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The Real Story of Returned Prisoners

Tape Recordings of GI's Back from Korea

Here—in their own words—is the GI story that shows how the enemy dins the Communist line into captured American soldiers in Korea.

Forced study follows a set pattern: filth, hunger, neglect—to "soften up" sick and wounded prisoners—then mass indoctrination, Soviet rule.

These exclusive tape recordings were made at Valley Forge, Pa., where 23 GI's who underwent the most intensive Communist pressure were hospitalized after their release and return to the U. S.

As soon as the GI's surrendered, the enemy started working on them with the Communist "line" of friendship. Soldiers soon learned that hardship was in store for those who rebelled, that they fared better by seeming to "get along" with their captors. M. Sergt. Robert W. Shaw, 44, of Liverpool, N. Y., starts his story with his capture near Anju on Dec. 1, 1950:

JUST as I started to cross this open field, someone took a shot at me, and I ran over to a haystack or strawstack or something of that sort, and got in there. I was in there two or three minutes and I heard somebody holler. I looked out and somebody was waving their hands out in this open field and hollering something.

I couldn't understand what it was. So I ran across there, thinking that it was our troops. And when I got up there, there was a GI there, halfway up in a trench. Then I seen there was all Chinese in there, too. And they were there with him, on both sides of him. And he said, "Sorry, Bud," or some words to that effect . . . The Chinese, they pulled me down into the trench and started shaking my hand and says, "We will not kill you . . ."

They got us out at dark that following evening and assembled us out in an area. They had other GI's in other houses all around that area, and when we got strung out, it looked like several hundred of them . . .

They started us on a march. Well, this march lasted until the 25th of December. During this march, many men died from the cold—men that couldn't keep up, men that had diarrhea. If you didn't keep up in the line, the Chinese just left you either in some Korean hut with some Koreans that happened to be around the village, or just left you lying in the road . . .

We marched Christmas Eve and Christmas night, and I know there were many thoughts about Christmas at home, because we made both of those evenings with two millet balls to eat. When we got to this here camp—which made about 23 days on this march—the column was much shorter than when we left. The Chinese said that they had separated some of the men and taken them someplace else, but of course we knew better by the men we seen fall out, and the men they

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PROPAGANDA BANNER URGES U. S. AND BRITISH PRISONERS TO 'DEMAND PEACE'
"This continuous repeating of lectures, repeating, repeating and repeating and repeating"

left in the houses that was too weak or sick or wounded too bad to carry on . . .

While at this camp, everyone was forced to go out to get firewood, which consisted of brush. We had a little tool—maybe 5 or 10 of them for about 150 men . . . Many of the men were sick . . . Some of them would pick up just a few pieces, because they were weak and they really couldn't carry this wood, and some of the other men tried to carry the wood for them . . . The Chinese, if they weren't satisfied that you had enough wood, they made you pick up more, or they picked it up and put it on your arms and made you carry it . . .

We stayed at this mining camp until about the 23d of January, and all this time we were there we had nothing to eat but millet . . . It took us about six to eight days—I don't just remember, at this time I was pretty sick—to march to what they call Camp No. 5 at Piuckdong . . .

The living conditions—well, I wouldn't say they was living conditions. They were dying conditions. They were the most filthy houses I ever saw. We were covered with lice. We had very rotten food, and dirty . . .

At times we didn't have any wood to burn. So we were taking shingles off the roofs of the buildings. If you got caught doing this, you got punished . . . standing out in the cold with an armful of this wood, holding it out arm's length, at least for an hour at a time . . . And if you tried to drop your arms, they always had a guard with a bayonet stand out there, watching you . . . He'd just say "Uuuh!" and point the bayonet at you. Of course, your arms had to get back up . . .

They divided the camp up into five different companies, besides the company that they used for the guard company. The sergeants' company, that they had all the sergeants in, was Company 4—that's the one I was a member of . . .

We had a "chief instructor," his name was Si . . . and several other instructors. All these instructors talked pretty good English . . .

They started preaching to us how we were duped. They started regular classes on it. They built a special building, one of the best buildings there. It wasn't made out of mud. It was like a theater, pretty large. It held a few hundred men. Any man, sick or not, unless he absolutely couldn't walk, was forced to go to this.

Some of the men played off sick, even got down on the floor and groaned to try to get away from these classes, and did every other thing. They would hide out. The Chinese would go around after everyone, and they made you go. Then you had to sit and listen to it. There would be Chinese scattered all through the place. Some of the men would make catcalls, laugh, stomp their feet or do something like that to disturb the instructor. When anybody was caught, they would make him stand up.

These classes last—they went on practically every day. Every other day, anyway. During the warm weather, they were held outside. Sometimes in the sun. After these lectures, we had to go back and get into groups and have a discussion on the lecture, give our opinions.

Chinese sat in with these groups and would take the opinions of these men. Anyone that wouldn't make an opinion of any kind for the lecture, or against the lecture, got special instruction. The instructor would take you off by themself someplace, and he would go all through it again. Then you had to listen to what you had listened to before, for a couple of hours more, and then he would ask your opinion again. If you still didn't want to give your opinion, then he would read

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the lecture over to you again, and you kept hearing that until you was ready to give your opinion . . . And with the condition of most of the men at that time, from the march, from the food they were eating—it seemed that it was better to give some kind of an opinion than go through much more of that kind of torture . . .

After we were at the camp quite a while, they started another camp which—a company, rather—which they called Company 5. They picked out men. I don't know what reason they picked them out or why they picked them out . . . There was about 50 men in the group. They said that every man in the camp would go to this fifth company, that it would last around two months. Something like that . . . We figured it was going to be interrogation, or something like that. But it turned out to be that it was more intense indoctrination. When the first group was over with and came back, they came back with the word that the Chinese told them now they would be able to help the men more better back in the companies, that they had learned more and they would know how to explain it to the other men better . . .

Of course this propaganda that they gave us, these lectures and stuff—many of the men pretended like they believed it. I mean they would answer back when they was asked the questions or something, agreeing with parts of the lectures and things like that, just to get along and for no other reason that I can see . . . This continuous repeating of lectures, repeating, repeating and repeating and repeating, hour after hour, day after day, is one of their ways they think probably—if they keep saying it long enough, they might think you might believe it, because that's what used to be the hardest part.

Better Food as Teaching Grew Heavier

Captured GI's were put on meager diets and their medical care neglected as they started the long march north to prison camps. Suddenly they began getting better treatment—and indoctrination was stepped up. Corpl. Robert H. Hickox, 23, of Syracuse, N. Y., recounts his experiences after he was taken prisoner near Wonsan in November, 1950:

WE WERE TURNED over to the North Korean Army, and were told they would escort us on our march north. The guards seemed to take on a somewhat friendly attitude. However, the Korean officers that were there with us showed nothing but a cold, hostile attitude.

During this period, conditions were bad. We were fed mostly coarse-grained foods. Medical treatment—there was practically none. The food I mentioned was mostly millet, cracked corn with very little rice, parched soybeans. The food was usually not too well cooked, and led to various forms of dysentery. It caused weakening conditions which brought about pneumonia under the extreme cold weather, and this led to the deaths of many of the men . . .

There was no means of getting clean. There was no water, no means of sanitation, personal sanitation or hygiene to be obtained whatsoever. There was no medicine. If a person became sick, he merely had to lay there until he died. Often several would die during the night in a person's own room . . .

THE DAY OF RELEASE: U. N. PRISONERS ARE ESCORTED TO AMBULANCES
"Even if we were sick, we still had to undergo a certain amount of political instruction"

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Tape Recordings of GI's Back from Korea

The conditions such as this continued up until about April of 1951. At this time, the Chinese again took over our direct control and provisions . . . better grade of food was brought in from China. Also, the medical supplies began to come in, and things in general began to pick up. Men became more active. The sick rate dropped a great deal . . .

At the same time the improvements began to occur, a form of indoctrination was put into effect. We received lectures given by the chief instructors—political instructors that had been appointed to the various companies within the camp. In my company our chief instructor, as he was called, was named Lim Chi Chung, or as customary Communist phrasing goes, Comrade Lim. He was referred to as Comrade Lim by all members of the company, with various nicknames such as The Skull, Laughing Hyena, and other such thrown in for good measure.

The lectures we received, often daily, consisted primarily of a form of study on the two systems, "The Socialist System and the Capitalist System." These lectures were put across in a fairly—in somewhat simple language which they believed we could all understand . . . These lectures seemed to be damning the United States Government, our country, our people and everything that we had always believed to be right . . .

All during this period that I've been talking about, the general condition, the living conditions, the food, the medical supplies, everything had improved greatly . . . We received all types of food, all commonly known American types of food as well as Chinese, and the general health of the men improved greatly. Sickness dropped to almost zero . . .

'Progressives' Got Better Deal

The Communists gradually classified GI's into "reactionaries" and "progressives," and transferred the latter to special classes. Pfc. Rogers Herndon, 20, of Jacksonville, Fla., who was captured near Kuna-ri on Nov. 26, 1950, tells his story:

OUR COMPANY was split up so we had to go behind the enemy's lines . . . After fighting for a while, we were captured. I were wounded in the right hand then . . .

We stayed in the valley to 5 o'clock that evening. During that period of time, well, there was an American doctor captured, and he had a dose of morphine with him, which he gave me for the pain in my wound. And at 5 o'clock we started our march to the rear . . .

Eight of us were wounded. They'd taken and separated the eight of us from the rest, and they put us on trucks. It was a convoy for about 30 trucks of wounded Chinese. And when we got on that truck, we rode until we reached a Chinese hospital . . .

We went to sleep that night about 8 o'clock. About 12 o'clock the nurse came in to get me . . . She carried me across the village to a house which was set up as a surgical room. I arrived in this room, and I asked the doctors if they were going to amputate my hand, and they told me no, they were only going to rebandage it. Well, they laid me on a table and strapped me down.

The next morning when I woke up, back in my building. My hand was gone. And it was not wrapped. It had no kind of bandage on it . . .

On the 21st night we left, went four miles from this hospital to an area where they had able GI's on the march to the rear. Well, there were very small rooms . . . there was about 25 of them in one room. And the best way we could sleep was to lay down in layers, and

AMERICANS READ COMMUNIST NEWSPAPERS IN A PRISON CAMP
"They started preaching to us how we were duped. They started regular classes on it"

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then have a relief shift. My first night over there, one of the fellows was going out and he stepped on my arm and he bust the stitches loose. So my arm was infected again . . . We received no medical care while we was there, and during the time we was there, men were constantly dying . . . In this 18 days we lost 21 men.

Then I started out with a group of about 60 to the rear. It took us nine days to reach this camp, and during these nine days we traveled through the snow, through valleys, mountains, and at night we would run across some village. There we would sleep with no heat, no blankets—only the clothes that we were captured in . . .

About the fourth night of our journey, we stopped in a village, and in this village I was in a room with 17 men. The next morning, when I awoke, there were only two living—myself and another fellow. The other 15 had died—frozen, starvation . . .

When we arrived at the rear, there was about 18 of us left . . . I was carried to a squad which at that time was known as Compound 40, and I stayed there.

Compound 40 is a part of Camp 5, which is in Piuckdong . . . The chief instructor of our company—that's the political instructor—his name was Instructor Kang . . . He acts as if he's sick all the time. He limps on one leg. Well, if you showed you were interested in the study, he was your friend. But if you were not interested in the study he was not your friend.

Guys who were not interested in the study—they were watched. And the least little thing that they do—they would tag them. Put them on detail, and the majority of time put them in "the Hole." And "the Hole" was a Korean mud hut with a concrete floor, and during the winter—it's an old saying around the camp, once you get in there, you don't come out unless you have frozen feet.

Well, we first started studying on the first part of February. We had no place to study. Men was still dying, sick and hungry, but they would call a formation and make us stand up in the snow . . . And they just pounded us in our head, giving us papers saying that they had captured 70,000 of our men in one day, downed so many of our planes. They were giving us papers from our buddies saying that our buddies was telling us to do such and such a thing. Names of fellows that have died and have been proven to be dead . . .

The instructor would suggest the books that you should read, then he'd ask you to give a book report on the book to see what you'd learned from that.

In the cases you didn't read, he would explain it to you, and if you didn't gain from that, you were branded right then as a "reactionary." And the "reactionary" guys, the ones that they called "reactionary," those are the guys that had a pretty rough go in the camp. Extra details and what not . . . And they were sent away to a camp they called a "reactionary camp," which was a labor camp . . .

Study was going on then. Didn't anyone like it, but they found that the best way they could get by was to sit up in a lecture and just pretend you're writing if you're not writing. During discussion, to give an answer in favor of them. Say what you think they would want to hear. This way, they would stay off you . . .

Then they set up a company in Camp 5 that was Company 5, and this was known as the "progressive company" of the camp. They picked men to go to this company. This company sat right on the outside of the camp and the men there were given study, but they went much deeper into things, and they studied all day and part of the night. They gave the men lights, they put lights in their buildings so that they may study at night. They had lectures all day and they discussed at night. They read at night and got little sleep.

Well, the guys that remained in the camp, some of them they paid no attention to the guys going to Company 5, and some of them, they disliked it, but later on it was found that the Chinese would just appoint you. You were going to Camp 5, and you were going to Camp 5, and you were going to Camp 5, and that was it. You go to Camp 5 . . .

We were introduced to this germ warfare . . . they set up a picture exhibition in the theater, where they had pictures of germ warfare, fragments of germ-warfare bombs, germ-warfare bombs that did not ex-

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plode, flies living in the snow, and they told us all this was dropped by the Americans. Pretty soon they made arrangements that one of the pilots could come to the camp. The name of this pilot was Quinn, and he came to the camp and they picked some soldiers to go down to talk to him, and when they came back they were to tell the company how the man acted. They say that if you just look at the man you will say that he was—was true. But if you watched him, you could tell that there was a type of nerviness about these men . . .

Politics Even in Hospital

Selected prisoners were drafted into the indoctrination network, and given specific responsibilities over fellow prisoners. This narrative of Corpl. Vernon L. Warren, 22, of St. Louis, Mo., starts with his capture near Wonsan in November, 1950:

THEY CAME UP and told us to put our hands down, started shaking our hands, saying, "We're your friends. We're your friends. We won't kill you. We won't kill you." That about seems to be the only words they knew . . .

We marched for about eight or nine days straight—I mean to say nights, because we were marching at night and rested in the daytime . . . We seemed to make 20 or 30 miles a night, but most of the men suffered from bad feet—frozen, frostbitten. When we came to one place that was a little over halfway of our journey, they told us the fellows were suffering pretty bad with their feet, and they wanted to leave them behind. So the fellows said no, they'll keep on with the group, because the fellows knew that if anybody was left behind, they'd never catch up with the group again . . .

We came to this valley and we stayed there from December 7 until January 18 . . . We met Dr. Anderson, which was one of the American doctors captured in another group . . . Dr. Anderson had to amputate some of the boys' toes. Only thing he had was just a pair of scissors. He cut one boy's foot off. I think it was his foot . . . The only thing he had was—it looked like a butcher knife and a pair of scissors. For anesthesia—he didn't have any then . . .

After we reached Piuckdong, which is now Camp No. 5, living conditions were very bad . . . I didn't get much of this in the camp life before I was sent to a general hospital, which was separated from the rest of the camp . . . I went to the hospital for lung trouble which I contracted after I was a prisoner of war . . .

After I left the general hospital, I went back to sick company, where I stayed for a few more months, then I went back to the camp, when I began to get in this hubbub they was carrying on—indoctrinating the prisoners on this Communist deal which they wanted everybody there to believe.

Well, things is pretty rough then, and all these lectures given was compulsory for each man to attend. They'd have lectures for two hours, and then you'd have a discussion for two hours. Well, I don't know all the instructors' names, but the only thing I know, we called him "Lu, the Wolf" . . . on account of the way he harassed the fellows and anything you'd say you'd probably get punished for, which is being put on a latrine detail . . .

They acted very bad if a man makes the slightest remarks in a lecture. He was trying to sabotage the study, or he was trying to overthrow the lecture, or something like that. And he was often punished for it, which is make him stand at attention in front of headquarters with boards over his head.

One incident happened to me. I made some remark in lecture. I was made to stand up for about a hour in front of headquarters with a couple of boards over my head . . . They made me stand up and hold these boards over my head. The boards had ice on them and my hands froze while I was holding these boards up over my head during this time . . .

Then they call me up to headquarters . . . They told me that they had a job for me . . . This Lu told me, "Since most of the men in your squad is not able to get around much, I want you to take charge of the study" . . .

I didn't want no part of it. He said, "But you will take charge of study." I say, "And if I refuse?" He said, "You will take charge of study." Well, I figured

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—because some of the fellows had refused—they had different ways of showing you that you do as they say, such as making your chow a little bit shorter, putting you in "the Hole" they had there, which had no heat at all . . .

They took me down to another school building on the other side of town with a bunch more fellows recruited into this same type of duty, and gave us . . . about three or four days of study, telling us, "You will carry out your discussion according to the way we want it."

After, I went back to the squad and discussed and told the fellows about what had happened, and told them that they would be looking to me—that if any fellow refused or try to get out of detail . . . the fellows knew that from the living conditions and the way we were in this camp, that it would be much better on them if they go and give some type of answer to their question . . .

I developed a relapse in my condition and was sent back to the general hospital. While there, I still had to undergo political lectures . . . the doctors was giving the lectures—not directly, but he would bring the material in, and if you showed in any way that wouldn't co-operate with him, well, your attention was a little less . . .

Study Topic: 'American Aggressiveness'

Forced study bore propaganda fruits for the Communists. Articles written by prisoners appeared later in Communist publications. Here is the account of M. Sergt. Walter McCollum, 34, of Lake Charles, La., who tells of his capture in November, 1950, near Wonsan:

SOME ENGLISH-SPEAKING Chinese rushed up and told us all that get up and put our rifles down, and no harm would come to us . . . We had no more ammunition to fire, but we had one very young soldier who were at that time anticipating death so that he thought about his mother. So he started crying . . . Some of the Chinese walked up to him, patted him on the shoulder and told him to stop crying, that they wouldn't kill him . . .

After about eight nights of continuous traveling, we came back to the valley where it is about 10 miles south of Piuckdong. We stayed in this valley approximately a month . . . We were told that we would eventually go to a permanent POW [prisoner of war] camp where we would undergo approximately four or five months of study, and then the Chinese said they would send us all home, which sound like a lot of baloney to us, at that time . . .

They sent for me and told me that I would be the monitor and I had to go up to the meeting three or four days by the instructor, the chief instructor on monitor's duty, which was to take notes of these lectures that the Chinese would give and after the lecture to discuss the lecture among the men. Let them discuss it, and let them state their opinion, and then I was supposed to give the opinion of every one of the men in the squad to the Chinese . . .

Well, at the start of the study was "The Aggressiveness of the American Armed Forces in Korea" . . . they was out to convince us that the South Koreans attacked the North Koreans, and that we were sent over by the American Government to assist the South Koreans which were improper, and we were duped in using the name of United Nations Forces or Police Forces . . .

There was some men that the Chinese deemed "progressive" and that was the men that they had choosed for the responsible positions. Now they were deemed "progressive" in a sense by some of the men, depending on how the men felt, because they were held responsible for the study and they were held responsible for the discussing opinion of the men getting to the Chinese.

Now they were not held responsible for the men changing their way of thinking or their opinion about the Government or what not. But they were responsible that all men in their particular squad would have something to say concerning the lecture . . .

Well, after the study started and got well on the way . . . they decided to set up committees throughout the companies to farther improve our living condi-

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tions, the way the Chinese put it . . . They also put up a committee for study. This study committee would be responsible for writing articles for the company wall paper [material posted on a bulletin board]. At first it started that way. And the men started writing the articles, and the Chinese say while we were in the POW camp that we should develop our ability to write . . . We might become interested in writing.

So the men did that for a while, but when they found out that the Chinese would take these articles and those that they would approve of would end up in some of the Chinese magazines that—later on we did get some from China—that had a few of these men's articles printed in them, they stopped writing. This magazine in particular we recognized our articles in were called *The Chinese Monthly Review* and it also came up in some of the Chinese pamphlets . . .

They used to also set up at general headquarters a paper *Towards Truth and Peace* and that was a camp paper, and they'd get articles out of such books as "The Communist Party," "Bolsheviks' History of the Communist Party in Russia" and "The Communist Party in China" and also later on they got books on "The Communist Party, U. S." by William Z. Foster . . .

This paper was set up in '51, and these articles would be printed in the paper and circulated throughout the camps in North Korea . . . They had these old-type printing machines and the Chinese didn't know too much about running the things, so they got POW's that they deemed was eligible to help run—to get the paper published.

I happened to be in the hospital during this germ-warfare period, but we did get pamphlets in the hospital. Even if we were sick, we still had to undergo a certain amount of political instruction . . .

Every now and again, the doctors would ask us: Did we believe that the germ warfare was a just thing? Did we believe that it should be used against the civilians and against soldiers?

If you said that you didn't believe the Americans was using germ warfare, and that you didn't care whether there was a war going on, and you was all-out to win the war—if you talked in that way, which some of the men did, I definitely know that they would be lax on your medical treatment . . . and you would get discharged from the hospital way before you were considered cured.

So under that condition, the average man that came to the hospital was aware of those things, and he had to go right along with the political issues that they presented . . .

'One or Two Did Waver'

Indoctrination took hold on some GI's who became interested in Communist theory and arguments. Corpl. James L. Pinkston, 23, of Jacksonville, Fla., who was captured near Wonsan on Nov. 4, 1950, gives his account:

WE WERE CAPTURED. The Chinese which captured us made us take our hands down, and shook hands with us and said hello . . .

We arrived where Camp No. 5 now is on approximately the 17th of November, 1950. The next morning the town was bombed, and the following night we were moved back to the valley camp . . . We stayed there for two months and then came back to Piuck-dong, which is now known as Camp 5 . . .

A instructor called Comrade Lim was in charge of my company. He could speak very good English. Comrade Lim was very small built, very thin. He wore glasses. He was very smart and had a very good education. He knew quite a bit about psychiatry. He was a very swell person, and he could figure a man out just by talking to him, just what type of a person he was, and it took a damn good man to fool him. Several men tried to pull the wool over his eyes, but they were unsuccessful . . .

Comrade Lim gave lectures on different subjects for a period of approximately a year. During this time I only attended for about two months—and he had a very good knowledge of English, and also a very good understanding of the American GI, and was pretty good at getting his points across.

Well, the lectures consisted of "The Korean War, Who Started It and The Reasons Behind the War," also "The Contradictions between Capitalism and Socialism."

During the period of indoctrination, the majority of the men in the camp did not go along with it.

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They would skip lectures, hide from them and would not pay attention to them, make noise and we classified it all as Communist propaganda . . . Comrade Lim did not threaten or blow his stack at any of the men during the time other than in the lectures when he tried to obtain order and then he would raise his voice. But no threats were made . . .

During the period of indoctrination, there were one or two who did waver, and after indoctrinations were over, quite a few came out and began studying on their own. They studied the difference between capitalism and socialism, the basis of both societies, political economy, and the labor movement in the United States, also Malenkov's report to the nineteenth Congress . . .

(image added)

Pictured above are a few of the former American POWs who chose not to leave North Korea at the war's end.

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