

Spring 5-13-2023

"Prodigals of Traitors: American POWs during the Korean War, Brainwashing, and National Security"

Brett Fearer

Southern Methodist University, bfearer@mail.smu.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholar.smu.edu/hum_sci_history_etds



Part of the [Arts and Humanities Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Fearer, Brett, ""Prodigals of Traitors: American POWs during the Korean War, Brainwashing, and National Security"" (2023). *History Theses and Dissertations*. 18.

https://scholar.smu.edu/hum_sci_history_etds/18

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the History at SMU Scholar. It has been accepted for inclusion in History Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of SMU Scholar. For more information, please visit <http://digitalrepository.smu.edu>.

PRODIGALS OR TRAITORS:
AMERICAN POWS DURING THE KOREAN WAR,
BRAINWASHING, AND NATIONAL SECURITY

Approved by:

Prof. Thomas J. Knock
Prof. of History

Prof. Crista J. DeLuzio
Associate Prof. of History

Prof. Jeffrey A. Engel
Prof. of History

PRODIGALS OR TRAITORS:
AMERICAN POWS DURING THE KOREAN WAR,
BRAINWASHING, AND NATIONAL SECURITY

A Thesis Presented to the Graduate Faculty of the

Dedman College

Southern Methodist University

in

Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the degree of

Master of Arts

with a

Major in History

by

Brett Fearer

B.A., History, French, Wichita State University

May 13, 2023

Copyright (2023)

Brett Fearer

All Rights Reserved

Fearer, Brett

B.A., History, French, Wichita State University

Prodigals or Traitors:
American POWs during the Korean War,
Brainwashing, and National Security

Advisor: Professor Thomas J. Knock

Master of Arts conferred May 13, 2023

Thesis completed April 24, 2023

American prisoners of war (POW) in Korea endured unimaginable hardship and pain while in captivity. American POWs suffered through long marches through the freezing mountains of Korea, were given little food or medical attention, and were sometimes executed on the spot when captured. Upon reaching the permanent POW camps along the Yalu River, POWs encountered a new challenge: Communist indoctrination. When the war ended, twenty-one American POWs chose to stay behind with their Chinese captors instead of returning. Additionally, American POWs were accused of collaborating with the enemy, and some military officials and journalists were suspicious of some POWs having become brainwashed communists.

This thesis analyzes how American POWs became viewed as threats to national security and attempts to explain the betrayal of American soldiers caused some to believe that American society was ill-preparing the next generation to fight the Cold War. On the other hand, Americans who were sympathetic to the plight of American POWs revealed that there were limits some were willing to go to fight the Cold War.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---|----|
| ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS | 6 |
| INTRODUCTION | 7 |
| CHAPTER 1: “SLAUGHTER OR SLAVERY” | 20 |
| CHAPTER 2: “YOU CAN’T ASK A MAN TO BE A HERO FOREVER” | 37 |
| CHAPTER 3: PRODIGALS OR TRAITORS?..... | 66 |
| CONCLUSION..... | 82 |
| BIBLIOGRAPHY..... | 85 |

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This thesis could not have been completed without the wisdom of my advisor, Dr. Knock, who challenged me intellectually and provided wonderful feedback on my work. I am also grateful for my committee members, Dr. DeLuzio and Dr. Engel, and the rest of the faculty in the Clements Department of History. The staff of the National Archives in College Park, the Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, and National Prisoner of War Museum were very helpful with identifying sources for this thesis. I am forever grateful for my colleagues in my graduate cohort for their continuous support and friendship.

INTRODUCTION

Born in the far southwestern reaches of Virginia, Edward Dickenson, like many Americans of his generation, was dealt a rough hand in life. Between two world wars and amidst the greatest economic collapse in US history, Dickenson and his twelve siblings relied on the family farm and what their father could muster from his carpentry for survival. After completing the sixth grade, Dickenson left school to help provide for his family. Given his humble upbringing, it would be hard to believe that his actions on the other side of the world would capture national headlines and lead to a reexamination of American society in the Cold War.

In 1947, at the age of seventeen, Dickenson enlisted in the Army. However, his time in basic training was short-lived after his officers discovered that he failed to disclose his rheumatic cardiovascular disease during recruitment. He returned to work in Richmond for a few years, until May 1950, when he would try his hand with the Army again. Overlooking his previous enlistment and medical issues, the Army assigned him to the 803rd Recon Battalion, and shipped him off to Korea.¹

Fortunes were turning for the UN coalition just as Dickenson's unit arrived in Korea. After being thrust into the frontline following the Inchon landing, they found themselves faced with a new enemy, the army of Communist China. Severely outnumbered and unprepared for the

¹ McKnight, Brian, *We Fight for Peace: Twenty-Three American Soldiers, Prisoners of War, and Turncoats in the Korea War*, Kent, Ohio: The Kent State University Press, 2014, p.17.

onslaught of thousands of Chinese soldiers, Dickenson's unit was cut to pieces, and the survivors taken prisoner. After enduring harsh conditions on a grueling march northward to the prisoner of war camps along the Yalu River, and surviving the long winters, disease, and cruel treatment afforded to them by North Korean and Chinese soldiers, the war came to an end. The American delegation at the armistice negotiations expected that all American POWs would want to return home at the end of the war.

However, Edward Dickenson and twenty-two other prisoners surprised the nation when they chose to stay behind with their captors.² Dickenson's mother said upon hearing the news, "I won't believe anything except that my son wants to return home."³ The twenty-three soldiers met with American officials at Panmunjom, who desperately attempted to change their minds. On the night of October 20th, 1953, Dickenson left his barracks and made his way across the neutral camp and confronted an officer and requested to repatriate. Escorted to the United Nations Command receiving area, he greeted a US Army Major with a salute and a smile. He tossed his Chinese cigarettes on the ground and lit an American one.⁴

But Dickenson's troubles were not over. As he recovered in a hospital in Tokyo from injuries he sustained in captivity, Army interrogators prodded Dickenson about his experiences. What did the Chinese and North Koreans do to American prisoners? What questions did the Chinese ask him? What answers did he give them? What did other prisoners do? The Army wanted to understand why an American soldier, even temporarily, would reject their own

² Ibid, p.120-127.

³ "Families Doubt G.I.'s Join Enemy; Some Charge Coercion by Reds," *New York Times*, 25 September 1953.

⁴ "Reds Rejoin Neutral Group After G.I. Quits Their Camp," *New York Times*, 21 October 1953.

country for their enemy.⁵ Furthermore, if the Chinese could convince some American soldiers to stay behind, then it was not out of the realm of possibility that other prisoners could have committed more minor infractions, or worse, be carrying out espionage missions upon their return to the states.

Unfortunately for Dickenson, his plight as a disgraced prisoner of war occurred at the height of Senator Joe McCarthy's crusade against communism in the United States. On November 21, 1953, Dickenson returned to the United States and was greeted by his joyous family who welcomed him with open arms. When he returned to his hometown in Cracker's Neck, Virginia, friends and neighbors piled into their small home.⁶ Just a few days later, he proposed to and married Lottie Kate Laney. But the fanfare and joy of freedom was short-lived, for Dickenson was arrested on charges of "currying favor with the enemy to the detriment of comrades."⁷ During the trial, former prisoners testified against him and claimed that he revealed escape plans of other prisoners. He also pushed communist propaganda on other prisoners, and made announcements over the camp's PA system that he was "going to fight for peace."⁸ One witness accused Dickenson of pushing a sick prisoner down a flight of stairs after the man asked for food from the camp cafeteria.⁹ The dramatic trial ended with a guilty verdict and a sentence of a dishonorable discharge, forfeit of pay and allowances, and ten years of hard labor. As the

⁵ McKnight, Brian, *We Fight for Peace*, p.142.

⁶ "Parents Greet Dickenson: Corporal, Ex-Prisoner in Korea, Arrives in Washington," *New York Times*, 21 November 1953, "Home Town Greets G.I. Who Bolted Reds," *New York Times*, 23 November 1953.

⁷ "G.I. Who Chose Reds, Then Quit, Is Seized in Court-Martial Case," *New York Times*, 23 January 1954.

⁸ "Former Comrades Accuse Corporal: 5 Ex-Prisoners of Red Chinese Testify That Dickenson was an Informer," *New York Times*, 21 April 1954.

⁹ "Abuse of Sick G.I. Laid to Dickenson: Corporal's Statement on How He 'Cooperated' With Captors Read to Court-Martial," *New York Times*, 22 April 1954.

sentence was read, he sat next to his wife who was holding back tears, whispered something in her ear, and left the courtroom without making any comments.¹⁰

The saga of Edward Dickenson was emblematic of the controversy surrounding American prisoners of war during the Korean War. In the first hot conflict of the Cold War, the US military confronted a new challenge: American soldiers collaborating with the enemy while in captivity. Should these soldiers be punished, or should the military be sympathetic to them? On one hand, the soldiers had a duty to maintain discipline, even in captivity, and should not have revealed any information to the enemy other than their name, rank, and serial number. However, the circumstances made it difficult for them to remain true to this standing order. Facing torture, hunger, and a cold, harsh environment, it seemed to make collaboration, even on the smallest levels, necessary for survival. Yet, the military needed to understand the reasons behind the widespread collaboration among American POWs. In the ideological struggle of the Cold War, soldiers who gave in to communist or anti-American propaganda was a matter of national security. This compelled the military to search for answers to why American soldiers betrayed their country.

Historians have given extensive attention to the POW experience during the Korean War. This stems not only from public interest in the sensational stories of captivity, resistance, and collaboration, but also from attempts to understand why so many American soldiers failed to do their duty. Amidst the Cold War and the Red Scare, POWs were caught between a global and domestic propaganda struggle. Repatriation was a central item in armistice negotiations, as both sides, often coercively, tried to keep POWs from returning home. The US Army seized the

¹⁰ "Army Convicts Dickenson Of Collaborating With Reds: Korea War Prisoner Gets 10-Year Terms—69 Are Cleared by Air Force," *New York Times*, 5 May 1954.

opportunity to show its anti-communist bona fides by ruthlessly investigating POWs upon their return home and setting examples through the military justice system.

However, historians have yet to thoroughly examine how the POW story reflected American anxieties about the United States' ability to wage the Cold War. Soldiers' collaboration was often explained as a combination of immaturity, a lack of discipline and of knowledge of American values. This was not only a failure of the military, but of American society as a whole, to give children the mental and physical fortitude to fight communism. One of the main fears at the heart of the POW issue was the possibility soldiers would collaborate with the enemy again, should the US find itself in another war against communism. Thus, while the number of American soldiers who refused to repatriate, or collaborated was insignificant compared with the size of the US population, they were viewed not as outliers, but as the symptom of something much more disturbing for American cold warriors. The military and officials in Washington viewed American POWs as threats to national security. The fear of brainwashing fed into existing anxieties about the vulnerability of children, and whether or not American institutions such as the family, schools, and churches were doing enough to prepare the next generation of Americans to carry on the ideological struggle of the Cold War.

While Americans' explanation for brainwashing and collaboration revealed underlying fears of weaknesses within the nation, simultaneously there was also a great amount of public sympathy for the soldiers who broke under the pressure of captivity. When juxtaposed with the political environment of McCarthyism, it may be surprising that so many Americans sided with the men who turned on their country. Previously, historians have mostly focused on the exploitation of former POWs by the military, to refute accusations of being 'soft' on communism. An analysis of the willingness of the public to forgive, rehabilitate, and welcome

home former collaborators is absent from the current historiography. I argue that sympathy for former POWs indicates the limits that many Americans were willing to go to fight communism. It was difficult for them to blame a group of young men who suffered as much as they did, and grew up in broken homes, impoverished, and lacked proper education. Furthermore, some Americans saw forgiveness and rehabilitation as a way of further distinguishing the United States from communism. Many relied on their Christian faith to guide their thinking on the POW issue. For them, this was the perfect opportunity for the US to show grace to soldiers who had lost their way. If the US wanted to win the Cold War, what better way to do that than put the benevolence of American Christian values, in contrast to amoral communism.

In the first chapter of this thesis, I will discuss the political context of McCarthyism and its effect on how the military handled its returning POWs. This chapter will also analyze how repatriation became a crucial factor in the armistice negotiations. In doing this, I will also discuss the experiences of the POWs on the ground, placing their experiences within the context of the Cold War. The second chapter will discuss the media coverage and the military's investigation of the soldiers who chose to not return to the US, and prisoner collaboration. The country searched for answers as to how its soldiers could turn against them so easily. The final chapter will discuss the public sympathy for American POWs. Concerned Americans penned letters to President Eisenhower asking for forgiveness of the disgraced POWs, as courts-martial were being carried out. Journalists wrote of the nightmarish experiences of the POW asking: "What would you have done if you were in their shoes?"

The POW issue has garnered the attention of journalists and scholars as well, with Eugene Kinkead's work, *In Every War But One* (1959), being one of the first investigations of American POWs during the Korean War. Kinkead, a war correspondent in the Pacific during

World War II, was interested in American POWs because of the drastic difference between the valor and bravery of the soldiers who fought in that war, and the breakdown of discipline and weakness of those who fought in Korea. What made these soldiers different from those who had fought the US' previous wars? He based his study on interviews with top Army officials who investigated prisoner misconduct and concluded that American soldiers were woefully unprepared for becoming prisoners of war in two ways. First, American soldiers lacked the education and understanding of communism as well as American values in order to resist indoctrination. Army officials believed that young American soldiers were easily swayed by communist and anti-American propaganda because they lacked the ability to analyze and refute the arguments being made by the Chinese. Furthermore, they asserted that the poor education and immaturity of American soldiers constituted a failure of American society as a whole: "For it was not just our young soldiers who faced the antagonist, but more importantly the entire cultural pattern which produced these young soldiers."¹¹ Second, American soldiers lacked the physical and mental fortitude to endure captivity. Thirty-eight percent of American POWs died in captivity, the highest death rate of American POWs of all wars the US had ever fought. Investigators attributed it not to communist mistreatment or the cold environment of North Korea. Instead, it "could be accounted for largely by the ignorance or the callousness of the prisoners themselves."¹² The name given to the malady of soldiers who seemed to willfully die was "give-up-itis." Soldiers, facing the impossibility of escape, succumbed to depression, laid down, refused to eat, and died.¹³

¹¹ Kinkead, Eugene, *In Every War But One*, New York: Norton, 1959, p.9-10.

¹² *Ibid*, p.17.

¹³ *Ibid*, p.148-149.

Kinkead fails to address the POW experience from the perspective of the prisoners themselves, one of the main weaknesses of his book; but it is still a crucial work in the historiography on the subject, for showing how the military perceived the collaboration of American POWs. *In Every War But One* posited the POW issue as unique within the historical context of the Cold War United States. The apparent failure of the US military and American society to prepare young men to fight the battles of the Cold War gave the POW issue a certain urgency: “It is a truism that no nation can expect to survive unless it knows the nature of its enemy and unless it maintains the moral tone as well as the armed strength necessary to defend itself.”¹⁴ However, the close historical proximity of Kinkead’s work has been useful to historians studying the POW issue. Along with other studies by journalists at the time, such as Virginia Pasley’s, *21 Stayed* (1955), these early works have given historians insight into the discourse surrounding American POWs in the years immediately following the end of the conflict.¹⁵

Other studies such as William White’s *The Captives of Korea* (1957), investigated more deeply into the American POW experience. In doing this, White makes a different argument than Kinkead--that American POWs experienced no more hardship than other POWs had in previous wars. White quotes a former POW:

“Some fool back in American later insisted that there had been no duress. But consider, at this point, the supreme importance of one egg, one vitamin tablet—or even one Tailor Made cigarette. Is duress only when a pistol is put at the back of your neck? Or only when the trigger is pulled? We saw men around us still dying of starvation. Is not this duress?”¹⁶

¹⁴ Ibid, p.9.

¹⁵ Pasley, Virginia, *21 Stayed: The Story of the American GI’s Who Chose Communist China—Who They Were and Why They Stayed*, New York: Farrar, Straus, and Cudahy, 1955.

¹⁶ White, William, *The Captives of Korea: An Unofficial White Paper on the Treatment of War Prisoners: Our Treatment of Theirs, Their Treatment of Ours*, New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1957, p.126.

By including the voices of the prisoners, White adds a perspective that Kinkead and the military investigators leave out. The experiences of the prisoners introduced the possibility of a limit of how much one could resist one's captors. This created a rupture between how the prisoners viewed themselves and justified their actions, and how others such as the military, journalists, and the American public attempted to come to terms with soldiers' collaboration.

Other historians would expand on individual experiences, with notable works such as *Broken Soldiers* (2000) by Raymond Lech. He built on White's argument about how prisoners interacted with the Chinese and North Koreans. While recognizing that prisoners were unprepared for captivity, he shows the different ways they not only collaborated, but resisted indoctrination. American soldiers often did not understand what the Chinese were trying to teach them, and thus were unaffected by the indoctrination. During interrogations, prisoners would lie or give the Chinese information that was militarily irrelevant in order to satisfy them. In addition, Lech asserts that the high death rate of American POWs could be attributed more to the Chinese and North Korean's treatment of prisoners, as opposed to American soldiers losing the will to live. He also discusses the innumerable war crimes committed against American POWs, including execution upon capture, or dying of untreated wounds. Many prisoners simply starved to death. Others froze to death on the long marches northward to the permanent camps, many without their boots. Often, enemy soldiers confiscated their boots when they were captured. Prisoners lived in crowded caves and abandoned buildings, with only the warmth of their comrades to keep them alive.¹⁷

¹⁷ Lech, Raymond, *Broken Soldiers*, Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000.

Lech's work is a more recent entry into the literature on American POWs during the Korean War, and crucial, because it opens up various POW experiences for a more nuanced and complex analysis. Prisoners did not just give up and die, nor did they fully give their hearts and minds away to the enemy. Later works would build on Lech's framework for studying POWs and examine more specific aspects of captivity, or specific groups of prisoners. For example, William Latham Clark in *Cold Days in Hell* (2013) recounts the experiences of the Marines captured at the Chosin Reservoir. He also devotes a chapter to downed pilots, who had the unique experience of being pressured to sign confessions that they used bacteriological weapons.¹⁸ Brian McKnight, in *We Fight For Peace* (2014), discusses the twenty-one Americans who refused to repatriate at the end of the war. McKnight applies Lech's analytical framework of assessing the constricting circumstances, desires, and fears to the infamous 'turncoats.' He also shows how the POW issue ran up against the Red Scare of the 1950s, with the Army seizing the opportunity to use the non-repatriates as scapegoats and demonstrate that the US military was not 'soft' on communism.¹⁹

Another landmark work is Lewis Carlson's *Remembered Prisoners of a Forgotten War* (2002), which uses oral histories of former POWs. These oral histories not only add a personal touch missing in prior works, but also provide POWs an opportunity to publicly explain their actions, albeit long after the fact. While the POWs had sympathizers in the public and in works such as Lech that brought the horrors of captivity to light, Carlson writes that "the negative voices reached far greater audiences" and that American POWs "have been redeemed neither in

¹⁸ Clark, William Latham, *Cold Days in Hell: American POWs in Korea*, College Station, Texas: Texas A&M University Press, 2013.

¹⁹ McKnight, Brian, *"We Fight for Peace": Twenty-Three American Soldiers, Prisoners of War, and "Turncoats" in the Korean War*, Kent, Ohio: The Kent State University Press, 2014.

popular culture nor in public discourse.”²⁰ *Remembered Prisoners of a Forgotten War* gives insight into how the use of the POW experience for propaganda affected the prisoners themselves, by first being imprisoned in North Korea and then accused upon returning to the US. Charles Young added on to the idea of the dual incrimination of prisoners in his work, *Name, Rank, & Serial Number* (2014).²¹ He describes the consequences of this: “The notoriety of Korea accomplished something unusual: It transformed traditional heroes into shadows.”²² Additionally, Young shows how the stories of American POWs, and their Chinese and Korean counterparts, were intertwined through connecting their experiences in the camps with the larger Cold War at hand. As delegates from both sides deliberated on how to end the war at Panmunjom, prisoners continued to suffer in both Communist and UN POW camps.

The overall trajectory of the historiography on Korean War POWs has gone from looking at the story from the perspective of the government to prioritizing the voices of POWs themselves who created their own narrative. No other works exemplify this shift more than the series of POW memoirs that have been published in recent years. Notable works include *I Cannot Forget* (2013), by Johnny Moore, who discusses his captivity and the ways he tried to navigate his duty as a soldier while trying to survive. One of the most valuable aspects of Moore’s memoir is his account of his court-martial and discharge after the war. He expresses feelings of betrayal by the military.²³ Betrayal is a common theme in POW memoirs. Don

²⁰ Carlson, Lewis, *Remembered Prisoners of a Forgotten War*, New York: St. Martin’s Griffin, 2002, p.19-20.

²¹ Young, Charles Stewart, *Name, Rank, & Serial Number: Korean War POWs at Home and Abroad*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2014.

²² Ibid, p. 109.

²³ Gentry, Judith Fenner, and John Wilson Moore, *I Cannot Forget: Imprisoned in Korea, Accused at Home*, College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2013.

Snyder writes in his: “You’re guilty of something just because you survived... There had been so much talk about POWs giving in to the Chinese, we were all under suspicion when we came home.”²⁴ Another prominent memoir is *An American Dream*, by Clarence Adams, one of the twenty-one Americans who refused repatriation, and one of the three who was black. Adams discusses how growing up under the shadow of Jim Crow in Memphis, Tennessee, played a major role in his decision to not repatriate.²⁵ These memoirs, along with other personal accounts such as Larry Zeller’s, *In Enemy Hands*, and *American POWs in Korea*, edited by Harry Spiller, add an important comparable perspective for scholars trying to understand their thoughts and emotions.²⁶

In an attempt to restore agency to the prisoners, other historians have used the concept of captivity as a lens through which to study the Cold War. Susan Carruthers, in *Cold War Captives* (2009), “examines captivity as a dense matrix of ideas, images, and practices” and is “a study of the storytelling that makes popular sense of geopolitics.”²⁷ In addition to Korean War POWs, Carruthers covers other forms of captivity such as Soviet gulags, defections, and interrogations. She makes the argument that imprisonment is a useful metaphor to understand how, in the eyes of many, the Cold War was a struggle between freedom and enslavement. Media reports on brainwashed POWs fed into many Americans’ fears of losing the country to communism. If

²⁴ Don Snyder in *A Soldier’s Disgrace* quoted in Young, Charles Stewart, *Name, Rank, & Serial Number*, p.87

²⁵ Adams, Clarence, Della Adams, and Lewis H. Carlson, *An American Dream: The Life of an African American Soldier and POW Who Spent Twelve Years in Communist China*, Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2007.

²⁶ Spiller, Harry, ed., *American POWs in Korea: Sixteen Personal Accounts*, Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 1998. Zellers, Larry, *In Enemy Hands: A Prisoner in North Korea*, The University Press of Kentucky, 2014.

²⁷ Carruthers, Susan, *Cold War Captives: Imprisonment, Escape, and Brainwashing*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009, p.5.

American soldiers could lose their right to think freely and instead be controlled by the enemy, then the nation itself was in danger.

Monica Kim, in *The Interrogation Rooms of the Korean War* (2019), adds to the literature on captivity by analyzing the interrogation room as the space where the interests of governments came into conflict with the individual loyalties and desires of prisoners. Both the Chinese and US governments relied on their perceptions of and assumptions about their enemy, in order to convince prisoners that it was in their best interest to leave their lives in their native country behind. On the other hand, prisoners had presumptions about their captors which affected how they interacted with them, and how willing they might be to cooperate.²⁸

Thus, there has been a significant amount of scholarly work done on Korean War POWs. However, this thesis will attempt to fill a gap in the literature by showing how Americans' fear of brainwashing indicated a deeper anxiety about the nation's ability to fight communism. A Gallup poll taken in October 1953 asked Americans if they felt the United States was prepared enough to fight a war with the Soviet Union. Just 41% of participants replied "yes," and 46% replied "no."²⁹ Just eight years after the triumph of World War II, the war in Korea ended in a stalemate, many felt that the US was not ready to wage another hot war against communism. Americans had to look in the mirror and find out why some of their boys abandoned their duty as soldiers in captivity. Simultaneously, while Americans could not condone their actions, they welcomed POWs home with open arms.

²⁸ Kim, Monica, *The Interrogation Rooms of the Korean Room: The Untold History*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2019.

²⁹ Gallup, George, *The Gallup Poll: Public Opinion, 1935-1971*, p.1186, available at <https://archive.org/details/galluppollpublic0000gall/page/1186/mode/2up?view=theater&q=prisoners> (Accessed Mar. 29, 2023)

CHAPTER 1

“SLAUGHTER OR SLAVERY”

In order to fully understand the story of American POWs, it is first necessary to contextualize the political environment of the early 1950s. This chapter will discuss the impact of McCarthyism on the political environment of the 1950s, and how it affected the military's handling of POWs once they returned home. Then, I will follow with an analysis of the armistice negotiations during the Korean War. This will show why repatriation was a prominent subject during the meetings between UN and Communist delegations. With the US unable to claim a military victory, it sought to deal a propaganda blow to the communists by claiming the loyalty of thousands of North Korean and Chinese prisoners. While this ultimately came true, voluntary repatriation resulted in one of the most dramatic scandals of the Korean War: twenty-one Americans choosing Communist China over the United States.

On February 9th, 1950, Senator Joe McCarthy infamously claimed in a speech in Wheeling, West Virginia to a meeting of the Ohio County Women's Republican Club that he had a list of 205 known communists working in the State Department. From that point on, he made a career out of making accusations, often with little to no evidence. He preyed on Americans' fear

that the government was being consumed from the inside out by communists.³⁰ McCarthy thrived on media coverage and the headlines. “My only forum is page one,” he told a reporter.³¹

In October 1953, the same month that Edward Dickenson decided to return to the United States, McCarthy set his sights on the US Army, specifically the US Army Signal Corps. Based in Fort Monmouth, New Jersey, the Signal Corps had developed new radars and other related technology. Even before McCarthy, the FBI in 1951 had identified thirty-five potential security risks at Ft. Monmouth. The corps came under scrutiny again after an executive order by President Eisenhower called for a review of all potential security risks of government employees with “derogatory information” in their files. Antisemitism, in part, fueled the ensuing investigation of Jewish engineers on the base. McCarthy picked on employees who had joined communist groups, attended meetings, or simply had family who were members.³² Before long, Senator McCarthy started taking shots at the Army, deriding it for not doing enough to rid its ranks of communists and charging employees at Monmouth with leaking military secrets and technology to the Soviets.³³ Each day at the end of his investigative committee’s hearings, McCarthy went before the press with fresh accusations. The American public was receptive to his message. In January of 1954, a Gallup poll reported that 50% of Americans had a favorable opinion of the Senator.³⁴ However, he would fly too close to the sun in his crusade against the

³⁰ Oshinsky, David, *A Conspiracy So Immense: The World of Joe McCarthy*, New York, New York: The Free Press, p. 108-109.

³¹ Ibid, quoted on p.167.

³² Ibid, p.331.

³³ “Senate Unit Queries Ft. Monmouth Aides,” *New York Times*, 9 October 1953.

³⁴ Gallup, George, *The Gallup Poll 1935-1971*, p.1201, available at <https://archive.org/details/galluppollpublic0000gall/page/1200/mode/2up> (Accessed Feb. 24, 2023).

Army when he pursued Dr. Irving Peress, an Army dentist. An internal investigation flagged him for “sufficient evidence of subversive and disloyal tendencies to warrant his removal.”³⁵

President Eisenhower made a statement on McCarthy’s handling of the Peress case:

“I regard it as unfortunate when we are diverted from grave problems—one of which is vigilance against any kind of internal subversion—through disregard of the standards of fair play recognized by the American people.”

Up to this point, Eisenhower had refused to confront McCarthy in the open, opting to remain above his antics. McCarthy responded with a vicious attack on the president that appalled members of the Republican party and estranged him from his colleagues—he had gone too far. Willard Edwards, a journalist for the *Chicago Tribune* said that it was “the day McCarthy died.”³⁶

While McCarthy’s confrontation with the Army was ultimately his downfall, the damage had been done. McCarthy’s accusations made it necessary for the Army to show that it was committed to fighting communism internally. For the Army, Dickenson could not have chosen a better time to repatriate, as historian Brian McKnight remarks, “the army needed a communist to sacrifice and Ed Dickenson unknowingly sat in the waiting.”³⁷ Former POW Johnny Moore, who was also accused of collaboration wrote in his memoir:

“The Dickenson trial took place in Fort Meade, Maryland, I think, very close to where the Army-McCarthy hearings were being held. I’m sure of that because Senator McCarthy was accusing everybody of being communists, and he had a great influence on the way the army treated ex-prisoners of war that had been charged with aiding and abetting the enemy, or

³⁵ Quoted in Oshinsky, David, *A Conspiracy So Immense*, p.366.

³⁶ *Ibid*, p.391-393.

³⁷ McKnight, Brian, *We Fight for Peace*, p.141.

anything like that. I think McCarthy had a lot to do with all of these trials of POWs, because he accused the army of coddling communists, and the army was trying to prove that it wasn't."³⁸

Not long after McCarthy began his war on communism in the halls of Congress, the US military began one of its own on the Korean peninsula. When the Korean War broke out on June 24th, 1950, the United States quickly found itself embroiled in its first armed conflict of the Cold War. With reports of disorganized and ill-equipped South Korean troops retreating in the face of advancing North Korean infantry and tanks, Secretary of State Dean Acheson was immediately concerned about the ability of Syngman Rhee's regime to repel the attack, and the potential blow to U.S. prestige that a successful North Korean invasion might become. In a statement on June 27, 1950, Truman said the invasion of South Korea made "it plain beyond all doubt that communism has passed beyond the use of subversion to conquer independent nations and will now use armed invasion and war."³⁹ Following Acheson's presentation to the UN Security Council, it passed a resolution on June 27, 1950, condemning the North Korean invasion and recommending that member nations intervene on behalf of the Republic of Korea. Just three days later, American reinforcements began arriving on the peninsula.⁴⁰

³⁸ Gentry, Judith Fenner, and John Wilson Moore, *I Cannot Forget: Imprisoned in Korea, Accused at Home*, College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2013, p.197.

³⁹ Statement by the President on the Situation in Korea, June 27, 1950, Public Papers, Truman Library, available at <https://www.trumanlibrary.gov/library/public-papers/173/statement-president-situation-korea> (Accessed Dec. 12, 2022).

⁴⁰ Security Council Resolution 83 (1950), *Resolution of 27 June 1950, S/RES/83*, available at <https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/content/resolutions-adopted-security-council-1950> (Accessed Nov. 17, 2022). Cumings, Bruce, *The Korean War: A History*, 1st ed, New York: Modern Library, 2010, p.5-13. For more on the origins and beginning of the Korean War, see Cumings, Bruce, *The Origins of the Korean War: Liberation and the Emergence of Separate Regimes, 1945-1947*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1981. Cumings, Bruce, *The Origins of the Korean War, Volume II, The Roaring of the Cataract 1947-1950*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990.

Americans largely felt confident of victory. Their confidence was partially fueled by racism towards Koreans, as well as by recent memories of the triumphs of the Second World War. The American military, especially with its overwhelming air superiority, would be able to stop the North Korean advance and push the invaders out of South Korea, with General George MacArthur claiming that he could “handle it with one arm tied behind my back.”⁴¹ In the early stages of the war the North Koreans pushed the South Korean armed forces into the tiny pocket of the Pusan Perimeter on the southeastern corner of the peninsula. These defeats caused anxiety for many Americans as casualties piled up in a war with an objective that was still unclear to many. One couple expressed these fears in a letter to President Truman: “It is with horror that I read of the losses of American lives in Korea, and I ask myself, what are we doing there?”⁴²

However, the tide of the war shifted in September following an audacious amphibious landing at Inchon on the western coast of South Korea by General MacArthur, effectively cutting off North Korean supply lines and annihilated the invaders. A National Security Council report designated NSC 81, written earlier that month, affirmed that the “objective of the United Nations in Korea is to bring about the complete independence and unity of Korea,” and authorized military operations north of the 38th parallel, the border between North and South Korea, as long as there were no signs of Chinese or Soviet occupation or intervention in the conflict.⁴³ As MacArthur crossed the 38th parallel and continued his march north towards the Yalu River, there

⁴¹ Quoted in Cumings, Bruce, *The Korean War*, p.14

⁴² Ann and George Ash to Harry S. Truman, July 12, 1950, *The Korean War and its Origins: OF; Truman Papers*, Truman Library, available at <https://www.trumanlibrary.gov/library/research-files/ann-and-george-ash-harry-s-truman>. (Accessed Nov. 17, 2022).

⁴³ National Security Council Report 81, “United States Courses of Action With Respect to Korea”, September 1, 1950, *The Korean War and Its Origins: PSF; Truman Papers*, Truman Library, available at <https://www.trumanlibrary.gov/library/research-files/national-security-council-report-81-united-states-courses-action-respect?documentid=NA&pagenumber=1>. (Accessed Nov. 17, 2022).

were mixed opinions as to whether China would counterattack. This left the UN forces unprepared and, on their heels, when Communist Chinese forces surged across the border on November 27, 1950. What followed was reminiscent of the first months of the war as UN troops were forced to retreat back below the 38th parallel, around where the war began with the North Korean invasion in June 1950, and where it would stay for over two years, until the signing of the armistice in June 1953.⁴⁴

Armistice negotiations began at Panmunjom in July of 1951. Back in the United States, as early as October 1951, in a *U.S. News and World Report* article, the conflict was already being called the “Forgotten War,” lamenting its costliness and that “no effort is being made or planned to win a clear military victory.”⁴⁵ The GOP candidate Dwight D. Eisenhower famously declared, “I shall go to Korea,” in a speech in Detroit, Michigan, on October 24, 1952, and that his first course of action “will be to review and re-examine every course of action open to us with one goal in view: to bring the Korean War to an early and honorable end.”⁴⁶

When negotiations opened up, one of the key items on the agenda that neither side seemed willing to concede was repatriation of prisoners of war. Initially, General Matthew B. Ridgeway, commander of UN forces, officially proposed a one-for-one exchange of POWs. The procedure for returning prisoners had been laid out in 1949 in the Geneva Convention Relative to

⁴⁴ Cumings, Bruce, *The Korean War*, p.23-31.

⁴⁵ “Korea: The ‘Forgotten’ War”, *U.S. News and World Report*, 5 October 1951.

⁴⁶ Presidential candidate Dwight D. Eisenhower makes 1952 campaign pledge, “I shall go to Korea.” Speech, October 24, 1952, [Papers of Dwight D. Eisenhower, Speech Series, Box 2, Oct 23, 1952 to Nov 3, 1952 and Dec 1952 (1); NAID #12012607] Available at <https://www.eisenhowerlibrary.gov/sites/default/files/research/online-documents/korean-war/i-shall-go-to-korea-1952-10-24.pdf> (Accessed Nov. 17, 2022). For more on President Eisenhower and the end of the Korean War, see Hitchcock, William I., *The Age of Eisenhower: America and the World in the 1950s*, New York, New York: Simon & Schuster, 2018. p.102-107.

the Treatment of Prisoners of War, as follows, “prisoners of war shall be released and repatriated without delay after the cessation of hostilities.”⁴⁷ Historian Rosemary Foot details the shift in the UN command’s position from a prompt and mandatory exchange, to one that sought to exploit the potential propaganda victories that voluntary repatriation could yield. President Truman was deeply interested in the repatriation issue because of the forcible repatriation of Soviet prisoners following the Second World War.⁴⁸ The President made the following statement on May 7, 1952:

“That there shall not be a forced repatriation of prisoners of war—as the Communists have insisted. To agree to forced repatriation would be unthinkable. It would be repugnant to the fundamental moral and humanitarian principles which underlie our action in Korea. To return these prisoners of war in our hands by force would result in misery and bloodshed, to the eternal dishonor of the United States and of the United Nations We will not buy an armistice by turning over human beings for slaughter or slavery.”⁴⁹

Truman thus presented the policy of voluntary repatriation as a humanitarian issue. Indeed, it was relentlessly pursued at the negotiation table because: the United States was morally superior to the communists, and former communist soldiers electing to remain under the control of the United Nations thus would be a clear-cut propaganda victory for the United States.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Article 118, Section II, “Release and Repatriation of Prisoners of War at the Close of Hostilities”, *Geneva Convention Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War*, International Committee of the Red Cross, August 12, 1949.

⁴⁸ Foot, Rosemary, *Substitute for Victory: The Politics of Peacemaking at the Korean Armistice Talks*, Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1990, p.87-89.

⁴⁹ “Truman Statement”, *New York Times (1923-)*; May 8, 1952; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The New York Times pg.3

⁵⁰ For more information on Korean and Chinese POWs during the Korean War see Young, Charles, *Name, Rank, and Serial Number: Exploiting Korean War POWs at Home and Abroad*, New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 2014, p.89-105. Young brings into question the validity of voluntary repatriation for Chinese and Korean POWs, showing the coercive and violent conditions of UN POW camps. Conflict between factions of POWs within the camps had great effects on POWs’ decisions on whether to repatriate. For a more in-depth analysis of Chinese POWs: Chang, David Cheng, *The Hijacked War: The Story of Chinese POWs in the Korean War*, Redwood City: Stanford University Press, 2020.

There were difficulties in getting the Communists to agree to an armistice with voluntary repatriation as one of its provisions. According to General Ridgeway this was “because of the extremely adverse effect that large scale defection would have on the world-wide Commie prestige.”⁵¹ Nevertheless, there was dissent within the Truman administration over drawing such a line in the sand. Such concerns considered the legality of implementing voluntary repatriation under the Geneva Convention of 1949, as well as the potential risks of unnecessarily extending the captivity of UN prisoners if negotiations hit a snag. Within the State Department, Edward Barrett and John Hickerson from the Office of Public Opinion Affairs lamented that the administration disregarded the discontent among Americans for letting American soldiers remain in communist POW camps longer than was necessary, not to mention the additional casualties that would occur if the war continued over this issue. Furthermore, reprisals against American POWs could occur if the UN withheld communist POWs seemingly against their will.⁵²

Before long, families of POWs circulated a petition pleading for a one-to-one exchange of POWs in order to hasten the end of the war and the return of their loved ones. In a letter to Senator Paul Douglas, Lorraine Fink, the wife of a captain in the Marine Corps captured the dilemma:

“I want my husband to come home, Senator Douglas. I feel our country’s FIRST obligation is to our boys—to my husband who served five years in World War II, 36 months as a fighter pilot in the Pacific – and now in the Korean War. I feel our country has a prior obligation to him and to all our men who are prisoners in Korea, rather than to the 60 or 70,000 Chinese POW’s who fought against us, and upon surrender do not wish to return to their country, whatever their reasons may be.”⁵³

⁵¹ Quoted in Foot, Rosemary, *Substitute for Victory*, p.89.

⁵² *Ibid*, p.90.

⁵³ Correspondence Between Paul Douglas and Harry S. Truman, With Attachments, June 12, 1952, The Korean War and Its Origins: OF; Truman Papers, Truman Library, available at <https://www.trumanlibrary.gov/library/research->

Mrs. Fink was torn between advocating for American soldiers, many of whom had then been in captivity for nearly two years, and the importance of the propaganda victory that voluntary repatriation would mean to the US effort to win the Cold War. The exchange of prisoners of war would spark a conflict over what many Americans were willing to sacrifice to wage the Cold War. In another letter to President Truman, Judge Donald McKinlay of Chicago expressed somewhat different feelings: “one cannot blame the parents of our boys who are captives of the enemy, if they want to trade anything to get their boys back. But the government is in a different position from the parents and must consider the life and limb of millions of other boys who may suffer if we exhibit weakness or fear in dealing with the enemy.”⁵⁴ Thus, repatriation became a political battlefield on which the ambitions of states confronted the personal desires of prisoners and their families, and a site of the ideological cold war that mirrored the hot war fought along the 38th parallel.

After two years of negotiation, stalemate, and heated debate, the Korean armistice was signed on July 27, 1953. The terms called for the return of POWs who wished to repatriate within sixty days after the armistice went into effect. Their return occurred in two main phases. First, Operation Little Switch commenced in May 1953 as peace negotiations were making progress and gave the exchange of sick and wounded prisoners priority. Over 600 UN prisoners were repatriated during Little Switch, and close to 7000 Chinese and Korean POWs were

[files/correspondence-between-paul-douglas-and-harry-s-truman-attachments?documentid=NA&pagenumber=3](https://www.trumanlibrary.gov/library/research-files/correspondence-between-paul-douglas-and-harry-s-truman-attachments?documentid=NA&pagenumber=3)
(Accessed Nov. 17, 2022)

⁵⁴ Donald S. McKinlay to Harry S. Truman, With Reply From William D. Hassett, May 10, 1952, *The Korean War and Its Origins: OF; Truman Papers*, Truman Library, available at <https://www.trumanlibrary.gov/library/research-files/donald-s-mckinlay-harry-s-truman-reply-william-d-hassett?documentid=NA&pagenumber=2> (Accessed Nov. 21, 2022)

returned to the Communists. After the armistice, the exchange of the bulk of repatriating prisoners proceeded as Operation Big Switch, during which, 75,801 Chinese and Korean prisoners were returned by the UN command, and 12,773 United Nations prisoners were repatriated by Chinese and North Korean forces.⁵⁵

As for POWs who did not want to repatriate, the armistice called for a ninety-day ‘explanation’ period, during which representatives from each country met with them to attempt to convince them to return home. During the explanation period, prisoners could choose to return to their home country or go to an undetermined neutral country. The Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission (NNRC) oversaw and the explanation process, and India and General Kodandera Subayya Thimayya spearheaded the effort. The NNRC was to ensure that prisoners’ decision not to repatriate was noncoercive, and that they were able to go to their country of choice.⁵⁶ At the end of the war, the UN command surrendered to the NNRC 22,605 Chinese and Korean prisoners refusing repatriation. On the other side, only 23 Americans refused to repatriate

⁵⁵ Korean War Armistice Agreement, July 27, 1953; Treaties and Other International Agreements Series #2782; General Records of the United States Government; Record Group 11; National Archives, available at <https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/armistice-agreement-restoration-south-korean-state> (Accessed Nov. 21, 2022). Foot, Rosemary, *A Substitute for Victory*, p.190-191.

⁵⁶ Bailey, Sydney D., *The Korean Armistice*, New York, New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1992, p.142-149. Kim, Monica, *The Interrogation Rooms of the Korea War: The Untold History*, Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2019, p.259-302. In the chapter of her book titled, “On the 38th Parallel: The Third Choice”, Kim discusses the complexities and consequences of the explanation process, repatriation, and the NNRC, especially for Korean and Chinese prisoners. Kim makes the point that one of the main concerns with the issue of voluntary repatriation was the political recognition of the PRC and the DPRK. One of the reasons for the addition of the choice of going to a neutral country, instead of one of the belligerents, was to make the choice of repatriation be more about the self-determination of the prisoners, rather than the recognition of states. There were also difficulties in determining what repatriation meant for Korean prisoners. Since many prisoners were from South Korea and had been conscripted into the North Korean military after the invasion, repatriation was understood by some prisoners as returning to their homes in South Korea. Kim, along with Charles Young in *Name, Rank, & Serial Number* note that many of the coercive elements within the UN prisoner camps persisted into the NNRC camp, where factions of prisoners threatened and coerced others into refusing repatriation.

during Operation Big Switch, two of whom would decide to return to the US during the explanation period.

The number of Korean and Chinese prisoners who refused to repatriate was a relatively large proportion of the total number of prisoners held by the UN when compared to the twenty-three Americans. The Americans who chose to stay in North Korea would capture the public mind and commonly be referred to as 'turncoats.' They would prompt ordinary Americans and the military to examine what had gone wrong in their lives to make them susceptible to seduction by communism. The choice of a few American soldiers blunted what was otherwise a stunning propaganda victory.

Private First-Class Rafael Diaz was a member of the 23rd Regiment of the 2nd Infantry Division when he and two of his comrades were captured by Chinese soldiers near the 38th parallel on the night of May 10, 1951. Their captors then forced them on a march that lasted for forty nights. The hardships of the long marches are recounted in prisoners' statements taken by the military after the war. Diaz and his fellow prisoners received no food for the first five days of the march, only marching at night, and resting in caves and abandoned buildings during the day to avoid strafing aircraft. All the while, men suffered from malnutrition, exhaustion, dysentery, and untreated wounds. Diaz recalled one instance in which he and his convoy of prisoners came across a wounded American soldier in a ditch who was missing an arm. The wounded man begged for water. The Chinese guards him shot him where he lay. Instances such as these reminded the prisoners that their lives were in the hands of their captors.

Diaz and his comrades eventually reached Camp #1, approximately 7 miles from the Yalu River, whereupon the Chinese began an intense indoctrination program that consisted of daily lectures on the warmongering of the United States, educating the prisoners on communism

and the pitfalls of capitalism and on how Wall Street businessmen were responsible for their captivity and suffering. Prisoners were required to write their opinions of the day's lecture. If the camp officers were displeased with a prisoner's response, he was punished. One prisoner in Diaz' squad who wrote a negative review of the daily lecture was thrown into solitary confinement for three days during the winter without any heating.⁵⁷

Prisoners who were hospitalized did not escape indoctrination either. Diaz recalled the poor medical treatment he received during his captivity in the camp hospital, an old Japanese temple, with dirt floors, and straw mattresses. The hospital staff consisted of only two men and one woman who acted as the surgeon for the camp. After being hospitalized with dysentery, the only medical treatment Diaz received was a charcoal powder that was consumed orally. Prisoners were also required to write a letter thanking the hospital staff for their care; if they refused, they did not receive any food until they did so.⁵⁸

Historian Monica Kim points out that of the 4,428 American POWs repatriated at the end of the war, 88% of them were captured within the first twelve months of the conflict.⁵⁹ This can largely be attributed to the two major retreats of UN and South Korean forces in the summer of 1950 when the war first broke out, and then later that year and into the early months of 1951 after China entered the war. This meant that the vast majority of American POWs were in

⁵⁷ Ibid.

Affidavit of Henry Leerkamp, Operation Big Switch Interrogation Reports, 1953-1954, Box 3; RG 153 Office of the Judge Advocate General; NARA, College Park, MD.

⁵⁸ Sworn Statement of PFC Rafael Diaz, Operation Big Switch Interrogation Reports, 1953-1954, Box 2; RG 153 Office of the Judge Advocate General; NARA, College Park, MD.

⁵⁹ Kim, Monica, *The Interrogation Rooms of the Korean War*, p.304.

captivity for over two years before the armistice was signed, enduring malnutrition, freezing temperatures, disease, exhaustion, and, at times, torture.

In all accounts of POWs during the Korean War, one aspect of the prisoner experience stands out and distinguishes the Korean War from other wars: indoctrination and the exploitation of POWs for propaganda. The level to which they either cooperated or resisted indoctrination, and the extent to which prisoners collaborated with and informed the enemy on the resistance of their comrades, became one of the defining aspects of how POWs experienced captivity. How POWs behaved also affected how they were treated in the United States upon their repatriation. POWs had to navigate innumerable choices between their duty as soldiers to resist their captors and their desire to survive and see their loved ones again. Thus, it is necessary to examine how prisoners understood their rationalization for collaboration at its varying levels of severity, and how their comrades, the military, and the American public judged them for seemingly turning their backs on their country.

When Johnny Moore's unit was overrun in November 1950, the orders from his officer were simple, "Break up into small groups. Try and get back to the link the best way you can." For Moore and many other American GIs at the time of the Chinese assault into North Korea, surrender was a death sentence:

"We were scared to death, of course. I had heard from others that 'If they capture you, they kill you.' The word had gone around for months earlier among the men that others had found American soldiers tied up and shot in the head. And that's what we truly believed would happen to us."⁶⁰

⁶⁰ Gentry, Judith Fenner, and John Wilson Moore, *I Cannot Forget*, p.84.

Understandably, there was a fear that surrendering to the enemy was the equivalent of forfeiting one's life, as rumors of war crimes ran through the ranks. Instances of execution and beatings of prisoners are prevalent in the accounts of prisoners after the war. One North Korean officer who figures prominently was known as the "Tiger." Henry Leerkamp stated that the Tiger took command of his group of prisoners marching north to POW camps on October 31, 1950. Due to exhaustion and the lack of medical attention and food, many prisoners began to fall behind and slow down the march. The Tiger stopped the march and walked to the back of the column towards Lt. John Thorton and asked him what the U.S. Army would do if men fell back in the formation. Thorton answered that other men would go back and help them, to which the Tiger replied that in the communist army, "we shoot you." The Tiger then placed a handkerchief over Lt. Thorton's face and executed him with a shot to the head. By its end on November 7th, Leerkamp remembered that the march had cost them "a man a mile in casualties."⁶¹ Master Sergeant Calvin Creeson of the 8th Infantry Division also had his run in with the Tiger after he was captured,

"I was supporting a Prisoner of War who was too weak to travel unaided on this march up the mountain. Another Prisoner of War along side of me, name unknown, was also supporting one of the Prisoners of War who was too weak to travel. When we reached the top of this mountain, a Korean officer known as "Burp Gun Charlie" told us through motions to let them down, and we placed these two weakened Prisoners of War on the ground. The "Tiger" came up to us and motioned us to rejoin the column; and, as we walked away, we saw the "Tiger" shoot the two Prisoners of War whom we had just left through the head, and then kicked their bodies off the edge of the road."⁶²

⁶¹ Affidavit of Henry Leerkamp, Operation Big Switch Interrogation Reports, 1953-1954, Box 3; RG 153 Office of the Judge Advocate General; NARA, College Park, MD.
Sworn Statement of Captain Ralph E. Culbertson, Operation Big Switch Interrogation Reports, 1953-1954, Box 1; RG 153 Office of the Judge Advocate General; NARA, College Park, MD.
Lech, Raymond, *Broken Soldiers*, p.9-28.

⁶² Affidavit of Calvin Creeson, Operation Big Switch Interrogation Reports, 1953-1954, Box 1; RG 153 Office of the Judge Advocate General; NARA, College Park, MD.

However, historian William Latham Clark has argued that there was a stark contrast between the experiences of being captured by North Korean and Chinese soldiers. Whereas North Koreans welcomed POWs with beatings and executions, the Chinese soldiers “frequently treated captured opponents with remarkable humanity.”⁶³ For example, when 1st Lieutenant William Funchess was captured on November 4, 1950, a group of Chinese soldiers formed around him. Suddenly, a Chinese soldier forced his way through the other soldiers holding him at gunpoint, pulled up Funchess’ right arm and shook his hand, and said, “We are not mad at you. We are mad at Wall Street.”⁶⁴ However, this moment of humanity amidst a bloody conflict was fleeting, as Funchess’ belongings were later stolen by other Chinese soldiers and doctors refused to treat the wounds of his comrades.⁶⁵

Johnny Moore was well-received by his captors, too, although he was suspicious of their true intentions: “these Chinese tried to convince us that “We’re your buddies, your friends.” Of course, we didn’t buy that.”⁶⁶ Robert MacLean recalled a similar experience years later, explaining that, if they “wanted to take us out in a quick snuff, they could have done it,” and that it seemed as if “they wanted to take some prisoners.” MacLean, among other prisoners, believed that the Chinese soldiers were under orders to take prisoners to undergo indoctrination and be used for propaganda.⁶⁷ Charles Young in his work, *Name, Rank, & Serial Number* makes the

⁶³ Clark, William Latham, *Cold Days in Hell*, p.80.

⁶⁴ Spiller, Harry, *American POWs in Korea*, Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 1998, p.45, quoted in Clark, William Latham, *Cold Days in Hell*, p.81.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Gentry, Judith Fenner, and John Wilson Moore, *I Cannot Forget*, p.84.

⁶⁷ Carlson, Lewis, *Remembered Prisoners of a Forgotten War*, p.25.

connection between the “lenient policy” of Chinese forces towards POWs during the Korean War, and a similar strategy that Mao Tse-tung’s political officers had used to great effect during the Chinese Civil War against the Kuomintang. As a result, many of these same officers and younger recruits were sent to Korea to attempt to recruit more soldiers into the communist revolution. However, the Chinese political officers ran into struggles with the treatment afforded to American prisoners by their enlisted men and guards. Former POW Arden Rowley wrote about a time when Chinese guards began setting up machine guns aimed at a crowd of prisoners:

“The Chinese instructors were devastated by what was happening. Here they had spent months telling us that Communism was the greatest and bragging to us about their lenient policy toward us, and all of a sudden they were faced with the most blatant incident of torture.”⁶⁸

When looking at all of the statements and memoirs of prisoners, it is intriguing the degree to which the prisoner of war experience differed on an individual basis. Stories of atrocities and war crimes feature prominently in the history of POWs during the Korean War. From the witnesses of the executions of American prisoners at the hands of the “Tiger,” to the massacre on Hill 303, where, on August 14, 1950, a group of forty-five American soldiers captured by North Korean forces were executed. Glenn Reynolds, upon finding the bodies of the men tied up with communications wire and shot in the back of head, described it as “the most gruesome sight I’ve ever seen.” In a similar incident at Taejon, sixty American prisoners were tied up and executed and discovered along with mass graves of ROK soldiers.⁶⁹ On the other hand, others received an almost warm welcome as Chinese soldiers saw themselves as liberating American soldiers from the clutches of capitalism. Between the two extremes of vicious war crimes and treatment as

⁶⁸ Quoted in Young, Charles, *Name, Rank, & Serial Number*, p.46-47.

⁶⁹ Carlson, Lewis, *Remembered Prisoners of a Forgotten War*, p.97

victims of an unsentimental American war machine, American prisoners indeed had to walk on unstable ground when interacting with their captors.

CHAPTER 2

“YOU CAN’T ASK A MAN TO BE A HERO FOREVER”

After the war, it was apparent that American soldiers had not been trained or well prepared for the possibility of becoming a prisoner of war. The idea that a soldier would only give their name, rank, and serial number to the enemy was simple, straightforward, and believed to be a hard and fast line for prisoners to follow, especially if they held no sympathy for their enemy. However, as seen with the Chinese “lenient policy,” prisoners did not expect to be treated humanely, a situation which they were not trained for. Eugene Kinkead quotes a U.S. Army investigator concluded that the collaboration of American soldiers with the enemy was “in a sense...the fault of the Army training program,” and “if the prisoner had been armed with the knowledge that this might happen, its effect might have been very different.”⁷⁰ The reasons given by the military and the American public for explaining why prisoners collaborated with the enemy will be explored in more detail later, but the importance of this is that many believed that American soldiers were not prepared to be prisoners of war.

To be a prisoner during the Korean War meant that the struggle did not end at the moment of capture. POWs, upon reaching the prison camps, faced a new challenge: how to maintain honor and discipline in the face of indoctrination while still fighting for survival. Billie

⁷⁰ Quoted in Kinkead, Eugene, *In Every War But One*, Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1959, p.88.

Lessman's statement describes the indoctrination and psychological tests prisoners faced during the war and the ways he and others resisted their captors, while simultaneously submitting to the demands of political officers. Upon being captured on June 30, 1951, Lessman and his comrades were continuously interrogated for valuable military information, subjected to "mental torture" and "serious questioning, hour after hour, no food, made to sit up for hours on end."⁷¹ He was physically tortured for not knowing how many field telephones the 1st Marine Division had. On this instance he wrote,

"The Gooks kept saying they would trade my life for a military secret. I told them we had a new cannon that would fire wire for telephones over the mountains and could contact rear echelons from the front lines in 30 minutes. They were apparently satisfied."⁷²

Lessman's account shows that he was deliberately demonstrating his resistance to the enemy's attempts to get information from him. The racism and sarcasm in his answer reveal the mental superiority he felt towards his captors, that he could outsmart and humiliate them. It is important to note that he was well aware that his conduct and integrity as a soldier were being scrutinized in his telling of the events of his captivity. Prisoners were determined to prove that they maintained discipline and continued to resist the enemy, often describing the Chinese interrogators as unintelligent, feminine, and referenced racial stereotypes.⁷³ This can be seen with Lessman's opening sentence: "To the best of my knowledge every member of the USMC

⁷¹ Statement of Billie J. Lessman, Operation Big Switch Interrogation Reports, 1953-1954, Box 3; RG 153 Office of the Judge Advocate General; NARA, College Park, MD.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Kim, Monica, *The Interrogation Rooms of the Korean War*, p.320-325. Note: Kim references a pamphlet circulated to American GIs during World War II that told them that if they were taken prisoner, they should disregard the "monkey-like expression on the Japanese faces". Kim argues that this line of thinking in-part, informed American GIs in Korea on how they interacted with their captors.

who was a POW was not captured, nor did he surrender, he was physically taken, either unconscious or wounded [too] badly to fight any longer.”⁷⁴ By writing this, he evades responsibility for being captured, by maintaining that he fought and resisted in every way he could. He understood the consequences if he revealed that he aided or accommodated the enemy while he was a prisoner.

‘Brainwashing’ would become the popularized catch-all term for what American POWs experienced and a way to explain why some of them chose to stay behind with the communists. One of the earliest works that analyzed the phenomenon of brainwashing, and coined the term, was *Brain-Washing in Red China* (1951), by Edward Hunter. Hunter examines the interrogation and education techniques the Chinese used to convert people to communism: “the wearing-down tactics used in learning and democratic discussions are carried over into every field of endeavor into which Communism extends, and it extends everywhere in China.”⁷⁵ Through repetition and exhausting the brain, it seemed possible to control the thoughts of other people. After the Korean War, brainwashing would receive more attention in order to understand how so many people could fall victim to communism. In *The Battle for the Mind* (1957), William Sargent takes a broad look at the process of thought control and changing the ideas of other people. The relevance of this book to the experience of POWs is apparent in the introductory question the book asks: “Why does a PW sign a ‘confession’ he knows is false?” Sargent describes brainwashing as a process where an individual or a group are subjected to fear, anxiety, uncertainty and, in some cases, physical torture in order to break down the emotional and mental barriers that prevent them from thinking a certain way. Once the subject has broken down, he is

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Hunter, Edward, *Brain-Washing in Red China*, New York: The Vanguard Press, 1951, p.59.

then ripe for reeducation, and the brainwashers can exert their will over them.⁷⁶ He applies similar concepts to the process of confession, in which the subject, even though he knows he is not guilty, will still write a confession if he is made to feel guilty, or if he is subjected to immense physical pain.⁷⁷ In an oral history, former POW Kenneth Badke described his brainwashing as “reducing the person to the lowest state of existence possible, without him dying. Then you start feeding him propaganda and at the same time you offer him an incentive of food if he’ll do so and so, or he’ll say so and so.”⁷⁸

Unlike Badke, Sargent, and Hunter described it and also made a distinction between brainwashing and indoctrination, the Army defined brainwashing as the “process producing obvious alteration of character.” This could be achieved through the use of one or of a combination of hypnosis, drugs, and physical or psychological physical torture. No matter the method, for the Army, brainwashing was intended to fundamentally change the character of a person.⁷⁹ By contrast, an Army psychiatrist said that the Army defined indoctrination as the “effort to change a man’s viewpoint while he is still a thinking individual by regulating his thoughts and actions.”⁸⁰ In looking at the Army’s distinction between the two processes of controlling an individual’s thoughts, the line of distinction is drawn at whether or not the individual still had control and responsibility for his actions. As a result, Army officials and medical professionals saw the conflation of the two terms in popular media as problematic when

⁷⁶ Sargent, William, *The Battle for the Mind: A Physiology of Conversion and Brain-Washing*, Baltimore, MD: Penguin Books, revised edition, 1961, p.131-137.

⁷⁷ Ibid, p.179-185.

⁷⁸ Transcript, Oral history of Kenneth Badke, Prisoner of War Oral History Project, National Prisoner of War Museum, Andersonville, GA.

⁷⁹ Kinkead, Eugene, *In Every War But One*, p.125.

⁸⁰ Ibid, p.31.

it came to disciplining soldiers for their actions as prisoners. How could they punish soldiers if they supposedly had no control over what they did? Furthermore, removing the responsibility of soldiers who collaborated with the enemy implied that there was a limit to a soldier's ability to resist his captors. If this limit was real, then this opened up to the possibility that soldiers' lack of discipline and failure to uphold their oath to the nation could go without consequence. This fear of course was amplified by the Cold War environment—the belief the American people faced the existential threat of communism and that winning the Cold War required the people to endure hardship and maintain faith in the American institutions and values.

In the case of the Korean War, American prisoners of war had their faith in the United States and their honor as soldiers put to the test in the indoctrination program of Chinese prison camps. As previously mentioned, one of the hallmarks of captivity in a Chinese POW camp were the lectures by Chinese political officers. The Chinese officers split POWs into different squads and assigned a prisoner to be a leader of each squad. Squad leaders were not chosen for their rank, but because they seemed to be more receptive to the communist message or more cooperative with camp officials. After each lecture, prisoners were required to have small group discussions and write down their thoughts on the lesson for that day. The squad leaders facilitated discussion and had to report back on how the POWs received the topic. Squad leaders thus were often times the first to be criticized for collaborating with the enemy, since they had the most direct contact with the Chinese and were also tasked with reporting on other prisoners. Johnny Moore recalled in his memoir that he was puzzled when he was asked to be a squad leader, since he was not a leader of any sort. When he asked an NCO for advice on what he should do, he was told that he should do it, because the Chinese would not allow officers or

NCOs to become squad leaders.⁸¹ The reason for this was that it was an attempt at breaking down the hierarchy and social order that American soldiers had become so accustomed to. For the Chinese, forgetting the old way of life that prisoners were accustomed to, was the first step in welcoming them into the communist ranks. Reflecting back on his decision to become a squad leader, and the criticism he and others received for going along with the indoctrination, Moore wrote:

“Some have said that we squad leaders or assistant platoon leaders were collaborating with the enemy, but I believe that under the circumstances it was probably the one thing that brought a lot of men home that would have died had we not done this.”⁸²

Moore knew that what he was doing was not becoming of an honorable soldier, in assisting the enemy with indoctrination and reporting on the activities of his comrades, and moving well beyond name, rank, & serial number. However, he does not see fault in his actions, because lives were saved by him taking the position of squad leader. As a squad leader, he had more freedom to move around the camp and had more influence on Chinese guards. If he saw a POW being beaten or detained by a guard, he might persuade the guard to let the prisoner go or relax the punishment. If a prisoner was put in solitary confinement, or “the hole” as it became known, he was able to sneak food and water past guards and to the confined prisoner.

Prisoners were conscious of the possible repercussions of collaboration. Captain Henry Humphries Osborne, a naval aviator and a veteran of World War II combat missions in the South Pacific, was shot down and captured on May 23, 1951. His captors told him that he could write a letter to his wife as long as he included criticism of the United States for its “imperialist

⁸¹ Gentry, Judith Fenner, and John Wilson Moore, *I Cannot Forget*, p.107.

⁸² *Ibid*, p.108.

suppression” of North Korea. Captain Osborne’s wife was six months pregnant, and he wanted to let her know that he was alive. However, he hesitated because he wanted to hold his “head high and not be a traitor” upon returning home. Despite his reservations, Captain Osborne eventually caved to the pressure and wrote a letter to his wife from the address of Camp #3.⁸³

As for the lectures themselves, they covered topics such as how the United States was responsible for the war and that the United States should pull out of the war, which was a regional conflict between North Korea and South Korea. Lectures also attempted to get prisoners to blame American politicians and Wall Street businessmen for warmongering, and that they were their true enemies, not the communists. Prisoners learned the history of Communist China and the Soviet Union, and the benefits of living under communism. Many of the Chinese political officers who gave these lessons to the prisoners were educated in the United States and spoke fluent English. The instructors earned mocking nicknames from the prisoners such as “Dirty Pictures” Wong and “Snake Eye” Ding.⁸⁴ In one instance when soldiers were not paying attention to the day’s lecture, a Chinese officer threatened the group:

“You are the aggressors and if you don’t accept the lenient policy and change your views, we have dug a hole which we are going to throw you in. You capitalist warmongers do stink. We are quite right in burying you. A person who does not accept our doctrine is not a human being because he is not for the masses and a man that is not for the masses does not deserve treatment any better than you give an animal. As an animal, we have a right to eliminate you. You will learn the truth and we don’t care if it takes one year, two years, ten years, twenty years; we don’t care if you die here because we will bury you and bury you deep so that you don’t stink.”⁸⁵

⁸³ Spiller, Harry, *American POWs in Korea*, p.67-70.

⁸⁴ Lech. Raymond B., *Broken Soldiers*, p.91-92.

⁸⁵ Quoted in Lech, Raymond B., *Broken Soldiers*, p.92-93.

This lashing out by a Chinese officer reflects the frustrations with getting prisoners to go along with their program of indoctrination. Soldiers often times did not understand or were not interested in the content of the lectures or did not believe what they were being told. Lessman wrote that when the Chinese tried to educate them on the United States' use of biological weapons, "we flatly refused to listen and it was dropped after the first two weeks."⁸⁶ Kenneth Badke similarly recalled of the indoctrination and the lectures, "we didn't believe in it in the first place."⁸⁷ Even so, prisoners had to turn in their written responses to the lectures in order to receive food that day, which was more than enough motivation.⁸⁸ What many prisoners recalled was the treatment they received when they resisted indoctrination, or did not give satisfactory answers. Prisoners were thrown into "the hole," and sometimes kept there for multiple weeks, without food or heat for consecutive days, and they often came out with "frozen feet and fingers or had markings from beatings. After about a week, prisoners had their mind 'changed' by the hole."⁸⁹ Corporal DeSmet recalled that, "so long as we did what we were told we were not punished."⁹⁰

While the circumstances were extreme, there were still varying levels of collaboration. In addition to being squad leaders, prisoners were involved in other matters such as writing for the

⁸⁶ Statement of Billie J. Lessman, Operation Big Switch Interrogation Reports, 1953-1954, Box 3; RG 153 Office of the Judge Advocate General; NARA, College Park, MD.

⁸⁷ Transcript, Oral history of Kenneth Badke, Prisoner of War Oral History Project, National Prisoner of War Museum, Andersonville, GA.

⁸⁸ Affidavit of Johnny J. DeLuca, Operation Big Switch Interrogation Reports, 1953-1954, Box 2; RG 153 Office of the Judge Advocate General; NARA, College Park, MD.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

Statement of Eugene I. Hale, Operation Big Switch Interrogation Reports, 1953-1954, Box 3; RG 153 Office of the Judge Advocate General; NARA, College Park, MD.

⁹⁰ Affidavit of Albert A. DeSmet, Operation Big Switch Interrogation Reports, 1953-1954, Box 2; RG 153 Office of the Judge Advocate General; NARA, College Park, MD.

camp propaganda newspaper, *Toward Truth and Peace*. They would be selected to write articles about communism, life in the United States, and other topics that often related to the lectures. The newspaper would often be required reading in the small group discussions. One of the prisoners closely involved with the publication of the newspaper was Claude Batchelor, who initially refused repatriation, but decided to return during the explanation process.⁹¹ Writing for the publication, Batchelor had more time to read the communist literature in the camp library. He later stated, “I had already started leaning in their general direction” and that he “began to believe a lot of it.”⁹²

However, working for the camp newspaper and becoming sympathetic to communist ideas were just a couple of things that could get POWs labelled as collaborators. The list of transgressions was extensive. Summary sheets and case files of the Returned or Exchanged Captured American Personnel in Korea Program (RECAP-K) inform us of what activities were considered punishable. These ranged from giving the enemy valuable military intelligence, signing and circulating peace petitions, assisting in study groups, or becoming friends with guards and officers.⁹³ Informing on another prisoner for planning an escape or for stealing food from the cafeteria, was also a form of collaboration, as prisoners thus exposed were punished, often brutally. The final report of the Japan Joint Intelligence Processing Board called informants “most despicable individuals in the ranks of the prisoners.”⁹⁴ One former prisoner, Sergeant

⁹¹ McKnight, Brian, *We Fight for Peace*, p.75.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Summary, RECAP-K Personnel, Franklin, Andrew E., RECAP-K Program, Miscellaneous Policy Documents, Box 4; RG 153 Office of the Judge Advocate General, NARA, College Park, MD.

⁹⁴ Final Report, Japan Joint Intelligence Processing Board, Folder 1 of 4, Box 47; RG 319, NARA, College Park, MD.

William Banghart was accused of collaboration for being the camp librarian and pressing other POWs to accept communist ideals. He participated in plays and theatrical productions that were meant to indoctrinate prisoners.⁹⁵ However, as seen with the case files and various activities, prisoners did not necessarily need to become communists themselves in order to be accused of wrongdoing. Making voice recordings, signing and circulation of peace petitions, and informing on other prisoners, were ways prisoners could collaborate with the enemy without being indoctrinated into communism. The Chinese utilized prisoners' recordings for propaganda, as examples of the good treatment they were receiving in the camps and painting the communists in a positive light. When prisoners made recordings, often the first thing on their minds was informing their loved ones that they were still alive, and not that they were putting the security of their country at risk. While these were not necessarily actions that physically harmed other prisoners, or affected the outcome of the war, instead, the actions of prisoners assisted the enemy in waging the larger ideological Cold War, and this was something that the military found difficult to forgive.

One other example of the Chinese use of American POWs for propaganda purposes was the Stockholm Peace Appeal, signed and circulated among prisoners, which called for an end to the war. Bribed with cigarettes, ultimately 300 prisoners ended up signing the document.⁹⁶ Clarence Adams was one of the twenty-one non-repatriates and one of the many who signed the peace appeal. In his memoir (2007), he reflected on his thoughts while he was in the camp as he

⁹⁵ Case File of former Sgt. William E. Banghart, Case Files of Returned of Exchanged Captured American Personnel, 1953-1958, Box 1; RG 153 Office of the Judge Advocate General; NARA, College Park, MD.

⁹⁶ Clark, William Latham, *Cold Days in Hell*, p.128. Statement of Sgt. Julius J. Benedict, Operation Big Switch Interrogation Reports, 1953-1954, Box 2; RG 153 Office of the Judge Advocate General; NARA, College Park, MD.

signed the peace appeal, and delivered lectures to other prisoners on the use of ‘germ warfare’ by the United States:

“I pointed out the hypocrisy of always accusing our enemies of war atrocities when we too often have been guilty of doing the same thing. I do not know whether I was deluding myself or not, but I felt my efforts were helping to bring about world peace. In no way did I think I was betraying my country. To the contrary, I thought I was doing everything I had never felt before. It was like being a part of something much greater than my own life.”⁹⁷

Adams claimed that he never became indoctrinated by the communists, but that instead he was “looking for something much more fundamental.”⁹⁸ He was one of the three black prisoners who refused repatriation. In his memoirs, Adams recalled his life before joining the Army, with all the hardship and difficulties that came with being a black man growing up in Jim Crow-ruled Memphis, Tennessee. He ended up in the Army while running away from the police. Adams simply wanted to be “treated as a human being” and to have “the opportunity to live a better life.”⁹⁹ The Chinese officers in the POW camps offered an alternative to Jim Crow and the United States. Adams was further convinced to choose the Chinese alternative because racism was alive and well in the camps. White prisoners scorned Adams as he began to take on leadership roles and seemed to get favorable treatment from the guards and officers.¹⁰⁰ American racism thus was exported to the prisoner of war camps across North Korea, even to the extent that prisoners formed a de facto Ku Klux Klan and acted as a resistance group to Chinese

⁹⁷ Adams, Clarence, Della Adams, and Lewis H Carlson, *An American Dream: The Life of an African American Soldier and POW Who Spent Twelve Years in Communist China*, Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2007, p.58.

⁹⁸ Ibid, p.59.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Check List on RECAP-K Cases, Clarence C. Adams, Records Pertaining to Voluntary Non-Repatriates, Box 1; RG 153 Office of the Judge Advocate General; NARA, College Park, MD.

indoctrination and intimidated black prisoners.¹⁰¹ Adams recalled the racial slurs and how the white prisoners said they would “take care of him” when they returned home. He responded to these attacks confidently, saying, “Yeah, but you ain’t home. You’re a stinking prisoner just like me,” and that “as prisoners, we were all equal.”¹⁰²

While Adams claimed that he never betrayed his country, it is apparent that his experiences inside the camps validated his experiences in the United States. In his mind, he never turned his back on his country, as his reasons for staying behind were not nationalistic, but more personal. A U.S. Army report on his actions in the camps characterized his decision to stay behind in a similar way. The report called Adams a “victim” of indoctrination, which resulted from the Chinese pressing him on racial issues in the United States and that communism could provide the “solution to the Negroes’ problems in America.” It is important that the report characterized him as a victim, as this mitigated responsibility for his actions. Instead, Adams is characterized as “not a serious student of Communism” and that “he blindly follows the Communist doctrine” on the issue of race in the United States.¹⁰³

The question of agency and individual responsibility for prisoners’ actions would become a crucial topic in discussions of collaboration and trials of former prisoners after the war. If prisoners were truly brainwashed, and had no control over their actions, how could they be punished? Yet, the decision to refuse repatriation by Clarence Adams and twenty-two other Americans at the end of the war—alongside reports of collaboration by repatriated prisoners and

¹⁰¹ Ward, Thomas J., “The Army’s Last Segregated Unit: Black Prisoners at Camp 5, North Korea.” *The Journal of African American History* 107, no. 1 (2022): 27–54. <https://doi.org/10.1086/717347>.

¹⁰² Adams, Clarence, Della Adams, and Lewis H Carlson, *An American Dream*, p.53.

¹⁰³ Summary of Information, Adams, Clarence C., Pfc, Records Pertaining to Voluntary Non-Repatriates, Box 1; RG 153 Office of the Judge Advocate General; NARA, College Park, MD.

hysteria about brainwashed prisoners returning to the U.S.—brought the POW story of the Korean War into the national spotlight.¹⁰⁴ As interrogations revealed the extent to which prisoners appeared willing to collaborate with the enemy, the military was faced with the issue of the breakdown of discipline of service members. According to General Arthur Trudeau, “the national security was very much on our minds here at G-2.”¹⁰⁵ Individual discipline became a matter of national security following the Korean War, top officials in the Army believed that soldiers were not properly trained on how to conduct themselves after they were captured.

The final report of the Japan Joint Intelligence Processing Board estimated that 30% of American prisoners of war during the Korean War collaborated with the communists on some level. They were accused of collaboration of varying levels of severity—from making radio broadcasts, signing peace petitions, writing articles for the camp newspaper, to signing confessions of the use of biological weapons, acting as a squad leader, or merely giving the appearance of being sympathetic to the communist worldview.¹⁰⁶ The same report also identified two former prisoners as having been assigned intelligence missions by the Chinese upon their return to the United States. One was instructed to move to San Francisco and join the International Longshoremen’s and Warehousemen’s Union and make contacts with its leaders. The report stated that the prisoner had no definitive knowledge of others but estimated that around fifty repatriated American prisoners had been given assignments by the Chinese. Despite the uncertainty of the prisoner, the reported continued, “this does not seem unreasonable when one considers that twenty-three members of the United States Armed Forces have elected to

¹⁰⁴ “23 U.S. Prisoners Refuse Repatriation, Red Reports”, *New York Times*, September 22, 1953.

¹⁰⁵ Quoted in Kinkead, Eugene, *In Every War But One*, p.63.

¹⁰⁶ “Collaboration with the Enemy in a Treasonable Manner”, Final Report, Japan Joint Intelligence Processing Board, p.8, Folder 1 of 4, Box 47; RG 319; NARA, College Park, MD.

remain...with their Communist captors.” While there was not enough evidence to establish a real threat of subversion from repatriated prisoners, the refusal of the twenty-three non-repatriates tended to stigmatize prisoners of war as a whole. The report concluded that “every repatriated United States PW must be considered a potential threat to the security of the Armed Forces and the United States government until such time as his activities as a PW of the North Korean and Chinese Communists have been satisfactorily explained.”¹⁰⁷ Later on, the report discussed the possible legal action that could be taken against former POWs. Out of the 30% of prisoners who collaborated in some manner, it identified 100 soldiers as being “willing and enthusiastic” collaborators. The report predicted that there was a good chance for successful legal cases against this group of more serious offenders, especially since many of them implicated themselves in their statements, and other POWs were eager to testify against them. Interestingly, the report added at the end of the legal section the potential consequences if prosecution was not pursued. POWs were obviously bitter toward the collaborators and detested the possibility of them escaping justice. It warned that there could be consequences for US defense agencies if they did not pursue legal action and the public learned of the misconduct of American POWs.¹⁰⁸

Even if prisoners were not brainwashed or indoctrinated, there were still fears that the communists could use the “threat of exposure and blackmail” to induce former prisoners to commit subversive acts once they returned to the U.S.¹⁰⁹ While it was a certainty that prisoners signed confessions of using bacteriological weapons and surrender leaflets, when it came to how

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ “Legal Report”, Final Report, Japan Joint Intelligence Processing Board, p.12, Folder 1 of 4, Box 47; RG 319; NARA, College Park, MD.

¹⁰⁹ “Potential Risk to the Security of the United States”, Final Report, Japan Joint Intelligence Processing Board, p.12, Folder 1 of 4, Box 47; RG 319; NARA, College Park, MD.

much of a security threat these actions posed, it was almost irrelevant to assessing whether or not if they held communist convictions.

Additionally, American POWs weakened the United States' propaganda mission to exploit the mistreatment of POWs by Chinese and North Korean forces. A report from the Department of the Army on Chinese and North Korean war crimes recommended that the news of collaboration and the twenty-three non-repatriates should be downplayed and pushed out of the public mind. The POW issue was highly politicized, and the Cold War imperative made it a crucial arena of propaganda for both sides. While the issue of voluntary repatriation favored the United States at the negotiating table, the report makes it clear that the propaganda war was not won.¹¹⁰

American POWs were not considered threats to national security because of leaked strategic information that the communists might have obtained through interrogation. In fact, the Joint Japan Processing Board (JJPB) concluded that none of the prisoners examined by the military possessed any strategically important information—not even Major General William Dean, the highest-ranking American POW captured during the war. Instead, American POWs posed threats to national security because of the damage their collaboration did to the standing of the United States in the Cold War. The twenty-three American non-repatriates dulled what was intended to be a decisive American propaganda victory, and further stigmatized POWs, many of whom had collaborated to varying degrees, calling into question their loyalty. There was also an omnipresent fear of subversion regarding indoctrinated prisoners of war, or those who could be blackmailed by the communists. While the number of prisoners who had undertaken missions for

¹¹⁰ "Exploiting Communist Mistreatment of U.S. Prisoners of War", Department of the Army, Historical Report of the Post-Capture Offenses Division, 1953, Box 1; RG 153 Office of the Judge Advocate General; NARA, College Park, MD.

the communists was unknown—for there was scant evidence about these missions—the fear of POWs turning against their country was difficult to shake, especially after twenty-three of them rejected their country entirely. The ongoing Red Scare at home only made the high-tension political environment worse.

This left the question of what allowed supposedly patriotic American soldiers to break so easily and give in to the demands of the enemy. The military made it imperative to determine why this happened in order to make sure it would not happen again. The JJPB recommended that soldiers needed further instruction on the “elements of character: loyalty, honor, integrity” as well as the “principles of democratic government in America.” The board believed the lack of education and understanding of American values made prisoners more susceptible to indoctrination in the face of adversity. The report also recommended increased physical conditioning, training in hygiene and first aid, and survival skills. Soldiers should also receive more training on the concepts of loyalty and military discipline and on maintaining the hierarchy of authority even while in captivity.¹¹¹

This was not the first time that the military had confronted the issue of instilling American values in its soldiers, or ‘toughening’ up its training. As early as August of 1950, it came to the military and the public’s attention that American soldiers had little clue what they were fighting for. An article in the *New York Times* decried that “The average G.I. seems not to know why he is fighting in Korea,” and that talking with troops “revealed a bitterness and a conviction that they were being sacrificed to American unpreparedness.” To combat this, the Army implemented a project called “Hours on Freedom.” The plan was created by the

¹¹¹ “Recommendations”, Final Report, Japan Joint Intelligence Processing Board, p.72 , Folder 1 of 4, Box 47; RG 319; NARA, College Park, MD.

Citizenship Education Project which was made up of professors from the Teachers College at Columbia University. It consisted of hour-long lectures on topics such as “religious freedom, the difference between democracy and communism, freedom and responsibilities of the press, the draft question,” and “people’s role in government.” However, the program was quickly deemed a failure. Recruits found the lectures to be long and boring, and difficult to pay attention to after hours of training. The program also suffered from insufficient funding, with two or three officers sometimes being responsible for the training of an entire base. Most officers were also unqualified and unprepared to give the lectures. Some found little purpose in the program; one Army instructor said, “it looks like a lot of boondoggling.”¹¹²

With the failure of the citizenship training course in mind, the JJPB stated that the military did not have the capability to solve the problem alone, that it was “a project for and the duty of public education.”¹¹³ To a considerable extent, the source of the problem was thought to be in the heart of American society. In a speech on October 4, 1956, to the officers at the San Francisco Naval Shipyard, Army psychiatrist Major William E. Mayer said that “the average American not only doesn’t know anything about his own system, or about his enemy” but also “loyalty was not a principal concern of our people—loyalty to each other, loyalty to organizations or ideas of communities or religions or anything of that sort.”¹¹⁴ Instead of placing the blame on the soldiers, Major Mayer believed that collaboration was due to a lack of

¹¹² “G.I.’s in Korea Handicapped By Unawareness of Mission,” *New York Times*, 13 August 1950.
 “Military Teaching on ‘Why’ Men Serve Termed a Failure,” *New York Times*, 14 May 1951.
 “Information Hour in Army Gives None,” *New York Times*, 15 May 1951.
 “Armed Forces Get Citizenship Course,” *New York Times*, 24 April 1951.

¹¹³ “Recommendations”, Final Report, Japan Joint Intelligence Processing Board, p.72 , Folder 1 of 4, Box 47; RG 319; NARA, College Park, MD.

¹¹⁴ Major William E. Mayer, “Brainwashing: The Ultimate Weapon”, October 4, 1956.

understanding of American values and communism, as well as a weakness in the moral character of Americans. He believed that this was a new phenomenon with the soldiers who fought in Korea. Mayer discussed the importance of the POW phenomena in a Freedom Forum presentation, which was circulated nationally as a brochure by the National Education Program. He said that the Army study found that “the men who fought in Korea were a strikingly different group of human beings from those who fought in World War II.” To combat this decline in nation’s fighting man, he recommended that “a meaningful version of American economic and political history...must be taught in schools...with the help of the private industry.”¹¹⁵

Eugene Kinkead similarly concluded that all “facets of American life might profitably be re-examined by our leaders in government, education, and religion.”¹¹⁶ The Defense Advisory Committee on Prisoners of War, created after the war and led by Assistant Secretary of Defense Carter L. Burgess, made recommendations to revise military training in order to prevent future collaboration and related misconduct:

“In all Services training should be adapted to cover the needs of all ranks from the enlisted man to the commander. It must be realistic as well as idealistic. Above all, it must be presented with understanding, skill and devotion sufficient to implant a conviction in the heart, conscience, and mind of the serviceman that full and loyal support of the code is to the best interests of his country, his comrades, and himself.”¹¹⁷

The Advisory committee recommended that the military cooperate with “civilian educational institutions, churches and other patriotic organizations to provide better understanding of

¹¹⁵ “Communist Indoctrination—Its Significance To Americans,” Central Files, General File, GF 125-U 1959-1960, Box 937; DDE Library, Abilene, KS.

¹¹⁶ Kinkead, Eugene, *In Every War But One*, p.18.

¹¹⁷ “POW: The Fight Continues After The Battle”, The Report of the Secretary of Defense’s Advisory Committee on Prisoners of War, August 1955.

American ideals.”¹¹⁸ In the age of the ideological struggle of the Cold War, the battlefield extended from the front line of Korea and into the homes, schools, and churches of the United States—for every American had a “responsibility for the maintenance and preservation of the United States and all it stands for.” The committee thus ended the final report: “every American is in the front line in the war for the minds of men” and “the Korean story must never be permitted to happen again.”¹¹⁹ Despite the number of American POWs making up barely a fraction of the population of the United States, government officials extrapolated their actions onto the whole of American society. Not only had POWs failed the nation, but there was the fear that American institutions were inadequately preparing children to continue to wage the Cold War.

The work of the committee resulted in President Eisenhower’s Executive Order 10631, which created the code of conduct for the U.S. military. The code reaffirmed service members’ duty to resist the enemy to the best of their ability, even after capture. It also required prisoners not to accept favorable treatment from the enemy or to take actions that would put the lives of other prisoners at risk.¹²⁰ The danger that American POWs posed to national security made it imperative that an executive order reaffirm the duties and responsibilities of members of the Armed Forces of the United States. Military officials believed that the Cold War required more of soldiers than to simply know how to fight the enemy with rifles, bombs, and bayonets; they

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Dwight D. Eisenhower, Executive Order 10631 – Code of Conduct for Members of the Armed Forces of the United States, Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, The American Presidency Project <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/235515> (Accessed Dec. 9, 2022).

needed to know why they were fighting and what was at stake in the conflict between the United States and communism.

Others such as journalist Virginia Pasley investigated the troubles surrounding American POWs and came to similar conclusions. *21 Stayed* (1955) was one of the most noteworthy journalistic works done on American POWs. Pasley's book focused on the American soldiers who refused repatriation at the end of the war. Much like the government, she asked:

“Why did they do it? Was there anything they had in common? Could a clue be found in their backgrounds, their early lives, their schooling? Was the army to blame? Or was it just fate and circumstances?”¹²¹

She likened the non-repatriates to Benedict Arnold, as some of the most infamous traitors in US history. These men received better food, medical care, and were freer to move around the camp at the expense of their fellow prisoners. Pasley set out across the country to interview the family, neighbors, and friends of the twenty-one in order to figure what had gone wrong in their lives that caused once proud American soldiers to turn on their country.

Pasley dedicates a chapter of her book to each non-repatriate. Each chapter begins with a cover page that lists where the prisoner was born, their age, IQ score, and the highest level of education they received. She then discusses the childhood of each prisoner, their parents' relationship, and their socioeconomic status. Teachers and neighbors told Pasley how her subjects behaved with other children and whether they got along well with others. As she conducted her investigation, a pattern emerged in the past lives of the turncoats. With one

¹²¹ Pasley, Virginia, *21 Stayed: The Story of the American GI's Who Chose Communist China: Who They Were and Why They Stayed*, New York: Farrar, Straus, and Cudahy, 1955, p.1.

exception, all of the non-repatriates had one or more of the following in common: they were abused, impoverished, emotionally disturbed, uneducated, and came from broken homes.¹²²

One of the non-repatriates, Richard Corden, was born in Pawtucket, Rhode Island. His father beat him with a belt when he was a child. Both of his parents would pass away while he was still very young, leaving him to be raised by his grandparents. His grandfather did not have any kind words for Richard when Pasley asked how they felt when they learned of his decision to stay with the Chinese: “He’s dead as far as we’re concerned. It would have been better if he had been shot.” Father Lamb of Corden’s local church expressed more sympathy, saying that his choice to stay behind resulted from defects in his development when he was younger.¹²³

Teachers were prominent witnesses for Pasley. William Cowart’s parents divorced when he was only six years old, after which he ran away from home. One of Cowart’s teachers said, “if anyone I had ever taught would do that, he would be the one.”¹²⁴ Another teacher said that Scott Rush was a “slow learner,” and that he was considered for clinical aid for emotional issues in school. Otho Bell’s teacher said that he was not educated enough to “be a good citizen of democracy or...be capable of judging what the Reds told him.” Some of the non-repatriates were not necessarily unintelligent but were described as emotionally disturbed. Teachers said that Lowell Skinner never smiled or showed any emotion. William White, who was one of the three black non-repatriates, was described as a loner and refused to play with other children during recess.¹²⁵

¹²² Ibid, p.227.

¹²³ Ibid, p.37, p.227.

¹²⁴ Ibid, p.44.

¹²⁵ Ibid, p.75-81.

Some parents even blamed themselves for their sons' decision not to return home. Samuel Hawkins' mother said that she was "too strict with him," she regretted not teaching him to be more self-reliant, and that she would often fight his battles for him. She sheltered him "from the realities so closely that he was unable physically, mentally, and spiritually to cope with the situation he faced in prison."¹²⁶ John Dunn's mother was somewhat surprised upon learning of his refusal to repatriate and said that he was a nice and well-behaved child. The only trouble he ever got into was when he ate an entire tube of toothpaste. However, she did admit that "maybe we spoiled him."¹²⁷

After her tour of the United States was finished, Pasley delivered her diagnosis of the issue at the heart of the POW story. Even though only twenty-one decided to stay with the Chinese—and their poor childhoods help explain their actions—this did not mean that these young men were extraordinary. In fact, it was the ordinary nature of these men that was the cause of concern for Pasley.

"The problem presented by the personality weaknesses of the twenty-one prisoners of war the Communists caught is more diverse. Educators in every section of the country pointed out that the problems of the slow learner, the emotionally disturbed child, the withdrawn child are widespread. These twenty-one do not represent isolated cases but represent millions who grow up hurt and undereducated."¹²⁸

What would happen if the United States found itself in another war against communism and the next generation of Americans who were to fight that war were unprepared for the challenge?

Pasley and American teachers feared that millions of children were at risk of succumbing to

¹²⁶ Ibid, p.111-114.

¹²⁷ Ibid, p.204-206.

¹²⁸ Ibid, p.238.

communism because broken families and schools were not capable of instilling American values in children. She stated that patriotism must be based on a “love of home and community,” and that the turncoats had very little reason to love their homes.¹²⁹ She offered three solutions to the problem of the brainwashing. First, American soldiers needed the proper psychological training in order to withstand Communist brainwashing after they are captured. Second, schools should give special attention to the “slow learner and the emotionally disturbed child.” Third, young Americans needed to be educated on what Communism was and how it functioned in order to resist its propaganda.¹³⁰

Major William Mayer gave a similar answer to the POW question in an interview with *US News and World Report*: “The behavior of many Americans in Korean prison camps appears to raise serious questions about American character, and about the education of Americans.” He commented on the Chinese assessment of American soldiers for not having a good understanding of their own political and economic system. When asked if a dose of “good old-fashioned patriotism” would have made a difference for the POWs, he answered that so many repatriated POWs expressed a similar sentiment that it was an “inescapable conclusion” for his study.¹³¹ He stopped short of assigning guilt to the soldiers for having succumbed to brainwashing because, “anybody is vulnerable to this kind of offensive unless he is adequately prepared and defended—not just American soldiers any more than anyone else.”¹³²

¹²⁹ Ibid, p.240.

¹³⁰ Ibid, p.242.

¹³¹ Interview with Major William E. Mayer, “Why Did Many GI Captives Cave In?” *US News and World Report*, Vol. 40, Issue 8, Feb. 24th, 1956, p.56-72.

¹³² Ibid.

While other commentators concurred that soldiers' childhood possibly could explain their transgressions, not all agreed that they were victims of circumstance. A *New York Times* review of *21 Stayed* agreed that American soldiers did not have the "moral ammunition" to effectively combat brainwashing; however, it pointed out that many other American POWs had "thumbed their noses at the Communist captors."¹³³ A *US News and World Report* article published in October 1953 reported that the non-repatriates "earned the contempt or hatred of their fellow prisoners," and those who resisted indoctrination called them "rats."¹³⁴ A.E. Hotchner, in *This Week* magazine, wrote that the hardships of captivity were "not valid excuses for treasonable acts against the U.S. or for committing crimes against fellow prisoners."¹³⁵

The question of guilt was one of the main drivers of the discourse after the Korean War. Was American society to blame for not equipping soldiers with the appropriate ideological defenses? Or were soldiers guilty of collaboration regardless of the circumstances? One of the main ways the American public confronted these questions, outside of the newspapers, was through film. After all, with all the drama of captivity, survival, betrayal, and at times, heroism, it is hardly surprising that Hollywood seized the opportunity to bring the story of American POWs to the silver screen.

The Rack (1956) starring Paul Newman, Wendell Corey, Walter Pidgeon, and Anne Francis, was one of the most prominent films produced about American POWs. The film follows the story of Captain Edward Hall Jr., played by Newman, as he returns home from Korea after

¹³³ "The Reasons Why: 21 Stayed: The Story of American G.I.'s Who Chose Communist China," *New York Times*, July 3rd, 1955.

¹³⁴ "Korean Puzzle: Americans Who Stay," *U.S. News and World Report*, Vol. 35, Issue 15, October 9, 1953, p.38-40.

¹³⁵ Hotchner, A.E., "They Were Not Brainwashed!" Records Pertaining to Voluntary Non-Repatriates, Box 2, Volume 2; RG 153 Office of the Judge Advocate General; NARA, College Park, MD.

having been a POW. It explores the themes of guilt, duty, and discipline, and it is revealed that Captain Hall Jr., the son of an Army colonel, collaborated with the enemy while in captivity. When his father learns of his crimes, he says to him, “Why didn’t you die like your brother did? It would’ve been much better that way.” Throughout the film, Captain Hall struggles with the guilt of endangering his comrades, and the disappointment from his father. He refuses to wear his service ribbons and appears to struggle to assimilate back into military life. When asked what unit he was in, he responds with, “Camp #5, Pyoktong.”

When Captain Hall’s court-martial begins, former prisoners testified against him. They claim they saw him beat a sick prisoner, give lectures on communism, and inform the Chinese on the escape plans of two prisoners, resulting in one of them being killed. Hall’s defense turns to the question of whether he experienced enough duress to justify his actions, and on what caused him to ‘break’. On the stand Hall tells the story of how he was in solitary confinement for months at a time and forced to write an autobiography repeatedly. The Chinese ultimately tapped into his poor relationship with his father and his sense of loneliness:

“He didn’t hold us or do what we saw other fathers doing with their kids. I never felt warm. I’m as strict with myself as he was. I can’t seem to love anybody now. I loved my mother, but she’s gone. I loved my brother but he’s not here. I wish my father had given me a chance to show how much I loved him. If this loneliness can kill me, I hope it does now.”¹³⁶

In his defense’s closing argument, the attorney asks the jury whether guilt truly rested on Captain Hall for giving in to the Chinese. Was he alone responsible for his actions? Or was the guilt shared amongst the generation of Americans who neglected to give those like Captain Hall, the love, care, and education necessary to resist communism? Ultimately, Captain Hall is found

¹³⁶ *The Rack*, directed by Arnold Laven (Warner Bros. Studios, 1956).

guilty on all charges, except for the one of beating another prisoner. Nonetheless, the audience is made to feel sympathetic towards Captain Hall at the end of the movie. His father makes amends for neglecting him as a child. The closing scene of the film shows Captain Hall looking directly into the camera, saying that he hopes others can learn from his mistakes, and that nobody will ever have to live with the guilt that he does.

The Rack encapsulated the public discourse surrounding the POW issue. Ending of the film with a guilty verdict implies that American POWs were guilty of wrongdoing. However, the movie seeks to give the audience an understanding and explain why they knowingly betrayed their country. While the film takes place after the war and does not include any scenes of captivity, the emotional trauma exhibited by Paul Newman in his portrayal of Captain Hall conveys a sense of the mental torture that many POWs experienced in the prison camps. The film also pushes the audience to analyze the POW story as a reflection of American society. This is most apparent in the final arguments in Hall's defense with the question of whether or not guilt is shared amongst those who raised Hall's generation, and whether his story is indicative of a larger issue of broken families and emotionally disturbed children in the United States. The film condemns the treacherous actions of American POWs; however, it urges Americans to be sympathetic and understanding. American POWs should be rehabilitated, perhaps as a collective project for Americans to ensure that another generation of soldiers does not break to the enemy.

Time Limit (1957) was another film that explored the drama of the American POWs. It follows the story of Colonel William Edwards, played by Richard Widmark, who is investigating the collaboration of Major Harry Cargill, portrayed by Richard Basehart. Major Cargill was accused of giving lectures to other prisoners. When Colonel Edwards questions him, he offers no defense, pleading guilty and confessing to every accusation. Edwards finds it odd that a man

would openly admit to such a high offense, so he digs further into the case. It is eventually revealed that Major Cargill unselfishly gave the lectures under threats from a Korean commander that he would kill the rest of the officers in his cabin if the major did not do so. Additionally, Colonel Edwards discovers that the son of his commanding officer, Lieutenant General James Connors, who was a prisoner with Major Cargill, informed on the escape plans of one of his comrades, leading to his death. The rest of the officers in the cabin discovered that he was the informer and killed him. It was only then that the Korean commander gave Cargill the ultimatum of collaborate or die. At the end of the film, when Lt. Gen. Connors seems bent on nailing the major to the wall, Cargill presents not only a defense of himself, but of every other prisoner who “cracked”:

“A man can be a hero all his life, but if in the last month of it, the last week, or even in the last minute, the pressure becomes too great, and he breaks, then he’s branded for life... You can’t ask a man to be a hero forever. There ought to be a time limit.”¹³⁷

The moral of the story is that the POWs who collaborated were only acting as humans. Whether they acted out of self-preservation or for the sake of others, one could not ask for more sacrifices from them.

The most well-known POW film is *The Manchurian Candidate* (1962). Starring Frank Sinatra as Major Bennett Marco, and Laurence Harvey as Raymond Shaw, the film tells the story of a group of soldiers who are captured and brainwashed. However, the men do not remember what happened to them, until they start having recurring nightmares. The film continues with the theme of POWs coming from broken homes. Shaw hates his stepfather, Senator John Iselin, a caricature of Joe McCarthy. Furthermore, Shaw’s mother is the undercover communist agent

¹³⁷ *Time Limit*, directed by Karl Malden (Heath Productions, 1957).

controlling him, and orders him to carry out an assassination attempt on presidential candidate, Benjamin Arthur. The assassination is intended to propel her husband, the vice-presidential candidate, into the Oval Office and give them powers that would make “martial law seem like anarchy.” When the time comes for Shaw to carry out this insidious order, he breaks free of the brainwashing spell over him and, instead, shoots his mother and his stepfather. Major Marco runs into the room he was shooting from, and Shaw explains that it was the only way to stop them, and then turns the gun on himself. At the end of the film, Major Marco reads a personal citation for Shaw, as if he were giving him a medal:

“Made to commit acts too unspeakable to be cited here, by an enemy who had captured his mind and his soul. He freed himself at last, and in the end, heroically and unhesitatingly gave his life to save his country.”¹³⁸

In the end, Shaw was the tragic hero of the film. By no wrongdoing of his own, his free will was taken away by the enemy. With the help of Major Marco, Shaw overcame the brainwashing, and foiled the attempt to send the United States down a path of totalitarianism.

POW films capture the trauma of captivity, and explore the philosophical questions of courage, fear, and loyalty. They also give insight into the public discourse on the collaboration and brainwashing of American soldiers. The theme that connects films such as *The Rack*, *Time Limit*, and *The Manchurian Candidate* is that they all show sympathy for the accused POWs. What happened to them in captivity was no fault of their own. The men could also repent for the things they were made to do, and in the case of Raymond Shaw, even become heroes. While Major Cargill, Captain Hall, Captain Connors, and Sergeant Shaw strayed from the code of strict military discipline and loyalty, the films urge the audience to be patient in branding them as

¹³⁸ *The Manchurian Candidate*, directed by John Frankenheimer (M.C. Productions, 1962).

traitors. In the words of Colonel Edwards, “Every man has his limit. There is no crime in being human.”¹³⁹

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

CHAPTER 3

PRODIGALS OR TRAITORS?

While the military and the public clamored for answers to the POW issue, the question of justice remained. Should American soldiers be punished for collaboration, even if it was under duress? If soldiers had been inadequately prepared for captivity, could they be blamed for what they did? With the wound of McCarthyism still fresh for the military, it was imperative that justice be brought down upon those who failed to resist. However, the military would find it difficult to bring every collaborator to such justice, especially those who refused to repatriate. These difficulties resulted from issues of evidence, mostly relying on the testimonies of vengeful prisoners and the limits of the jurisdiction of military justice. In addition, the military was alone, for the most part, in seeking to punish former collaborators. There was a surprising amount of sympathy and mercy afforded to American POWs. As courts-martial were decided, and the ‘turncoats’ began to return to the US, Americans feared the worst for these poor young men. President Eisenhower called for caution and mercy when it came to the trials of former POWs, and many Americans heeded the words of the former war hero. They wrote letters to the President urging him to do everything in his power to lessen their punishment, with many referring to the biblical story of the prodigal son for guidance. Using letters, newspapers, and government records, this chapter will show how the attitudes of the American public and military differed when it came to welcoming home American POWs. The American military sought to

reaffirm its principles of discipline and duty by making examples out of the worst offenders. Meanwhile, the crusade against communism had gone a bridge too far when it came to prosecuting the young men who had signed up to put their lives on the line for the United States, in a war that few understood.

In total, the military deemed 425 repatriated POWs suspect enough to warrant further investigation, 47 of which received approval to be court-martialed. Fourteen were brought to trial, resulting in eleven convictions. While the number of convictions seems low when compared the number of POWs who were investigated, or the number of POWs who acted in a dishonorable manner according to the investigation of the JJPB, the number who were *not* brought to trial, but undesirably or dishonorably discharged is unknown.¹⁴⁰

In addition, the 1950s were a time of change for the processes of military justice. Judith Fenner Gentry masterfully describes these legal reforms, and their implications for POWs in her commentary on Johnny Moore's memoir. In 1951, the Uniform Code of Military Justice was adopted, the first major changes to the military's legal system since the Revolutionary War. One of the main changes was that officers were no longer expected to act as lawyers during court martial proceedings. Instead, the military required professional military lawyers who had been trained, passed a bar exam, and approved by the Judge Advocate General (JAG). Another major reform was the introduction of the Court of Military Appeals. Consisting of three civilian judges, the military hoped to rid the review process of tampering from officers above the accused in the chain of command. Overall, the UCMJ resulted in greater protections for the rights of the

¹⁴⁰ Gentry, Judith Fenner, and John Wilson Moore, *I Cannot Forget*, p.194.

accused, including the right to professional counsel, and enlisted men could request that other enlisted personnel be members of the jury.¹⁴¹

However, it was still unclear when soldiers needed to be informed of charges against them, or when they were being investigated. Soldiers still could be questioned without being informed of any charges against them, resulting in them potentially making self-incriminating statements. While this issue would be addressed in 1953, the problem of self-incrimination persisted since soldiers had not been properly educated on how to wield the right to remain silent. In addition, interrogators did not need to tell soldiers about informal complaints lodged against them prior to questioning. An unintended consequence of the UCMJ was that officers often chose the easy path of administrative discharge for enlisted men, versus the otherwise difficult path of court martial. In discharge proceedings, soldiers lacked the legal protections afforded to them in a court martial. Moreover, if soldiers were dishonorably discharged, they were denied veteran's benefits.¹⁴² One of Gentry's most significant observations about these reforms is that the "the exact date on which a man became engaged with the military justice system in the 1950s made a big difference for his legal rights."¹⁴³ This meant that American POWs who were investigated, and, brought to trial often times experienced varying levels of legal protections. However, the changes in military justice indicated that the discipline of enlisted men and officers was becoming a greater concern in the 1950s.

¹⁴¹ Ibid, p.190-191.

¹⁴² Ibid, p.192-193. Note: It was not until 1958 that interrogators were required to inform soldiers of charges against them prior to questioning.

¹⁴³ Ibid, p.193.

The legal offensive against former POWs began with Edward Dickenson's arrest on January 22, 1954. As soon as the news hit headlines, the Army and Department of Defense argued over whether the military was authorized to arrest Dickenson. Dr. John Hannah, Assistant Secretary of Defense said that it was the timing of the Army's arrest that concerned the Department of Defense. Dickenson's arrest came quickly after the 'explanation' period had ended, and members of the Defense Department believed that the arrest would further discourage the 21 Americans to repatriate.¹⁴⁴ However, for Claude Batchelor, the other American who chose to repatriate at Panmunjom, the writing was on the wall after hearing the news about Dickenson. Speaking with the press in Tokyo, he said that he expected to be arrested as well. Another source affirmed Batchelor's suspicion; Dickenson's arrest was only the "first step in an investigation of the whole sordid story of crimes committed by Americans against Americans."¹⁴⁵

Reactions to the start of courts-martial against former POWs were mixed. Few Americans took the side of the military brass, that the crimes committed by POWs should not go unpunished, largely because the principle of military discipline was at stake. In a government analysis of the positions of each branch on POW misconduct, all the branches agreed that "Acts of alleged misconduct before the enemy or misconduct while a prisoner of war will be investigated and judged in accordance with the Uniform Code of Military Justice."¹⁴⁶ Those who favored of a steady hand of justice can be seen with commentators such as Hanson Baldwin, who maintained in the *New York Times* that the POW cases must be handled "without sentimentality,"

¹⁴⁴ "Army Challenged on P.O.W. Charges: Defense Official Says Action Against G.I. Who Quit Reds Upset Plan to Woo Others," *New York Times*, 24 January 1954.

¹⁴⁵ "Batchelor 'Expects' Arrest," *New York Times*, 24 January 1954.

¹⁴⁶ "Analysis of Service Positions Regarding Standards of Conduct Governing Military Personnel Who May Become Prisoners of War," RECAP-K Program, General Records, 1953-1955, Box 1; RG 153 Office of the Judge Advocate General; NARA, College, Park, MD.

and that “We must render honor to those whom honor is due and punishment to those who deserve it.”¹⁴⁷ In another article, Hanson wrote that there was a nationwide tendency to welcome home former ‘turncoats’ as heroes, and that this was misplaced because it disregarded the prisoners who returned without having aided the enemy while in captivity. He asserted that the grand welcome was orchestrated by “psychological warriors” in the government, in order to encourage the other non-repatriates to return home.¹⁴⁸

President Eisenhower’s statement on the trials of former POWs struck a more sympathetic tone. While he urged a fair and impartial investigation and trial for Dickenson and any other POWs accused of wrongdoing, he was sure that the Army would not punish the men for “a simple mistake, made under trying circumstances, that he later repented.” Eisenhower told Americans to look to the biblical story of the prodigal son for guidance on the POW issue. The tone of his statement was merciful. Due to the president’s distinguished military background, he understood the trauma experienced by POWs. For those sitting in the comfort of their home, it was impossible to know what they would have done if it had been them behind the barbed wire in North Korea. On the subject of the twenty-one non-repatriates, Eisenhower said that the only course of action was to dishonorably discharge them.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁷ “The Prisoner Issue—I: Charges Against Dickenson and Others Must Be Weighed Without Sentimentality,” *New York Times*, 26 January 1954.

¹⁴⁸ “The Prisoner Issue—II: Crimes of American Against American In Korean Camps Call for Investigation,” *New York Times*, 27 January 1954.

¹⁴⁹ “Eisenhower Urges Tolerance for G.I.: Mentions Lesson of Prodigal Son in Case of Corporal Who Quit Korea Reds,” *New York Times*, 28 January 1954.

Claude Batchelor's prediction was realized on March 5, 1954, when the Army arrested him on charges of collaborating with the enemy.¹⁵⁰ Dickenson and Batchelor's courts-martial followed similar trajectories, with former POWs testifying against them, firing off accusations of collaboration and endangering their comrades. Dickenson pleaded innocent. His lawyer, Guy Emery, cited a promise of immunity given by the military prior to his decision to repatriate. Emery called Dickenson the "Judas goat" of the Army, that once the deadline for repatriation had passed, his usefulness to the military, to entice the others to return, had run out.¹⁵¹ Batchelor's lawyer, Joel Westbrook, attempted to have the charges dropped as well, claiming that the Army had promised immunity; but the judge shot it down.¹⁵²

The immunity promise that was supposedly made to the non-repatriates was particularly controversial. One draft official for the Army resigned after the guilty verdict was served to Dickenson, claiming that the Army lied to Dickenson—that if he gave up communism and returned to the United States, he would not be punished. "Instead, he gets ten years of hard labor," he said, "and his citizenship taken away from him. I don't call that freedom."¹⁵³ While the military said that the POWs who initially refused to come back to the US would not be punished for their decision, this did not protect them from crimes they committed while they were in captivity. A June 1955 JAG memo on the course of action to take if any other non-repatriates decided to come back confirmed this policy, "that the turncoats are not being held

¹⁵⁰ "Second Ex-P.O.W. Arrested by Army: Batchelor Seized in Texas—Faces Pre-Trial Inquiry on Collaboration Charge," *New York Times*, 6 March 1954.

¹⁵¹ "Army Puts Former P.O.W. on Trial," *New York Times*, 20 April 1954.

"Dickenson Called Army 'Judas Goat': Counsel in Court-Martial Asks Acquittal for Former P.O.W. Accused in Korea," *New York Times*, 1 May 1954.

¹⁵² "Immunity Promise Denied," *New York Times*, 1 September 1954.

¹⁵³ "Draft Official Resigns: Board Member Says Army Lied to Cpl. Dickenson," *New York Times*, 7 May 1954.

responsible for their failure to come back earlier to United States control, but only what they are alleged to have done after their capture.”¹⁵⁴ Similar accusations of the military renegeing were made when Secretary of Defense Charles Wilson announced that the twenty-one non-repatriates were to be dishonorably discharged, and denied any back pay or allowances. The minutes of the Operations Coordinating Board reveal the propaganda line:

“It was noted that some press comment had already referred to the impending discharges as being given because of the choice of the POW’s not to return to U.S. Army Control. The Working Group agreed that it would be desirable to state the facts concerning the history of each individual POW, together with his conduct while in the POW camp, subsequently relating these facts to the dishonorable discharge. Thus, we would emphasize that the discharge was not directly associated with the POWs’ choice.”¹⁵⁵

Government officials wanted to show that these men were being punished for crimes committed while still prisoners of war, not for exercising their right to choose to repatriate to their country of choice. After all, the public would have viewed this as especially hypocritical of the military, to prosecute these men for exercising their right of voluntary repatriation, which the US had fought for so vigorously at the negotiating table.

It was clear that the Army was set on making an example out of Batchelor. During the trial, Westbrook made another attempt to get the charges dropped, claiming that Batchelor was brainwashed into collaborating, thus relieving him of responsibility. However, the law officer of the court martial denied this plea, saying that brainwashing could not be used as an excuse for

¹⁵⁴ “Memorandum: Procedure for Handling POWs Who Refused Repatriation,” Records Pertaining to Voluntary Non-Repatriates, Box 1; RG 153 Office of the Judge Advocate General; NARA, College Park, MD.

¹⁵⁵ “Memorandum: Meeting of the POW Working Group, January 26, 1954,” National Security Council Staff: Papers, 1948-1961, OCB Central File Series, OCB 383.6 File #1 (7), Box 118; DDE Library, Abilene, KS.

collaboration.¹⁵⁶ A report from the Department of the Army on the plan to exploit Communist mistreatment of POWs insisted, “Any illusions about any justification for the Communist cause resulting from defection, acceptance of Communist ideology, or collaboration with their captors on the part of a few U.S. prisoners of war must be destroyed.”¹⁵⁷ In the eyes of the Army, it was necessary to make it clear that collaboration with the enemy under any circumstances was a crime. This point was to be emphasized by giving awards to former POWs who acted commendably. An Army summary sheet recognized that this could potentially have the opposite of the intended effect, if soldiers who had collaborated were given awards. In order to avoid recognizing “unworthy individuals,” the Army ordered officers to submit names to the Intelligence Office to be vetted, prior to the medal being awarded.¹⁵⁸ The POW Working Group in the OCB recognized the importance of awarding outstanding POWs as well, with the Department of Defense recommending the Army to expedite this process.¹⁵⁹ According to a JAG memo dated October 21, 1954, there were 1400 former POWs whose records indicated outstanding service as a POW, 57 of which were deemed worthy enough to receive commendations.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁶ “Brainwash Plea Lost by Ex-P.O.W.: Court-Martial Rules That It Is Not a Defense Against Collaboration Charge,” *New York Times*, 16 September 1954.

¹⁵⁷ “Exploiting Communist Mistreatment of U.S. Prisoners of War”, Department of the Army, Historical Report of the Post-Capture Offenses Division, 1953, Box 1; RG 153 Office of the Judge Advocate General; NARA, College Park, MD.

¹⁵⁸ “Summary Sheet – Uniform Treatment of Repatriated Prisoners of War, 15 October 1953,” RECAP-K Program, General Records, 1953-1955, Box 1; RG 153 Office of the Judge Advocate General; NARA, College Park, MD.

¹⁵⁹ “POW Working Group Meeting, December 8, 1953,” White House Office, National Security Council Staff: Papers, 1948-1961; OCB Central File Series, OCB 383.6 [Prisoners of War – Korean War] File #1 (4) [October 1953 – January 1954, Box 117; DDE Library, Abilene, KS.

¹⁶⁰ “Memo – Public Information Officer release regarding Prisoner of War Trials, 21 October 1954,” RECAP-K Program, General Records, 1953-1955, Box 1; RG 153 Office of the Judge Advocate General; NARA, College Park, MD.

Ultimately, Batchelor received a life sentence for his crimes. He was found guilty on all charges but one for informing on his fellow prisoners.¹⁶¹ While the Army indicted Dickenson and Batchelor, the other branches of the military hesitated to punish their own POWs. Early on after investigations began, it was clear there was no uniform policy on how to treat POWs. A *New York Times* article in May 1954 brought attention to the discrepancies among the services. Corporal Dickenson had already received his punishment, but Colonel Frank Schwable of the Marine Corps, who was accused of signing false confessions of ‘germ warfare,’ was cleared of all charges. The article cited the Marine Corps as being the most unforgiving of its POWs, yet, the case of Colonel Schwable was the exception, as highly decorated officers testified on his behalf that he “had been pressed beyond the limit of endurance.” Additionally, the Air Force announced that none of its eighty-three airmen under investigation were to be charged (Air Force officials refused to give their names). However, they said their reasoning for leniency was, “The lives of its crews are more important than vain heroics in trying to keep from an interrogator information that the enemy already has.”¹⁶²

The amount and type of information a POW could give to their captor was one of two primary points of contention between the Air Force and the other branches. The Defense Department’s report showed that the Army, Navy, and Marine Corps generally agreed that a service member should only give their name, rank, and serial number to the enemy. The Air Force, on the other hand, recognized that such a strong stance could endanger POWs, and so airmen could give military and strategic information that could not reasonably be used against

¹⁶¹ “Batchelor Guilty; Sentenced to Life: Army Court Convicts Him on 5 Counts of Aiding Enemy While War Prisoner in Korea,” *New York Times*, 1 October 1954.

¹⁶² “Policy on P.W.’s Now Shaping Up: Air Force Is Lenient, Marines Most Strict, and the Army Somewhere in Between,” *The New York Times*, 2 May 1954.

the United States or its allies. The second was whether a single code of conduct should govern all services. The Air Force's reasoning for have a unique specialized code of conduct was that most captured airmen were officers, and thus had access to more sensitive information than the average enlisted man in the Army or Marine Corps. The Air Force brass rightfully expected that officers would be put under more stress by the enemy in attempts to extract this information. It seemed unreasonable to risk the lives of the Air Force's most important asset, its pilots, by forcing them to adhere to the same strict code of conduct as enlisted men. The Air Force instead advocated for a doctrine of active resistance and evasion for its POWs, giving the enemy information that was insignificant, or entirely untrue.¹⁶³

The Air Force desired to go even further than advocating for active resistance for prisoners of war. The Air Force and officials in Washington desired to counteract communist propaganda that used the confessions of Colonel Schwable and other pilots and accused the US of using biological weapons during the Korean War. The plan drafted by the Psychological Strategy Board (PSB) to counteract communist accusations of bacteriological warfare said that it was necessary to explain to the American public that these confessions were obtained through the use of excessive physical and mental pressure. While the plan said that the US should not go as far as condoning cowardice for giving in to the enemy's demands, one of the other objectives was to protect from public scorn former POWs who signed confessions.¹⁶⁴ To do this, the PSB

¹⁶³ "Analysis of Service Positions Regarding Standards of Conduct Governing Military Personnel Who May Become Prisoners of War," RECAP-K Program, General Records, 1953-1955, Box 1; RG 153 Office of the Judge Advocate General; NARA, College Park, MD.

"Proposed Uniform Policy Concerning Conduct While In a Prisoner of War Status," RECAP-K Program, General Records, 1953-1955, Box 1; RG 153 Office of the Judge Advocate General; NARA, College Park, MD.

¹⁶⁴ "National Operations Plan to Exploit Communist Bacteriological Warfare Hoax, Mistreatment of Prisoners of War, and Other Atrocities Perpetrated by Communist Forces During the Korean War," White House Office, National Security Council Staff: Papers, 1953-1961, Psychological Strategy Board (PSB), PSB 383.6 [Prisoners of War] File #2 (1), Box 26; DDE Library, Abilene, KS.

made a film of former POWs refuting the confessions that they had signed in captivity. The film also contained examples of POWs who did not confess, in order to show the heroism of a few in captivity, while simultaneously describing the interrogation techniques of Communist China.¹⁶⁵ Other parts of the plan included the drafting of a proposal to pursue a libel lawsuit on behalf of American pilots who were pressured into signing confessions. The proposal sought to bring legal action against newspapers such as *The Daily Worker* for making American pilots “war criminals in the minds of millions of people throughout the world.”¹⁶⁶ The PSB even brought the issue before the United Nations. Dr. Charles Mayo made an opening statement before the UN General Assembly and discussed the abysmal manner in which these confessions were extracted from American pilots. Afterwards, the American delegation presented statements by Colonel Schwable and the other pilots refuting communist claims of bacteriological warfare to show the “inhuman and criminal practices” that underlie communism.¹⁶⁷

When comparing how each branch of the military approached the POW issue, the Air Force clearly was the most sympathetic to its service members. The US defended American pilots who aided the communist propaganda effort. Officials in Washington went even further and used POW’s stories of captivity in the UN as evidence of communism’s inhumanity. This

¹⁶⁵ “Memo – Release of POW Confessions and Denials Follow-up with POWs Who Did Not Confess, Colonel Bertram Kalisch, Newsreel Section Pictorial Branch,” White House Office, National Security Council Staff: Papers, 1953-1961, Psychological Strategy Board (PSB), PSB 383.6 [Prisoners of War] File #2 (3), Box 26; DDE Library, Abilene, KS.

¹⁶⁶ “Draft Proposal for a Libel Suit to Secure Punitive Damages for U.S. Pilots Accused of Conducting Bacteriological Warfare in Korea,” White House Office, National Security Council Staff: Papers, 1953-1961, Psychological Strategy Board (PSB), PSB 383.6 [Prisoners of War] File #2 (4), Box 26; DDE Library, Abilene, KS.

¹⁶⁷ “U.S. Indictment in the U.N. General Assembly of Communist Treatment of POW’s,” White House Office, National Security Council Staff: Papers, 1953-1961, Psychological Strategy Board (PSB), PSB 383.6 [Prisoners of War] File #2 (4), Box 26; DDE Library, Abilene, KS.
Charles W. Mayo, Statement before the UN General Assembly, White House Office, National Security Council Staff: Papers, 1953-1961, Psychological Strategy Board (PSB), PSB 383.6 [Prisoners of War] File #2 (5), Box 26; DDE Library, Abilene, KS.

was not the only instance of sympathy and mercy shown to former POWs. When three of the twenty-one Americans who snubbed the US in favor of China finally decided to return, some Americans feared that the Army would throw the book at them, just as it did with Edward Dickenson and Claude Batchelor.

On July 10, 1955, Otho Bell, Lewis Griggs, and William Cowart crossed the border from China to Hong Kong. Henry Lieberman wrote in *The New York Times* that their return was anything but triumphant and “no red carpets had been laid out for them.”¹⁶⁸ Despite the cold-shoulder reception and their expectation that worse lay ahead of them, the men smiled, happy to be returning home, after close to two years in Communist China. While on their trip back to the United States, the Army announced its plan to arrest the men upon their arrival in San Francisco. The Army claimed that even though the men had been discharged early in 1954, under Article 3A of the UCMJ the military had regained jurisdiction over soldiers accused of crimes that carried sentences of five years or more.¹⁶⁹ When the men stepped off the boat, a captain read off the charges against them before they were transported to a nearby jail. Cowart spoke briefly to reporters who were on the scene, “Any punishment we receive we will gladly accept.”¹⁷⁰

After news of their arrest and pending court martial spread across the country, concerned Americans penned letters to officials in Washington, pleading for mercy on behalf of the ‘turncoats’ and parroted Eisenhower’s earlier statement on the story of the prodigal son. Edward Jones of San Carlos, California wrote to Secretary of the Army, William Bruckner, “You have a

¹⁶⁸ “3 Turncoats, Out of China, Condemn Communist ‘Hell’,” *The New York Times*, 11 July 1955.

¹⁶⁹ “Army Plans Arrest of Three Turncoats,” *The New York Times*, 26 July 1955.

¹⁷⁰ “Three Ex-G.I. Turncoats Land in San Francisco and Are Jailed by Army,” *The New York Times*, 30 July 1955.

chance to either make these boys good honorable citizens or ruin their lives entirely.”¹⁷¹ Another letter, from Fieri Floyd to President Eisenhower, appealed to his Christian faith and asked, “how can we exemplify the love of Christ, if we do not pardon them, and take them to our hearts?”¹⁷² Pastor Arthur Witherspoon of Columbus, Ohio, wrote that Eisenhower could emulate the father in the parable of the prodigal son, that the three men had “recovered their former faith in the institutions of the land of their birth.”¹⁷³ On top of forgiveness, some believed they should be rehabilitated: “They should be given everything they ask for, a good job, a home and a family.”¹⁷⁴ Echoing Virginia Pasley’s conclusions in *21 Stayed*, it was not the fault of the turncoats that they were raised in broken homes, and lacked the education to resist communism.¹⁷⁵

Others questioned whether it was the military’s right to pass judgement, calling it a “rotten deal.”¹⁷⁶ Even though they had temporarily turned their backs on the US, they were still viewed as heroes who had still sacrificed more than officials in Washington who sat safely

¹⁷¹ Letter from Edward Jones to William Bruckner, Records Pertaining to Voluntary Non-Repatriates, Box 1; RG 153 Office of the Judge Advocate General; NARA, College Park, MD.

¹⁷² Letter from Fieri Floyd to President Eisenhower, Records Pertaining to Voluntary Non-Repatriates, Box 1; RG 153 Office of the Judge Advocate General; NARA, College Park, MD.

Letter from Ed Nolte to President Eisenhower, Records Pertaining to Voluntary Non-Repatriates, Box 1; RG 153 Office of the Judge Advocate General; NARA, College Park, MD.

¹⁷³ Letter from Arthur Witherspoon to President Eisenhower, Records Pertaining to Voluntary Non-Repatriates, Box 1; RG 153 Office of the Judge Advocate General; NARA, College Park, MD.

¹⁷⁴ Letter from David S. Markey to President Eisenhower, Records Pertaining to Voluntary Non-Repatriates, Box 1; RG 153 Office of the Judge Advocate General; NARA, College Park, MD.

¹⁷⁵ Letter from Mrs. Ed Moore to President Eisenhower, Records Pertaining to Voluntary Non-Repatriates, Box 1; RG 153 Office of the Judge Advocate General; NARA, College Park, MD.

¹⁷⁶ Letter from W.C. Haner to President Eisenhower, Records Pertaining to Voluntary Non-Repatriates, Box 1; RG 153 Office of the Judge Advocate General; NARA, College Park, MD.

behind a desk.¹⁷⁷ Darel Musgrave wrote to Eisenhower, “I think that if the ones that do the sentencing would have to go through what those boys did they would probably crack in half the time.” For some, it was impossible to criticize the men because they did not know what they themselves would have done if they were in the prisoners’ shoes.

Some Americans simply did not understand why these men were being prosecuted after many others accused of similar crimes had been acquitted. *Look* magazine criticized the military for its lack of clarity and posed the question, “What is justice for a tortured GI?” The article illustrated the typical experience of Korean War POWs and suggested that they were now being used as political pawns by the Army to counteract charges of “coddling communists.”¹⁷⁸ After Operation Little Switch, when rumors of collaboration began to swirl, an Army Major in charge of wounded repatriated prisoners at an Army hospital defended the men, “How would you feel if you fought for your country and were captured and wounded and then flew 10,000 miles to a hospital to find you were being labeled a possible Communist?”¹⁷⁹

A Gallup poll in July 1955 surveyed Americans’ opinions on what should be done. Thirty-seven percent responded that they should be set free and rehabilitated; 20% believed that they should be given a fair trial before punishment; 25% said they should be punished in some way; 8% responded that other courses of action should be taken; and 11% had no opinion.¹⁸⁰ This opinion poll supported one done in February 1954 on POWs who made false confessions of

¹⁷⁷ Telegram from Mrs. R.R. Johnson to Charles E. Wilson, Records Pertaining to Voluntary Non-Repatriates, Box 1; RG 153 Office of the Judge Advocate General; NARA, College Park, MD.

¹⁷⁸ Letter from Janet Dearing to President Eisenhower, Records Pertaining to Voluntary Non-Repatriates, Box 1; RG 153 Office of the Judge Advocate General; NARA, College Park, MD.
Lowe, William, “What Is Justice for a Tortured GI?,” *Look*, 28 June 1955.

¹⁷⁹ “Freed G.I.’s ‘Burned Up’ by Reports They Succumbed to Red Ideology,” *The New York Times*, 3 May 1953.

¹⁸⁰ Gallup, George, *The Gallup Poll: Public Opinion, 1935-1971*, p.1350-1351.

germ warfare. Just 20% of participants believed these men should be punished; 61% favored pardons; 19% had no opinion. Out of all participants, only 4% said they should be court-martialed, and another 4% would give them a prison sentence, with 1% believing they should be given the death penalty or denied citizenship. Those who believed the turncoats and collaborators should be penalized were in the minority, and far from agreeing on what level of punishment they deserved. The majority of Americans thought former POWs should be forgiven for collaboration, or at least given a fair trial.¹⁸¹

On November 7, 1955, Otho Bell, William Cowart, and Lewis Griggs received their saving grace—not from public outcry or a sudden change of heart by the Army, but from the Supreme Court ruling in *United States ex rel. Toth v. Quarles* (1955). The Court ruled that the military could not court-martial civilians after they had been separated from the service for crimes committed while they were in the military. The non-repatriates were discharged in February 1954 following their decision to go to China, ending their military service, and put them outside of the military's jurisdiction.¹⁸²

As for the POWs who were already convicted, the Army organized a board to review the sentences, and compare the offenses with the punishment given. Of the eleven convictions, only three sentences were reduced. The Army reduced Major Ronald Alley's sentence of ten years imprisonment to five years. Corporal Dickenson's ten-year sentence was reduced to five years, and Corporal Batchelor's taken down to seven years.¹⁸³

¹⁸¹ Ibid, p.1215.

¹⁸² "Court Frees Toth and Bars Military Trials for Ex-G.I.'s," *The New York Times*, 8 November 1955.
"Army Releases Turncoat P.O.W.'s," *The New York Times*, 9 November 1955.

¹⁸³ "Final Report of Ad Hoc Board," Records Relating to the Ad Hoc Board for Review of Sentences, Volume 1, Box 1; RG 153 Office of the Judge Advocate General; NARA, College Park, MD.

The question of justice was at the heart of the POW issue. Should soldiers who committed treason be punished or shown mercy? Earlier chapters of this study have shown how there was a reexamination of American character and institutions after the collaboration of American GI's made headlines. The military and the public saw this as a crisis of the American family, where absent fathers, poverty, and poor education rendered the next generation ill-prepared to fight the Cold War. If soldiers were not prepared for the challenge, how could they be blamed for what they did? There was, in general, agreement on the causes of POWs' collaboration, but a rift between the general public and the military prevailed on how to treat them when they came home. The Army in particular wanted to reinforce its principle of unwavering discipline, and punishing collaborators was the way to do this. If POWs evaded justice, it would encourage the permissive attitudes that caused American soldiers to abandon their duty to their country. The general public's perception of the returning POWs was more sympathetic and merciful to the young GI's. A testament to the influence of President Eisenhower on the subject as a former war hero, many followed his lead in being patient and understanding with the former POWs. Many Americans fell back on religion as a guide to understanding the predicament the soldiers were in. While recognizing they had sinned by potentially endangering their comrades, just as the father welcomed home the prodigal son, Americans felt that there was still a place in the US for the turncoats. There were limits they were willing to go to purge the country of communism. While the Army's attempts to do so within its ranks faltered due to legal barriers, this chapter has shown that public opinion favored the accused GIs in a surprising display of mercy, especially after the US' first hot war against communism.

CONCLUSION

C.D. Jackson, special aide to President Eisenhower, who was involved with the administration's propaganda, wrote in a memo on May 11, 1953, that when word of POWs collaboration got out, everyone at the Pentagon was prepared to deal with a "mass of brainwashed prisoners." The situation only got worse, he went on, when the press got a hold of this information "and everyone started shouting at once."¹⁸⁴ The problem for the historian when analyzing the American POW story is finding meaning in the hysteria incited by dramatic tales of treason and brainwashing. This thesis traced the issue of POWs during the Korean War—from the armistice negotiations over the principle of voluntary repatriation to the fear of brainwashed American POWs returning home, which prompted Americans to search for answers as to how their sons could turn their back on the US in favor of communism.

The issue of repatriation and the experiences of the prisoners themselves was a manifestation of the larger Cold War. Both sides in the war sought to exploit POWs for propaganda purposes, creating a situation in which neither the United States nor the communists were willing to compromise for nearly two years, bringing about further loss of life and increased time in captivity, for virtually zero gain by either side. Interrogations of returned prisoners revealed collaboration and misconduct. Along with the refusal of twenty-three

¹⁸⁴ Memo from C.D. Jackson, White House Office, National Security Council Staff: Papers, 1953-1961, Psychological Strategy Board (PSB) Central Files Series, PSB 383.6 [Prisoners of War] (2), Box 26; DDE Library, Abilene, KS.

Americans to repatriate to the United States, former POWs constituted a threat to national security. Stories of prisoners' collaboration with the enemy weakened the U.S. propaganda efforts. Prisoners' actions such as signing surrender leaflets, writing letters about the good treatment they received from the Chinese, signing confessions of germ warfare, becoming sympathetic to communism, and cozying up to Chinese officers made former POWs' loyalty to the United States suspect. This was the manifestation of one of Americans' worst fears: communist brainwashing and indoctrination. In searching for answers as to how this could happen to American soldiers, military and government officials concluded that the willingness of soldiers to collaborate with the enemy was evidence of a deeper illness in American society, that American children were poorly educated and disciplined. This was supported by investigations into the backgrounds of the twenty-one non-repatriates, almost all of whom grew up in broken homes and lived in poverty. There was a fear that this problem was not limited to American POWs, but that there were millions of children living under similar circumstances who were also vulnerable to communist brainwashing.

While the military and the general public agreed that the POWs' susceptibility to brainwashing was a flaw within American society, the question of punishment for collaborators remained. This forced the military to confront its policy on how service members should conduct themselves in captivity. The Army in particular wanted to make examples out of those who had given in to the enemy and insisted that under no circumstances should soldiers give any information to the enemy other than their name, rank, and serial number. The Air Force, on the other hand, was much more understanding of their POWs and gave them much more room to maneuver when being interrogated. The public had similar feelings about justice and punishment. Films such as *The Rack* and *Time Limit*, letters to President Eisenhower, and public

opinion polls showed that Americans were more merciful than the Army. This signals that there was a limit to the fight against communism that some Americans were unwilling to cross. It was unfair to punish young American soldiers for misconduct because they were not raised properly nor prepared for the challenges of being a POW. In addition, the question that repeated itself in magazines, letters, and films was: What would you have done if you were in their shoes? Many Americans found this question difficult to answer and could not help but voice their sympathy for the POWs, while the Army sacrificed them for the sake of anti-communism.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources

Archival Records

Case Files of Returned or Exchanged Captured American Personnel, 1953-1958. RG 153 Office of the Judge Advocate General. NARA, College Park, MD.

Central Files. General File. Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Abilene, KS.

Historical Report of the Post-Capture Offenses Division, 1953. RG 153 Office of the Judge Advocate General. NARA, College Park, MD.

Japan Joint Intelligence Processing Board. RG 319 Records of the Army Staff. NARA, College Park, MD.

National Security Council Staff: Papers, 1948-1961. OCB Central File Series. Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Abilene, KS.

Operation Big Switch Interrogation Reports, 1953-1954. RG 153 Office of the Judge Advocate General. NARA, College Park, MD.

RECAP-K Program, General Records, 1953-1955. RG 153 Office of the Judge Advocate General.

RECAP-K Program, Miscellaneous Policy Documents. RG 153 Office of the Judge Advocate General. NARA, College Park, MD.

Records Pertaining to Voluntary Non-Repatriates. RG 153 Office of the Judge Advocate General. NARA, College Park, MD.

Records Relating to the Ad Hoc Board for Review of Sentences. RG 153 Office of the Judge Advocate General. NARA, College Park, MD.

Republican National Committee. Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Abilene, KS.

White House Office. National Security Council Staff: Papers, 1953-1961, Psychological Strategy Board. Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Abilene, KS.

Oral Histories

Badke, Kenneth. Prisoner of War Oral History Project. National Prisoner of War Museum, Andersonville, GA.

Barber, James. Prisoner of War Oral History Project. National Prisoner of War Museum, Andersonville, GA.

Clarke, Conley. Prisoner of War Oral History Project. National Prisoner of War Museum, Andersonville, GA.

Davis, Prestee. Prisoner of War Oral History Project. National Prisoner of War Museum, Andersonville, GA.

Dennison, Dick. Prisoner of War Oral History Project. National Prisoner of War Museum, Andersonville, GA.

Hill Charles. Prisoner of War Oral History Project. National Prisoner of War Museum, Andersonville, GA.

Meyers, John. Prisoner of War Oral History Project. National Prisoner of War Museum, Andersonville, GA.

Pate, Llyod. Prisoner of War Oral History Project. National Prisoner of War Museum, Andersonville, GA.

Rowley, Arden. Prisoner of War Oral History Project. National Prisoner of War Museum, Andersonville, GA.

Sanchez, Antonio. Prisoner of War Oral History Project. National Prisoner of War Museum, Andersonville, GA.

Film

The Manchurian Candidate, John Frankenheimer, M.C. Productions, US, 1962.

The Rack, Arnold Laven, Warner Brothers Studios, US 1956.

Time Limit, Karl Malden, Heath Productions, US, 1957.

Newspaper and Magazine Articles

- “23 U.S. Prisoners Refuse Repatriation, Red Reports”, *New York Times* (Sept. 22, 1953).
- “3 Turncoats, Out of China, Condemn Communist ‘Hell’.” *New York Times* (July 11, 1955).
- “Abuse of Sick G.I. Laid to Dickenson: Corporal’s Statement on How He ‘Cooperated’ With Captors Read to Court-Martial.” *New York Times* (April 22, 1954).
- “Almost All Released Prisoners Come Home Happily...” *Life* (Sept. 7, 1953).
- “A Prodigal and His Kin.” *Life* (Nov. 2, 1953).
- “Armed Forces Get Citizenship Course,” *New York Times* (April 24, 1951).
- “Army Challenged on P.O.W. Charges: Defense Official Says Action Against G.I. Who Quit Reds Upset Plan to Woo Others.” *New York Times* (Jan. 24, 1954).
- “Army Convicts Dickenson of Collaborating with Reds: Korea War Prisoner Gets 10-Year Terms—69 Are Cleared by Air Force.” *New York Times* (May 5, 1954).
- “Army Plans Arrest of Three Turncoats.” *New York Times* (July 26, 1955).
- “Army Puts Former P.O.W. on Trial.” *New York Times* (April 20, 1954).
- “Army Releases Turncoat P.O.W.’s.” *New York Times* (Nov. 9, 1955).
- “Batchelor ‘Expects’ Arrest.” *New York Times* (Jan. 25, 1954).
- “Batchelor Guilty; Sentenced to Life: Army Court Convicts Him on 5 Counts of Aiding Enemy While War Prisoner in Korea.” *New York Times* (Oct. 1, 1954).
- “Brainwash Plea Lost by Ex-P.O.W.: Court-Martial Rules That It Is Not a Defense Against Collaboration Charge.” *New York Times* (Sept. 16, 1954).
- “Case Histories of Those 21: What Their Lives Show.” *Newsweek* (Jan. 18, 1954).
- “Collaborators’ Reward.” *Time* (Jul. 11, 1955).
- “Corporal Dickenson Tells Us Why Some GIs Stay with Reds.” *U.S. News and World Report* (Nov. 13, 1953).
- “Court Frees Toth and Bars Military Trials for Ex-G.I.’s.” *New York Times* (Nov. 8, 1955).
- “Dickenson Called Army ‘Judas Goat’: Counsel in Court-Martial Asks Acquittal for Former P.O.W. Accused in Korea.” *New York Times* (May 1, 1954).
- “Draft Official Resigns: Board Member Says Army Lied to Cpl. Dickenson.” *New York Times* (May 7, 1954).

- “Eisenhower Urges Tolerance for G.I.: Mentions Lesson of Prodigal Son in Case of Corporal Who Quit Korea Reds.” *New York Times* (Jan. 28, 1954).
- “Families Doubt G.I.’s Join Enemy; Some Charge Coercion by Reds.” *New York Times* (Sept. 25, 1953).
- “Former Comrades Accuse Corporal: 5 Ex-Prisoners of Red Chinese Testify That Dickenson was an Informer.” *New York Times* (April 21, 1954).
- “Freed G.I.’s ‘Burned Up’ by Reports They Succumbed to Red Ideology.” *New York Times* (May 3, 1953).
- “G.I.’s in Korea Handicapped by Unawareness of Mission,” *New York Times* (Aug. 13, 1950).
- “G.I. Who Chose Reds, Then Quit, Is Seized in Court-Martial Case.” *New York Times* (Jan. 23, 1954).
- “Home Town Greet G.I. Who Bolted Reds.” *New York Times* (Nov. 23, 1953).
- “Immunity Promise Denied.” *New York Times* (Sept. 1, 1954).
- “Information Hour in Army Gives None,” *New York Times* (May 15, 1951).
- “Korea: The ‘Forgotten’ War.” *U.S. News and World Report* (Oct. 5, 1951).
- “Korean Puzzle: Americans Who Stay.” *U.S. News and World Report* (Oct. 9, 1953).
- “Military Teaching on ‘Why’ Men Serve Termed a Failure,” *New York Times* (May 14, 1951).
- “One Who Changed His Mind.” *Time* (Nov. 2, 1953).
- “One Who Won’t Return.” *Time* (Oct. 26, 1953).
- “Parents Greet Dickenson: Corporal, Ex-Prisoner in Korea, Arrives in Washington.” *New York Times* (Nov. 21, 1953).
- “Policy on P.W.’s Now Shaping Up: Air Force Is Lenient, Marines Most Strict, and the Army Somewhere in Between.” *The New York Times* (May 2, 1954).
- “Reds Rejoin Neutral Group After G.I. Quits Their Camp.” *New York Times* (Oct 21, 1953).
- “Second Ex-P.O.W. Arrested by Army: Batchelor Seized in Texas—Faces Pre-Trial Inquiry on Collaboration Charge.” *New York Times* (Mar. 6, 1954).
- “Senate Unit Queries Ft. Monmouth Aides.” *New York Times* (Oct. 9, 1953).
- “The GI’s Who Fell for the Reds.” *Saturday Evening Post* (Mar. 6, 1954).
- “The Prisoner Issue—I: Charges Against Dickenson and Others Must Be Weighed Without Sentimentality.” *New York Times* (Jan. 26, 1954).

“The Prisoner Issue—II: Crimes of American Against American In Korean Camps Call for Investigation.” *New York Times* (Jan. 27, 1954).

“The Reasons Why: 21 Stayed: The Story of American G.I.’s Who Chose Communist China.” *New York Times* (July 3, 1955).

“The Sorriest Bunch.” *Newsweek* (Feb. 8, 1954).

“They Chose Red China, And Then...” *U.S. News and World Report* (June 28, 1957)

“Three Ex-G.I. Turncoats Land in San Francisco and Are Jailed by Army.” *The New York Times* (July 30, 1955).

“Truman Statement”, *New York Times* (May 8, 1952).

“We Can Baffle the Brainwashers!” *Saturday Evening Post* (Jan. 22, 1955).

“We Got Everything You Wanted.” *Life* (Oct. 19, 1953).

“Why Did Many GI Captives Cave In?” *US News and World Report* (Feb 24, 1953).

“Without Honor.” *Newsweek* (July 13, 1953).

Online Sources

Convention (III) Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War. August 12, 1949. <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/ihl-treaties/gciii-1949>.

Eisenhower, Dwight D. Executive Order 10631 – Code of Conduct for Members of the Armed Forces of the United States. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley. The American Presidency Project <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/235515>.

Gallup, George. *The Gallup Poll: Public Opinion 1935-1971*. <https://archive.org/details/galluppollpublic0000gall/page/1350/mode/2up?view=theater&q=prisoners>.

Eisenhower, Dwight D. “I shall go to Korea” speech, Speech Series. Papers of Dwight D. Eisenhower. Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Abilene, Kansas. <https://www.eisenhowerlibrary.gov/sites/default/files/research/online-documents/korean-war/i-shall-go-to-korea-1952-10-24.pdf>.

“POW: The Fight Continues After the Battle.” The Report of the Secretary of Defense’s Advisory Committee on Prisoners of War. August 1955. <https://www.loc.gov/item/2011525470/>.

Public Papers. Harry S. Truman Library, Independence, Missouri. <https://www.trumanlibrary.gov/library/public-papers>.

The Korean War and Its Origins. Online Collections. Harry S. Truman Library, Independence, Missouri. <https://www.trumanlibrary.gov/library/online-collections/korean-war-and-its-origins>

United Nations Security Council. Resolutions Adopted by the Security Council in 1950. <https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/content/resolutions-adopted-security-council-1950>.

Secondary Sources

Journal Articles

Van Dijk, Boyd. "‘The Great Humanitarian’: The Soviet Union, The International Committee of the Red Cross, and the Geneva Conventions of 1949." *Law and History Review* 37, no. 1 (2019): 209-35.

Keefer, Edward C. "President Dwight D. Eisenhower and the End of the Korean War." *Diplomatic History* 10, no. 3 (1986): 267-89.

Ward, Thomas J. "The Army’s Last Segregated Unit: Black Prisoners at Camp 5, North Korea." *The Journal of African American History* 107, no. 1 (2022): 27-54.

Young, Charles S. "Missing Action: POW Films, Brainwashing and the Korean War, 1954-1968." *Historical Journal of Film, Radio, and Television* 18, no. 1 (1998): 49-74.

Zweiback, Adam J. "The 21 ‘Turncoat GIs’: Nonrepatriation and the Political Culture of the Korean War." *The Historian* (Kingston) 60, no. 2 (1997): 345-62.

Books

Bailey, Sydney D. *The Korean Armistice*. New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1992.

Biderman, Albert D. *March to Calumny: The Story of American POWs in the Korean War*. New York: Macmillan, 1963.

Borgwardt, Elizabeth. *A New Deal for the World: America’s Vision for Human Rights*. Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005.

Carlson, Lewis. *Remembered Prisoners of a Forgotten War*. New York: St. Martin’s Griffin, 2002.

Carruthers, Susan. *Cold War Captives: Imprisonment, Escape, and Brainwashing*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009.

- Chang, David Cheng. *The Hijacked War: The Story of Chinese POWs in the Korean War*. Redwood City, Stanford University Press, 2020.
- Chinnery, Philip D. *Korean Atrocity!: Forgotten War Crimes, 1950-1953*. South Yorkshire, England: Pen & Sword Military, 2009.
- Clark, William Latham. *Cold Days in Hell: American POWs in Korea*. College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2013.
- Cumings, Bruce. *The Korean War: A History*, 1st ed. New York: Modern Library, 2010.
- Cumings, Bruce. *The Origins of the Korean War*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981.
- Dunne, Matthew. *A Cold War State of Mind: Brainwashing and Postwar American Society*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2013.
- Fehrenbach, T.R. *This Kind of War: A Study in Unpreparedness*. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1963.
- Foot, Rosemary. *Substitute for Victory: The Politics of Peacemaking at the Korean Armistice Talks*. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1990.
- Goodman, Allen E. ed. *Negotiating While Fighting: The Diary of Admiral C. Turner Joy at the Korean Armistice Conference*. Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1978.
- Grieve, Victoria. *Little Cold Warriors: American Childhood in the 1950s*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2018.
- Halberstam, David. *The Coldest Winter: America and the Korean War*. New York: Hyperion, 2007.
- Helgren, Jennifer. *American Girls and Global Responsibility: A New Relation to the World During the early Cold War*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2017.
- Hillman, Elizabeth Lutes. *Defending America: Military Culture and the Cold War Court-Martial*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005.
- Hitchcock, William I. *The Age of Eisenhower: America and the World in the 1950s*. New York, New York: Simon & Schuster, 2018.
- Holt, Marilyn Irvin. *Cold War Kids: Politics and Childhood in Postwar America, 1945-1960*. Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2014.
- Honeck, Mischa. *Our Frontier is the World: The Boy Scouts in the Age of American Ascendancy*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2018.
- Hunter, Edward. *Brain-Washing in Red China*. New York: The Vanguard Press, 1951.

- Kim, Monica. *The Interrogation Rooms of the Korean War: The Untold History*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2019.
- Kinkead, Eugene. *In Every War But One*. New York: Norton, 1959.
- Kinsella, Helen M. *The Image Before the Weapon: A Critical History of the Distinction Between Combatant and Civilian*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011.
- Lech, Raymond. *Broken Soldiers*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2000.
- Leffler, Melvyn P. *A Preponderance of Power: National Security, The Truman Administration, and the Cold War*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1992.
- Lifton, Robert Jay. *Thought Reform and Psychology of Totalism a Study of "Brainwashing" in China*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989.
- McKnight, Brian. *We Fight for Peace: Twenty-Three American Soldiers, Prisoners of War, and Turncoats in the Korea War*. Kent, Ohio: The Kent State University Press, 2014.
- Oshinsky, David. *A Conspiracy So Immense: The World of Joe McCarthy*. New York: The Free Press, 1983.
- Pash, Melinda L. *In the Shadow of the Greatest Generation: The Americans Who Fought the Korean War*. New York: NYU Press, 2012.
- Pasley, Virginia. *21 Stayed: The Story of the American GI's Who Chose Communist China—Who They Were and Why They Stayed*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, 1955.
- Sargent, William. *The Battle for the Mind: A Physiology of Conversion and Brain-Washing*. Baltimore, MD: Penguin Books, revised edition, 1961.
- Steinacher, Gerald. *Humanitarians at War: The Red Cross in the Shadow of the Holocaust*, 1st ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 2017.
- Weiss, Jessica. *To Have and to Hold: Marriage, The Baby Boom, and Social Change*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000.
- White, William. *The Captives of Korea: An Unofficial White Paper on the Treatment of War Prisoners: Our Treatment of Theirs, Their Treatment of Ours*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1957.
- Young, Charles Stewart. *Name, Rank, & Serial Number: Korean War POWs at Home and Abroad*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2014.

Memoirs

Adams, Clarence, Della Adams, and Lewis H. Carlson. *An American Dream: The Life of an African American Soldier and POW Who Spent Twelve Years in Communist China*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2007.

Clark, Mark. *From the Danube to the Yalu*. New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1954.

Gentry, Judith Fenner, and John Wilson Moore. *I Cannot Forget: Imprisoned in Korea, Accused at Home*. College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2013.

Snyder, Don. *A Soldier's Disgrace*. Dublin, NH: Yankee Books, 1987.

Spiller, Harry, ed. *American POWs in Korea: Sixteen Personal Accounts*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 1998.

Zellers, Larry. *In Enemy Hands: A Prisoner in North Korea*. Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 2014.