which the Vietnamese had brought to them.

We told them that we did not want them to tell us their decision until we left Hanoi, and that we felt it would be a mistake for us to go directly to any members of the ICC. The Vietnamese wanted to maintain this contact themselves and it could only complicate our situation if we attempted to deal with the ICC directly. We simply had to keep our poise and stick things out a little longer. We agreed that their basic situation remained ambivalent at best and that they had to accept very close limitations on what they could do. We said that we knew of explorations for alternative routes but that we felt it would be unwise to discuss this until more was known about the alternatives.



The pilots seemed to be relieved to get their questions listened to, if not answered. They agreed with us that the only thing to do was to keep cool and aim toward a definite departure by ICC plane a week hence if no attractive alternative had opened meanwhile. So that was the way we left it.

#### The Attack by Insurgents at Udorn

A few days later an AP wire service dispatch reached Hanoi telling of grenade and automatic weapon attack on Udorn Air Base. The attack had occurred on the night of July 26 and, reportedly, the medical evacuation plane which Sullivan had summoned from Udorn to be at Vientiane that night had been the object of the attack after it had returned from Vientiane without the three pilots. According to the press story, Thai Prime Minister Thanom had charged that the attack was a North Vietnamese effort to kill the three pilots "in order to prevent them from talking about the real conditions in North Vietnam." He added, "They did not want to kill them in Hanoi as it might spoil their international image." This wild charge came in to Hanoi by teletype and it so happened that Vunh got a copy of it and showed it to the pilots, apparently thinking that they would be amused. Instead they were alarmed. They showed us the dispatch, and I at first thought that they believed the story. I pointed out to them that if the North Vietnamese had wanted to kill them they could find an easier way to do it than that. And in any event if that had been their purpose they would have been sure to put them on the ICC plane. It would not make much sense to set up an ambush at Udorn and then not put them on the plane that would take them to the place where they could board the Udorn-bound plane and arrive there in time to be ambushed.

The pilots readily agreed with this. What they feared was that this ambush had been set up to kill them and that the contrivers of the ambush were anti-North Vietnam cloak and dagger types who wanted to pin the ambush on the North Vietnamese! Thus they would turn the pilots' release into a propaganda disaster for North Vietnam. This was a little too much for me. I tried to get them calmed down, and I wondered how long it would be before we would all be totally paranoid. And then I wondered what was paranoia and what was real. It is a nice question which at times even sane people have to face.

#### Departure at Last

On August 1 the Vietnamese told us that they had received word that Ambassador Sullivan's instructions had been changed, that undue pressure would not be brought to bear on the pilots in Vientiane, and that we would definitely be leaving the following night by ICC plane. Nothing more was said about the alternative route. On Friday we saw the text of a message assertedly given to Mr. Thuy by Mr. Harriman assuring him that the pilots would have a free choice and would not be put under pressure.

We left on the ICC plane on August 2, and when we were at cruising altitude the pilots told us that they had decided to return to the States with us by commercial air line. When we reached Vientiane Ambassador Sullivan came aboard and told the pilots that they could return either with us or via military plane. But he said nothing about "considered preference" of the armed services. The pilots each in turn told Sullivan that they had decided to return with us.



Earlier they had told us that we had been frank and forthright in our dealings with them, and that they thought that returning with us would enhance the possibility of other releases.

And so our mission drew toward its end. We stayed overnight in Vientiane and on the following day took a plane to Bangkok where we boarded a TWA plane which brought us all the way to New York with brief stops in Bombay, Cairo, Athens, Rome, and Frankfurt. At every stop except Athens there was a brief press conference and photographs. At Athens the U.S. Consul greeted us and proudly assured us that he had arranged for the press not to be there. Greece is a place where this can be arranged. In Bangkok U.S. Ambassador Unger was very thoughtful and gracious, extending many courtesies, including a pleasant meal at his home before flight time.

The opportunity for the press to meet the pilots at Kennedy was brief and awkward, having been set up that way by the various governmental public relations men who were swarming about when we landed. Even so we had arrived there with the pilots on a commercial plane when their wives greeted them. So we had completed what we had undertaken to do.

#### A Brief Comment

Apart from the basic merit of enabling men imprisoned to go free, was the advantage of thwarting Sullivan worth the trouble and the delay? Probably not. Yet I admire the unwillingness of the Vietnamese to have their release project taken in hand by Mr. Sullivan and his military planes and air bases.

Was the effort of the U.S. authorities to get in on the release essential either to the well being of the pilots or to the larger interests of the United States? It seems to me that neither was at stake. As it turned out I think each would have been better served if Mr. Harriman and Mr. Sullivan had taken a slightly more modest view of their respective roles from the start. It seems to me that we had here, in a relatively minor and unimportant incident, an effort to display imperial authority in Southeast Asia. The idea of a small country turning pilots loose and the mighty U.S. not being able to take charge of the operation--this was what was too much for our Ambassadors to bear.

If the AFSC had a chance again to play a role in prisoner releases, should we do it? I think we should give it the most serious consideration. The central act is clearly a matter of basic humanitarian concern. The peripheral jockeying for advantage should not deter us.

A final question: At a time when many conscientious young people and older people as well in the U.S. are risking prison or are already in prison because of acts taken for conscience sake connected with the war in Vietnam, should the AFSC be willing to participate in trying to arrange a prisoner exchange? Possibly a given number of captured pilots in Vietnam for a given number of war resisters in the United States? This is something to consider.



## IN CONCLUSION

1. Apparently the DRVN follows a considered policy of not revealing the total number of pilots held or the names of more than a small percentage of them. We were told that the total number is a state secret. We got no clues to the reason for this policy but I think that it probably is tied in with the very deep feeling of the DRVN that the war itself is a vast crime by the United States against the Vietnamese people. This feeling is not to be dismissed merely as the propaganda of an embattled country. It has been given theoretical support by competent international and constitutional law experts, both U.S. and European. Eventually the United States is going to have to face this issue.

Considering this claim by the DRVN it has seemed to me that possibly they do not wish to be in a position of according de facto prisoner-of-war status to the shot-down flyers lest they undercut later claims that the war itself is a crime and those engaged in it criminals.

2. It seems to me that the refusal of the DRVN to deal with the International Red Cross on prisoner matters may have somewhat similar roots. The DRVN feels that it is a legal government illegally assaulted by a dominant member of the UN and other international bodies, and that it is wrongly excluded from those bodies. So long as this is the case the DRVN will not willingly accept the intervention or the services of the UN or other international bodies in which the U.S. plays a strong role. It wishes to be either a full member in good standing or have nothing to do with the international bodies.

It follows from this that the DRVN will not deal with the International Red Cross on prisoner matters.

3. Two particularly harsh conditions affecting prisoners flow from the above:
- a. The practice of keeping many of the prisoners without contact with other prisoners.
  - b. The practice of not allowing or severely limiting communication between prisoners and their relatives in the States.

It does nothing to relieve the harshness of these conditions to point out that unless they were imposed it would not be possible to keep the number and the identity of prisoners a state secret.

4. I gathered from the pilots that prisoners are adequately fed and clothed, and get good medical care.

5. We took 42 letters to Hanoi directed to prisoners or persons thought to be prisoners, from relatives in the States. We handed these over to the Peace Committee representatives and so far as we know they were delivered.

6. At our suggestion we brought letters back from pilots to their relatives in the States. The Peace Committee turned over 50 such letters and these have been forwarded.

7. I personally inquired about three prisoners, but was given no information regarding any of them.



8. We saw no pilots except the three who were released. They were relatively short-term. One was captured in December 1967 and the other two more recently.

9. One of the pilots who returned with us said that the North Vietnamese were correct in interrogation. No threat or pressure was used and when he said that a matter was classified they would drop the subject and not pursue it.

10. The pilots with us were pale but had not lost weight; they appeared not to have suffered any mental or psychological impairment. They had spent most of their time in their respective rooms at the Detention Camp, coming out only to get their food trays under guard and for bathing, etc. Two of them had been kept separated from any other pilots the entire time.