MOTIVATIONAL FACTORS OF AMERICAN PRISIONERS OF WAR HELD BY THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM

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Introduction. January 1973 witnessed the end of the longest continual armed conflict in the 200-year history of the United States. Sixty days after the signing of the Paris agreement, the longest recorded incarceration of American prisoners of war (POW's) ended for more than 500 men, over 450 of whom had been held in the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV). Several of these men had endured more than 8 years as prisoners of the DRV, while one POW held by the Vietcong was detained over 9 years.

The POW's received a warm and tumultuous welcome from the people of the United States. This served to create a unanimity among Americans which had been lacking during the long years of the Vietnam conflict. The Nation's public display of pride and relief was a genuine show of interest and concern for "their" POW's.

The Vietnam POW's, however, were not the first prisoners of war who had received publicity. Those American men who had been held prisoners in all recent wars have been the subject of public examination, and their return to the United States has provided a great deal of human interest news copy.

The post-Korean period was the most lucid example of such investigation. Eugene Kinkead's widely read book, *In Every War But One*, based on

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The source material for this article is drawn from the author's 6 years of imprisonment in the Democratic Republic of Vietnam —his experience and observations plus the narratives and reflections of 118 other prisoners with whom he, at various times, shared a cell.

psychological factors that influenced the prisoners, emphasized the poor conduct of American POW's in Korea. Similar works combined with the conclusions reached in the *Secretary of Defense Advisory Committee POW Report* prompted the issuance of the Executive Order Code of Conduct. The perceived necessity for an executive order delineating the expected standard of conduct for POW's was a *de facto* condemnation of Korean POW's. For the many U.S. servicemen who served honorably as POW's in Korea, it is unfortunate that the books defending their conduct, such as *March to Calumny*, received less notoriety than those which condemned, but the intent here is not to debate the guilt stigma of Korean POW's nor to exonerate the innocent. Instead, it will be enough to note that such writings do exist.

Now there exists another group of subjects, the Vietnam prisoners, whose experiences might substantiate, repudiate, or expand upon the findings of the studies of prisoners held in previous wars. A military examination of the Code of Conduct's influence on Vietnam's POW's and its further applications, a psychological investigation into the personality effects of from 6 to 9 years of foreign detention, and the sociological problems involved in living 5 years with the same man under adverse stress conditions should be of intense interest for research. Indeed, the findings would be of value not only to military leaders and behavioral scientists but to any human beings who have more than a casual curiosity toward their fellow man.

No amount of descriptive words can completely peel back the skin of the POW and reveal his inner self. But perhaps an acquaintance with the confined environment in which a POW must survive and some insight into the methods by which a man copes with this situation will help the reader better understand his actions.

A prisoner's world is subject to a variety of influences, both internal and external, influences that can cause a man's perceptions to expand and contract as the situation changes. Hence, conscious acts, willful choices, and resistance motivations have shifting roots within a prisoner. For example, the rationale of a new captive differs from that of a man hardened by years of prison life; a consuming injury can alter one's outlook, and resistance with group support is not the same as standing alone. The expansion of individual experiences to general behavioral axioms by which motives are assigned to all POW's is inherently dangerous, but some factors of resistance behavior are universal. Such general propositions observed to be true are examined in this paper.

Capture and Interrogation. Consider, if you will, a pilot in the relative safety of a smooth flying jet aircraft with the comforts of a CVA "ready room" fresh in his mind. Suddenly he finds himself huddling in a flooded rice paddy—still shaken by the combined effects of his aircraft being hit, abrupt ejection, and an unwanted parachute descent to earth—"skivvie-clad" and tightly bound amidst a crowd of angry, club-waving Vietnamese peasants, screaming in a language unintelligible to him. He is now a prisoner of war!

When such events occur in staccato fashion within 15 to 20 minutes, they represent an abrupt, disconcerting change. The most dominant emotion is a sense of *bewildering fear* at the alien surroundings and *uncertainty* of one's ultimate fate. Things held dear—friends, home, and family—take on greater importance when they are no longer accessible. Embodied in this sense of loss is the uncertainty of time. How long? Ever?

Throughout captivity, this or some other form of fear is a prisoner's constant companion, always capable of

influencing his behavior. It is more accurate to say that in the years ahead the POW will learn to control his fear rather than conquer it.

Behavior at such a time is patterned largely by instinct—one acts as a programed individual and military man. Such programing is attributable to information bits acquired through age, cultural experiences, and training. That one's actions are instinctive means that resistance efforts draw on learning and values formulated earlier in life. For example, past survival school training and the ingrained knowledge that the Code of Conduct is the order of the day embody the spirit of resistance and give a man an instinctive *modus operandi* from the outset of captivity.

The POW soon comes to realize that this patterned, instinctive reaction to events is his only guide on what to do next. *He is alone,* a helpless object vulnerable to the enemy's wrath. One manifestation of the subconscious loneliness is the relief one feels when an American aircraft passes overhead. This nostalgia and sense of kinship with other pilots was experienced by U.S. POW's in Hanoi during every bombing raid from May 1967 to April 1968, a brief respite from the gnawing loneliness inside each prisoner of war.

The impact of this loneliness is further intensified as the POW comes to realize that his programed, instinctive reactions will not cover every situation. He understands that at some point he must consciously deal with the question of how to relieve the constant pain of the binding ropes—without giving the inquisitors any information.

Resolving the dilemma of resistance and survival is exacerbated by the strict rules that prevail in the captor-captive relationship. It is unlikely that an American prisoner has previously been involved in a contest in which the stakes have been so high and the regulations so invariable. A man's life in the United States is a series of second chances, getting a break, or receiving a helping hand. But in a Hanoi interrogation cell, such relief does not occur. Here there is no chance that someone will enter the sweat-stained room with bumpy walls designed to muffle screams and say, "We will let you go this time, but don't do it again."

Some would attribute the captive's resistance to loyalty or devotion to duty; and, in later periods of POW life, devotion to duty and patriotism may be an accurate description of resistance motivation. However, in the early days of captivity, *pride* is a more correct motivational assessment. Pride is a driving desire to prove yourself to yourself and to those whose opinion you respect, and so strong is this desire for self-respect that many have endured torture to the point of crippling pain. The combination of pride and obligation seems to motivate men, time and time again, to resist to the limit of their endurance—despite the knowledge that the prisoner will probably be forced to conform in the long run.

It is important to note that physical well-being as well as mental resolve influence a prisoner's conduct. Strong physiological needs are always present for a POW. Some men crave water even before their parachutes deliver them to earth, and several sweltering days without washing, plus involuntary immersion in rice paddy water with a human excrement additive, produce an almost maniacal desire for a bath. For many men, maimed in the course of capture, physiological priorities center on injuries and a struggle to stay alive. Still, men with twisted legs, shattered arms, crushed faces, and flame-charred bodies do resist from the outset rather than seek aid by compromising their principles. But such action is beyond the ordinary and cannot be expected from all. It is a strong motivation that induces a physically disabled man to select the arduous course of action because of what he knows is expected of him.

It has been stated that initial behavior is instinctive. Instinct is used here in the classical sense[1] in that the newness of the environment dictates "trial and error" or "best guess" behavior based on innate feelings. However, as the years of prison transform new captives into oldtimers, and the bitter lessons are learned, a man is better able to determine proper courses of action. His actions are still instinctive in the sense that behavior is limited by the goals perceived as attainable.[2] This prison maturity replaces earlier guesswork, thereby enabling a POW to recognize the frequent fluctuations in the captor's attitude and take advantage of these changes for his own benefit.

Living Alone. The new captive is first thrust into another completely new and unnatural environment, that of living in solitary confinement. Few people have ever lived for any length of time without any form of human companionship. Both U.S. penal institutions and the 1949 Geneva Conventions on Prisoner of War Treatment set 30 days of solitary as maximum punishment. A poll of U.S. POW's captured in the DRV before 1969 reveals that 90 percent of the men endured solitary living conditions for periods ranging from a few days to more than 4 years, and an equal percentage had been subjected to physical torture. Men of varied personalities are affected by "solo" living in different ways. The combination of emotional stresses and physical hardships prompts hallucinations within some new prisoners. Some memories of the first days in Hanoi are confused and dotted with haunting recollections of irrational outbursts and disturbing dreams.

The physical condition of the cells within what became known as the "Hanoi Hilton" contributes to the depressive state of a new POW. An 8-foot by 8-foot concrete room, bare board bunks, a heavy, iron-braced door with a shuttered peephole, and a small barred window looking onto a wall crowned with broken bottles comprise the appointments of his new home. The daily schedule is quickly learned, and the two meals do not fill the endless hours of a prisoner's day. To a "solo" prisoner, the daily fare of two meals has more value as a relief from boredom than as nourishment. Even the sporadic bathing schedule provides a welcome respite from the oppressing heat of one's cell if little else. A POW's bath entails dipping cold water from a tank resembling a horse trough and spreading it over one's body by means of a cup.

The sound of the turnkey opening doors usually announces the time to eat or bathe, but the rattle of keys at an unscheduled time often means he will be called to a quiz.* Quizzes usually mean being called upon to do something against one's will, and there is a feeling of relief when the jingle of keys fades into the distance or when another's door is opened.

It ought not to be surprising that in this isolated existence a POW seeks some contact with familiarity wherever he can find it. Something so innocuous as smoking a cigarette provides a feeling of security in that the act of smoking is a familiar experience, and, to one who has tried a Vietnamese cigarette, it is obvious that an ulterior motive is required to enjoy it.

The pleasure derived from such familiar associations indicates the POW's desire to conquer his alien environment and to gain control of his emotions. Since knowledge is the armor by which we arm ourselves against adversity, a prisoner constantly strives to learn about his surroundings. Thus, the physical camp layout, the guard change schedule, and the turnkey's idiosyn-

*The term "quiz" was coined by POW's to denote prisoner meetings with some Vietnamese representative of the camp organization. Quizzes could entail interrogation, propaganda, discipline, torture, or indoctrination.

crasies are all objects of study. A person knows he operates better in familiar surroundings or when he possesses the "home court" advantage. The POW subconsciously realizes that action under extreme emotional stress provides a poor basis for rational behavior. He is motivated to establish a better platform from which to act.

A universal activity of solo POW's is to peer through cracks, under doors, or through the bars in the hope of seeing another POW. Despite Vietnamese efforts to avoid even sight contact between Americans, a fleeting glimpse is occasionally available as a Yank shuffles from his cell to a quiz or to pick up his chow. Eventually the day comes when an "old head" is able to communicate with the "new" man. By means of a few well chosen words, spoken or written, the new man is given the tap code used for clandestine communication among POW's, advice on prison pitfalls, words of encouragement, and the senior officer's policy of resistance, called BACK-US.* This information is passed at great risk to the transmitter, for the camp maintains strict regulations against communication enforced by guards roaming the halls of the Hanoi Hilton who report even suspected violations to camp officers. To be caught means severe torture, as many prisoners would learn during the communication purges.

A man named Ho Chi Minh once said, "Communication is the lifeblood of resistance." The impact of communicating is precisely that for the POW. For some POW's, covert communication is their sole contact with others over a period of months and years. Any device capable of making noise may be used to transmit information from the highest priority to idle chatter to pass the time and combat loneliness.

A man in solitary with only rats for roommates also spends a great deal of time involved in introspection. His attitude is a poignant mixture of feeling sorry for himself and seeing himself as one with a duty to perform. Thoughts center on assessing one's situation, prospects, and the dilemma of how to exist, a dilemma which prevails for years. Reflections on the war are subject to the constant Vietnamese propaganda which the camp authorities provide through a crude wooden encased radio speaker in the window. Fortunately for the POW, the broadcasts are very naive and intended for someone with no more than a seventh grade education or the right psychological set.

The POW's attempt to evaluate his situation prompts a circular reasoning that meanders through the present, past, back to the present, and ultimately to the future. When one accurately assesses the war, as he knew it prior to being shot down, certain questions begin cropping up: Who really cares about POW's? How often does anybody think of one who is a POW? What reasons are there to expect the war to end in 1, 2, 3 . . . years?

The biggest question a POW poses to himself is, "How would I live my life if I were to live it over again?" To answer such a question, a man recalls many events and decisions of his past life and how alternate decisions might have altered his present circumstances. A mental playback of the events leading to his capture provides hours of speculative thought as to what went wrong. Pondering the decisions made earlier in life raises a fantasy of foregone occupations. The life of a schoolteacher, a business-

*BACK-US was an acronym which contained the essence of the senior officer's resistance policy in the Little Vegas area of the Hanoi Hilton in 1967. Each letter represented the following:

B—don't Bow when in front of cameras.
A—stay off the Air, i.e., don't read on camp radio.
C—you are not a Criminal.
K—don't Kiss the Vietnamese goodby by making good statements when we leave.
US—Unity before Self.

man, or an airline pilot now seems to have greater appeal; and when one dwells on his past, thoughts linger on pleasant memories reconstructed in fine detail. Ultimately the question, "Why was that particular event enjoyable or important?" causes one to evaluate himself and ask, "What is important? What do I value?"

The surfacing of values, the examining of past goals, and the facing of the reality of a prisoner of war situation lead most POW's to consider the dilemma of the present, the guilt felt by each man who has been forced to act against his will during initial interrogations. Before talking to other POW's, each man perceives himself to be the only one who has given information. But every man knows he cannot endure the Vietnamese rope torture indefinitely without giving some information. The natural outcome of this thought process is to form a workable plan for the future, namely, a motivational force to resist, to honorably survive the trials that lie ahead.

The early solitary period of captivity is marked by a high frequency of quizzes, intended largely to determine what type of prisoner a new man might become. Thus, there is ample opportunity for the prisoner to employ his newly devised plan of intended action. One is always, on these occasions, taken from his cell to a designated room to be quizzed alone, with only his convictions for support. One might say the general POW attitude at quiz, knowing one can be forced to comply is never to give "something for nothing." It is a point of pride that no information is given as long as the prisoner is capable of resistance.

Each prisoner formed his own judgment of tactics employed by the interrogators during quizzes, but several generalities seem to be widely held. The Vietnamese interrogator needed to feel that he was in control. Therefore, a direct challenge to his authority could not go unanswered. It was not necessary for the POW to yield control of himself to the interrogator but merely to convey the impression of such. For example, there were many instances when an uncooperative POW was told by the interrogator, "You know I can force you to answer, don't you?" When the POW acknowledged, "Yes, you most likely can," the question or demand was often dropped.

It is also generally agreed that the interrogator had some preconceived answers to the questions he asked concerning military matters and covert POW activities. If the POW perceived these desired answers to be erroneous, he responded to reinforce this error. However, when the Vietnamese had a correct answer in mind, an attempt to create doubt in the interrogator's mind was usually a better tactic than a flat denial of fact. Of course, these deceptive methods were not perfect, and, when unsuccessful, the POW ended up in ropes, on his knees holding up the wall, sitting on the stool, or in some other form of punishment.

Perhaps the peak experience of this phase of a POW's life occurs when he makes a truly maximum effort to physically resist torture.*[3] It may be the first time in his life that he musters every ounce of physical strength, mental courage, and determination. The feeling of being totally consumed by this effort is truly unique; and even when this maximum effort, with nothing held back, proves to be not enough, one at least feels pure and satisfied for having done his absolute best. Such an experience usually leaves a POW broken and physically disabled, but is nonetheless of great psychological value to him.

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*Maslow referred to the peak experience as "... a self-validating self-justifying moment which carries its own intrinsic value with it."

Living in Groups. Life in an 8 by 8-foot cell with one, two, or three other men is nearly as unique as living alone. However, the absence of loneliness makes it considerably easier to cope with the difficulties associated with small group living. The axiom "misery loves company" holds true. Close conditions, where four men eat, sleep, and perform hygienic functions in the same room, require some adjustment and concession by all concerned. Individual physical traits of snoring or body odor, combined with personality idiosyncrasies of vulgar speech, braggadocio, and loquaciousness, can cause strained relations among roommates. However, with few exceptions, U.S. officers interned in North Vietnam came to appreciate the need for compromise and self-sacrifice for the good of the group.

Accommodation becomes a way of life, and various means are employed to make existence tolerable. One such means is to routinize the events of the day and to rigidly maintain that routine. Planning such common events as exercising, sweeping the floor, cleaning the cell, telling stories, and the time of communication with other cells serves a twofold purpose. It gives an element of order to life and permits some control of one's action. Otherwise a prisoner must perform the most common daily acts of eating, bathing, rising, and going to bed at a time designated by the prison guards, and the schedule is subject to frequent unannounced changes. The value of order and self-control is best appreciated in the light of the prisoner uncertainties and required compliances.

Routine also permits a POW the opportunity to vary his activity from time to time in order to relieve boredom. An example would be to not exercise on the Fourth of July or to let another empty the "honey bucket" because it is the duty man's birthday. Thus, to deviate from the routine becomes a form of celebration.

Another practice that may seem humorous is the method by which some POW groups parceled out food. The best method of handling the potential trouble of unequal food portions is to raffle off the meals and to rely on the "luck of the draw" method for distribution. Such procedures ultimately become a source of entertainment as homemade dice are cast to determine which bowl of soup each man receives.

An important element of harmony is a sense of humor in the *illegitimae non carborundum* sense. The ability to laugh in the face of adversity is a valuable asset. It is difficult to express how great it feels to laugh after months of crying. The man who finally has a roommate following months of solitary living is ready to laugh at anything, and the slightest provocation prompts uncontrollable hysterics. There can always be found an element of "sick prison humor" in the most dire situations. One could find a bit of humorous irony in being tortured to write a statement that he is being treated well. Since the situation appears humorous even today, perhaps the sickness still prevails.

Living together in a small prison cell means constant association and interaction for 24 hours a day, not the mere 8 hours a day at work or at home that most people equate with "knowing a person." In that respect, when a POW has the same roommate for 2, 3, 4, and 5 years, it is safe to conclude they know each other better than they know their wives.

The exchange of ideas that takes place among men in a common predicament and the knowledge they gain from each other can greatly broaden one's perspectives. There is no need to hide one's feelings on a subject for image purposes because one has no image. Roommates know each other in their true colors; and within the sanctity of one's small cell, the familiarity among POW's prompts an open expression of opinions on many subjects

that are not usually discussed at cocktail parties or in rap sessions.

This atmosphere of frankness and the commonality of the situation make resistance behavior, its methods, limits, and consequences, a popular subject for examination. Decisions on the subject usually represent a consensus view rather than the dictates of the senior member of the group. The ultimate authority rests with the senior man, but "having one's say" removes the resentment associated with an authoritarian environment and more firmly commits members of the group to a program they have helped to formulate. However, perhaps because a man's proud belief that his above-the-norm capability demands higher standards, group decisions tend to require less stringent courses of action than those individually formed.

Even small group membership enables a man to project his thinking beyond concerns for his own survival. Resistance may now be viewed as a contribution to the war effort as well as individual responsibility. The adverse effects of his compliance with the enemy become more vivid when shared and discussed with roommates in the same predicament. Thus, as a man lives in closer union with his fellow POW's, his motives are more likely to become less selfish.

Consensus decisions, common problems, and close quarters generate unity and *esprit* among members of the small group, a necessity if a group is to be effective. An indication that POW's possess these qualities and care for one another is evidenced by the prevalent atmosphere of gloom when a cellmate is at quiz. Genuine concern promulgates itself through unselfish acts of sharing, cheering up each other, or communicating at great risk with a solo man purely for his psychological needs.

Communication provides a sense of group accomplishment for it demands group effort. This function often requires two men to visually clear the area by watching for approaching guards while the other two men "communicate." Each message successfully passed produces a euphoric satisfaction within the group. This reaction may appear overstated, but to a group whose purpose is primarily negative, that is, not doing something, to accomplish anything in a positive manner is significant.

To dispel the notion that U.S. POW's held in the DRV were a group of superhumans, it seems appropriate to make some subjective observations of isolated individual behavior within the context of living together. Before October of 1969, when the treatment of POW's improved, torture abounded, solitary confinement was common, and very few men engaged in correspondence with the outside world. During this period the most significant improvement in POW treatment was that torture stopped. The POW's were then assembled in large numbers, and this change in confinement prompted a change of attitude in some POW's. In this sanctuary from physical abuse, some men discovered a boldness within themselves and felt compelled to exhibit ultimate resistance.

This could be called the "irons theory" in that POW's challenged the camp authorities to put them in leg irons and handcuffs again. Its advocates considered minor camp restrictions to be harassment that should be resisted, forgetting that for years prisoners were humiliated by the requirement to bow in the presence of a Vietnamese. Now in the atmosphere of relaxed camp discipline, the "iron men" found it personally elevating to curse and ridicule a guard in a language that guards could barely understand, if at all. It may not be surprising that these hard-line beliefs did not surface until prisoners lived in large communities where the visibility of toughness had a larger audience. It is worth noting that these men were not those of senior rank with whom the

final authority and responsibility rested. In fact, this antagonistic behavior conflicted with the "live and let live" policy issued by the senior officers during periods of relative calm.

There might have been an element of sincerity involved, or these men might have been motivated by the belief that prisoners should push for as much as they could get. The possibility also exists that an element of "one-upmanship" or a desire to atone for less stiff resistance in the early years of captivity might have been present. Whatever the motivation of these men, it was obvious that a strong desire for self-esteem existed among them.

Other men also followed rules for personal conduct that was not a group characteristic—POW's motivated to conduct themselves in a manner they believed would best represent the United States to the North Vietnamese because they felt the POW's were the only Americans with whom most North Vietnamese had contact. Although prison guards were by no means the elite of North Vietnamese society, they would eventually return to their villages and answer the inevitable question: "What were those Americans who bombed our country really like?" In other words, was the Vietnamese minister of propaganda really telling the truth that U.S. pilots were bloodthirsty, arrogant, insensitive criminals?

These POW's believed that an attitude of aloofness, support of the U.S. Government, and resisting propaganda efforts in a professional manner were what would ultimately gain respect for a POW as a man. Puerile actions such as belittling the DRV and its citizens merely supported the Communist claims that American POW's were the "blackest criminals in the DRV."

By November of 1970, most of the U.S. POW's were concentrated in one camp as a result of the U.S. commando raid on the Son Tay POW camp. Communal living, with 20 to 50 men in a single cell, marked the final experience for the veteran POW who endured the gamut of living conditions within the DRV.

It was rather exciting to meet men whose names and background had been memorized but whose faces were heretofore unseen. New friendships were born; common acquaintances and experiences were discovered; and time was passed listening to new stories and biographies. It was a time of high emotion compared to an earlier drab existence, but as one man candidly remarked, "It is a bit depressing to hear so many tell their stories and not hear one happy ending."

The organization of the POW's within this larger camp was immediately structured in military fashion. Each cell had a senior ranking officer (SRO) with a staff of flight leaders. Every man was assigned to a flight with the flights alternating the menial housekeeping tasks of cleaning, distributing food, washing dishes, and clearing for communications.

Never did the Vietnamese permit contact between prisoners in different cells, and the senior officers were located in a rather remote section of the camp. The establishment and protection of communication channels became vital to the organization. Those responsible for the transmission of information within the camp deserve a great deal of credit for a job well done. To some men the communication process occupied so much of their time that it became a way of life, a truly professional operation.

Through their efforts, a close link was established between the leaders and the rest of the POW's, and a rather elaborate set of goals was promulgated to all POW's from the senior officer and his staff.

These goals were embodied in what was known as the "plums." The plums covered many areas of duty in detail and identified our common goal. The compendium of those plums follows: to

support the Code of Conduct by doing and saying nothing harmful to the U.S. interests, to actively resist propaganda efforts of the Vietnamese, and to work together in order to go home with honor. These concepts were not new to the U.S. captives and had been implied by individual SRO's previously. However, the assurance that everyone would be presenting a united front to the enemy greatly increased the group's cohesiveness.

The organization of POW's was essentially involved with the Vietnamese in a struggle for control. The Vietnamese appeared to have an innate fear of an organized group of Americans, and, therefore, they rejected the terms of the Geneva Conventions of 1949. Americans held in North Vietnam were never granted POW status but were continually referred to as "criminals" by the Vietnamese. By attributing any good treatment to their own benevolence rather than to the just right of prisoners, a sense of authority was maintained in the minds of the Vietnamese.

When security precautions dictated the POW's be concentrated in one camp, the camp authorities (as they always referred to themselves, thereby implying control) were especially wary. The Vietnamese never recognized military rank among POW's and attempted to exert internal control by placing a junior officer in charge, thus reducing the structure and organization established by the POW's in that room. This rather puerile effort was eroded through universal resistance, and internal control remained with the SRO ostensibly as well as in fact.

The idea of control is further typified by the manner in which the Vietnamese resisted any suggestion for camp improvement if it came from a POW, whether or not the suggestion would be mutually beneficial. Thus, the POW's indirectly approached their captors to gain improved conditions rather than directly confronting them in a forthright manner.

The rescinding of the early regulation that a POW bow before any Vietnamese indicated tacit admission by the Vietnamese that control of another's body did not constitute control of his will. With this admission, quizzes and attempts at political indoctrination, humorously naive and ineffective as they might have been, ceased altogether and propaganda efforts lessened toward resisting POW's.

There is a distinct difference between propaganda for the purpose of indoctrinating prisoners and propaganda released to the world in order to sway public opinion. Indoctrination efforts caused little concern to the POW's and were often a source of entertainment or a source for tidbits of news from the outside world. However, the propaganda directed toward world opinions could not be predicted and therefore was a primary target of a POW's resistance efforts. The Hanoi parade of POW's in 1966, the circulation of grotesque pictures of pilots taken immediately after capture, the coercing of POW's by torture to meet with foreign visitors to Hanoi, the torturing of POW's to write good-treatment statements, or the circulation of deceptive photographs suggesting universal good treatment of prisoners were examples of such propaganda. The POW's realized the harmful public effects these tactics could have, both on the U.S. war effort and on its allies, and were motivated to resist participation in these events to the same degree that they resisted providing the DRV military information. Thus, when torture for such devious reasons ceased in the later years, the POW felt some sense of relief. No longer was one forced to do these things against his will. An understanding of this perceived exploitation and the reasons for torture explains the bitterness of some returnees against the DRV.

Returning to the notion of control within the camp, it should be noted that

the prisoners had their own ideas of control and influence. When it was felt that the mail situation was intolerable, a letter writing moratorium was enacted for a period of 9 months in order to create the impression that POW's were no longer allowed to correspond with their families. This would dispel any possible misconception that the treatment of POW's was good, and it was hoped subsequent pressure on the DRV would prompt the Vietnamese to distribute more mail.

On another occasion, prisoners were forbidden to hold religious services, to form a choir, or to have any POW speak in front of the group. This restriction against religious services was met with a unified POW demonstration in which 350 POW's throughout the camp started to yell and sing in unison. The reaction of the Vietnamese was greater than had been anticipated—they actually thought a revolt was in progress. Several senior POW officers were taken out of the camp, and the camp discipline was tightened. For several days the atmosphere within the camp was tense, but eventually the right to hold church services was won. Similar struggles for camp control, however, continued until the POW's were released.

Even though a man is dedicated to group goals, he remains very much an individual. Manifestations of this individuality come in many forms such as the power need of those who controlled the communications[4] or those who were prestige motivated and thus voluntarily filled the thankless roles of education officer, entertainment officer, cigarette control officer, doctor, or chaplain when their rank did not warrant a role of leadership.[5]

A few within the group could not resign themselves to accept camp improvement for fear such acceptance would compromise resistance. Therefore, if a prisoner accepted any form of improved treatment, such as writing a Christmas card home or the use of a pencil and paper, he would not be performing his duty.

Perhaps reluctance to accept camp improvements in the DRV prisons could be explained by Maslow's metagrumble theory[6] where such qualms could be present only in a truly self-actualizing man as he strove for perfection and thus rejected any compromise. A more likely explanation would be that the POW's possessed a basic distrust of the Vietnamese and their motives—an attitude not without foundation. The North Vietnamese made propaganda a way of life and used religious services, medical treatment, and POW mail as bribes or exploitation. Small wonder that a popular expression among POW's was, "Beware of Gooks bearing gifts."

To a degree, attitudes within the formal POW organization—a source for POW motivation—changed during the final years. Motivation continued to become more altruistic or patriotic than egoistic within the POW organization, situationally enhanced by large group living. The managing and protection of a united organization provided an atmosphere that enabled thinking to be more long range and altruistic. A certain security was felt and a better opportunity was provided to perform as honorable men, as outlined in the organizational objectives. Could it be that the decision to support and participate in the activities of the large POW group was derived from agreement with its goals, or was it a desire to gain the personal protection afforded by group membership? There did exist the moral obligation to fulfill one's contract as a military officer. Perhaps a man was motivated by pure love of his country, or was it a hatred of a philosophy so alien and detrimental to his survival? Was the POW's philosophy pragmatic or idealistic?

It appeared that the POW was duty motivated and tended to be more altruistic as he became more actively a part of the larger POW organization.

The ego-centered pride motivation of initial captive days expanded to include consideration of other POW's and ideals. However, embodied within that duty were as many factors as there are caveats in the label of patriotism.

It has been stated before that POW's resisted making statements harmful to the United States and its allies. But that is not to say the POW's agreed 100 percent with all aspects of the war in Vietnam and the way in which it was conducted. The group of U.S. POW's in North Vietnam represented both liberal and conservative political philosophies, but there was universal agreement that the POW camp was not the place from which to air those views to the world. A POW had an obligation—yes, duty—to conduct himself in the manner expected of a POW as embodied in the spirit of the Code of Conduct.

It was also the duty of a POW to remain a POW until released through government channels. Such reasoning supports a finding that a near universal rejection of the early releases by the DRV of a few officer POW's* from 1968 to 1972 was a cohesive factor. The criticism of those accepting parole ranged from vocal condemnation to charitable doubt, but there was no one who defended the acceptance of early release as honorable behavior for an officer. The determination to avoid such stigma was a binding influence among resisting prisoners.

One last observation is important. POW's in general felt that they had invested a long time serving as POW's in the war. Most of these men did not want their position undercut through the U.S. Government conceding defeat or its inability to win. Hence, the men clung to their position of resistance to the last day. Some might call this irrational or just plain stubborn. But many POW's have said, after having spent more than 6 years in prison, they were willing to spend another year if it meant the difference between walking out of Vietnam or crawling out. They meant it!

The comparison of POW communal life to standard group behavior theories is enormous. No doubt many aspects of prisoner existence will fill books of the future. Since these men will be collectively evaluated, as were the Korean POW's, it does seem appropriate to conduct an examination of the Vietnam POW organizational effectiveness. An appropriate criteria by which to measure the effectiveness of any group is contained in the Field Theory of Lewin, The Interaction Process Analysis of Bales, and The Human Group Theory.[7] These men have designated many factors that influence an organization's productivity, but some are more germane to this discussion than others.

A common factor for a successful group in the theories of Bales and Homan is the requirement of positive interaction. The interaction among people who had lived in confined quarters had been present whether desired or not. A characteristic of American POW's in the DRV had been their willingness to promulgate to all fellow captives personally tragic or triumphant prison experiences. Accounts of torture sessions, quizzes, or personal thoughts were related regardless of whether a man's participation had been a point of pride or shame. Such revelations had helped others to learn vicariously and represented nearly perfect interaction. Events that occurred throughout the camp were transmitted to everyone. Sometimes listening to a POW sweep the hall or the camp courtyard with the tapcode rhythm was slightly reminiscent of listening to the evening news events of the day.

*Of the POW's who were released early, only one man went home with the permission of the senior American officer in camp. No stigma was attached to this seaman's release by any POW. His resistance had been exemplary from capture to release.

Another standard of groups is contained in the writings of Lewin[8] who held cohesion to be the key element of a successful group and tied it directly to the productivity of the body. The satisfactions, the degree of closeness, the amount of pride, the ability to meet crises, and the willingness to be frank and honest in expressing ideas among members of the group were some criteria needed for cohesiveness. Lewin's concept of cohesiveness, lacking among Korean POW's, provided an apt description of the Vietnam war POW's. The common goals, united actions, and other instances previously cited support this contention.

The most comprehensive set of standards for a successful group was stated by Shepherd.[9] He listed five features by which to measure group effectiveness:

- Objectives: Is its purpose the same as that of its members?
- Role Differentiation: Does each member know what is required of him?
- Values and Norms: Is that which is desired and that which is expected clear?
- Membership: Is the membership clear-cut and heterogeneous?
- Communication: No one withholds relevant information.

All of these features as they apply to the U.S. prisoner organization in Vietnam have been examined within this paper. It is left to the reader to pass judgment on the organized group's effectiveness.

For my part, I would like to stress again that the high standards of behavior the U.S. POW's demanded of themselves were largely due to the personal integrity of these men. From one who has spent considerable time in their midst, I have nothing but the highest regard for them as military officers. America is fortunate to have been represented by such a select group under the most trying of circumstances.

NOTES

1. Abraham H. Maslow, *Motivation and Personality* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), p. 88.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 31.
3. Abraham H. Maslow, *Toward a Psychology of Being* (Princeton, N.J.: Van Nostrand, 1968), p. 79.
4. David A. Kolb, et al., *Organizational Psychology* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1971), p. 125.
5. Clovis R. Shepherd, *Small Groups* (San Francisco: Chandler, 1964), p. 25.
6. Abraham H. Maslow, *Eupsychian Management, a Journal* (Homewood, Ill.: Irwin and Dorsey, 1965), p. 238.
7. Shepherd, pp. 23-41.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 26.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 122.

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