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Resettlement Problems of Prisoners-of-War of the Japanese in World War II and the Chinese Communists in Korea

Allen Hanegan
Eastern Illinois University

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Resettlement Problems of Prisoners-of-War of the Japanese in World War II and the Chinese Communists in Korea

(TITLE)

BY

Allen Hanegan

THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

M. A. in History

IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL, EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
CHARLESTON, ILLINOIS

1978

YEAR

I HEREBY RECOMMEND THIS THESIS BE ACCEPTED AS FULFILLING THIS PART OF THE GRADUATE DEGREE CITED ABOVE

DATE

25 July 1978
RESETTLEMENT PROBLEMS OF
PRISONERS-OF-WAR OF THE JAPANESE IN
WORLD WAR II AND THE CHINESE
COMMUNISTS IN KOREA

BY

ALLEN JAY HANEGAN
B. S. in Ed., Eastern Illinois University, 1975

ABSTRACT OF A THESIS

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
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The readjustment problems that were encountered by the prisoners-of-war (POWs) were caused by their identification problems, the chief aspect of which was their defensive isolationism. These problems produced further difficulties for the individual POW in the behavioral category and for the entire POW group in their underlying distrust of the outside world. These also produced confused reactions, paranoid syndromes, and a lack of participation in military and civilian affairs, and were expressed in the POWs as fearful withdrawal and belligerent negation with anti-social overtones. These problems were more marked in the case of the Korean War prisoners than in the case of the prisoners of the Japanese in World War II because of the complex and confusing pressures to which the Korean War POWs were subjected.

The prisoner-of-war identification syndrome was exaggerated by the repatriates and used as a rationalization for all the adjustment problems the men faced. If a POW could not identify with his community, he fell back and identified with his prisoner-of-war group and showed more interest and enthusiasm for meetings and reunions with them than his own occupational or social peers.

The psychological effects of imprisonment were very damaging. They could be handled, however, by qualified people and successful readjustments could be made back into civilian life. If the POWs problem stemmed from a definite psychiatric disability, the Red Cross or Veteran's Administration or one of the local psychiatric or mental hygiene clinics usually provided the only source of help. The local Family Welfare Society or Family Service Societies
provided some help for problems that affected family relationships but were not psychiatric in nature.

On the personal level, rehabilitation began with a realization on the part of everyone that each POW's case was distinct and he reacted differently to his military and prison experiences, based largely upon his emotional maturity before he entered the service. His treatment, therefore, usually began with a psychiatrist or social worker compiling a case history which included many of the experiences of his early life. The most important objective for the person who wanted to help the POW to readjust was to secure the best possible understanding of his complex problems. This helped to create the intelligent and sympathetic atmosphere the returning POW needed in his first difficult months at home. All that was really required was the use of common sense and patience.

Readjustment was not accomplished without many heartaches, and even today, some POWs remain emotionally and physically crippled by their experiences. Perhaps they will never completely recover, but a genuine understanding by the family and friends of the prisoner was invaluable in hastening the readjustment process and sometimes averting chronic invalidism.
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PREFACE

Not the least important factor to the health of the returning prisoners-of-war of the Japanese after World War II and the Chinese Communists after the Korean War was a warm and understanding public. They were welcomed and acclaimed upon their return but many civilians did not understand that the prisoners had changed, sometimes drastically, since they had left home. They were older, bruised in body as well as mind, and unsettled. They were in doubt about their place in the community. They came home bearing many of the rough edges of grime and tragedy of war. Not all the returning prisoners were like this but many were. The ultimate objective of civilian society after the two wars was to reabsorb all of these returned prisoners into the life of the nation and community.
Chapter I

Introduction

In the Great Depression of the 1930's, the number of days a man worked were few and pay was low. In this period also the value of human life was rising in America. The value of human living, as contrasted with human life, though, had not yet been standardized. It took the inhuman tragedy of war to bring this value home to our people.

Human living, however, is often only valued in the laws of a nation or society and not by its members. Yet, the way of life and politics in this country, called democracy, have produced a welcome concern for the value of the individual. We have come to believe that a man is worth saving because he is an individual and that no other justification is necessary. This was just as true after World War II or the Korean War as it was in the depression. It was also just as true for a prisoner-of-war (POW) as a civilian because he was a human being and because saving him gave him his appropriate opportunity in our national life. During the depression we were in danger of not realizing this principle because of the inhuman and opportunistic impulses we had gained during that time. Fortunately, we did realize it, and did everything we could to rehabilitate our POWs after both World War II and Korea.

The quandaries faced by the returning prisoners were only reasonable. It was unrealistic to assume that we could place upon the shoulders of the POW the entire burden of rehabilitating himself into our society if for no other reason than the fact that he was not used to that type of responsibility. The prisoners were not asking that we reward them for the suffering they had endured (although they did deserve it), but rather to
be again absorbed into society.

Many of the benefits given to the prisoners in the form of pensions and various programs had an opposite effect on them and, in fact, made them feel as if they were being rewarded. Such measures may have acted as an incentive to some, but to others they merely made them more dependent. A new type of bonus was needed that rewarded disability with opportunity and that enhanced life rather than prestige and power.

What was done for the POWs was a sign of the times, of what we had learned from fighting in the two wars, and of the hope, that was placed in these prisoners' futures. The POW, at the moment of his return, had to be treated as a part of humanity; later on he became a member of some rural, town, or urban life and a participant in the government again. What was done for the POWs in 1945 and again in 1952 and after told the American civilian as well as the POW where the nation stood and gave both groups a cue for future actions. It set the pace for our entire population.

Well trained and professional personnel were needed in government and professional agencies to direct efforts on these levels to prevent interference and therefore disillusionment in the prisoners' affairs. In most cases, all that was needed from the public to help with the successful readjustment of the POWs was an attitude of friendship, love, and acceptance. Some veterans required additional help such as special medical treatment, if they were disabled, occupational therapy for the young and handicapped, social services for those prisoners who were returning to broken families, educational services for those needing to acquire new skills, and financial assistance in a variety of circumstances.

The POW needed to know how and where to obtain these services and
how to use them along with his own resources. It also had to be determined whether any new services were necessary and should be offered or whether any old services were obsolete. It was also necessary to find a way to test and measure the repatriate to determine his progress toward readjustment.

Over-all, a certain spirit had to be developed to transform these principles into practical social action. This was the scope of the problem facing America after both World War II and the Korean action. It was hoped that a mature feeling of understanding and an attitude of support could be instilled into the families, friends, and employers of these former prisoners so that they and the prisoners of America's future wars would be able to establish for themselves a satisfactory way of life and would become good citizens again. If the families failed to understand the POW's problems, and satisfactory solutions were not reached, the results would have undoubtedly proven quite grave indeed.

Most of the previously published data concerning prisoners-of-war from World War II and Korea dealt with incidents of physical and mental disease. Prior to World War II, few studies were done on prisoners-of-war and there is little information available on them. This report will concentrate on the social and psychological readjustment of prisoners and will, in that respect, be different from the above mentioned studies. How did the POW think, act, and feel in a number of significant life areas: at work, at home with the family, with friends, in community relationships, about religion, and what were his aspirations for the future?
Chapter II  
Conditions in Prison

The World War II POWs went through shattering emotional experiences while being held captive by the Japanese. They were starved, frequently beaten, threatened with death and deliberately kept uninformed about their families and the progress of the war, although many said they knew we were winning when they were moved to Japan and especially when they saw the B-29 bombers flying over their camps. Many prisoners lost sixty-five to one hundred pounds. The diseases suffered included pneumonia, dysentery, malnutrition, and vitamin deficiencies. These ailments took a heavy toll.

The doctors and psychologists who examined the POWs were amazed that they were able to survive their experiences because of the quiet demeanor they exhibited after their release and because of the fact that these experiences were common for all the prisoners, even those who died. Doctors who examined the prisoners after their release reported that "... unsatisfactory and unscientific ... moral fiber and moral courage were common findings."¹ Most of the POWs felt that those who died "did so because barring serious disease or accident they lacked courage."² Many of the POWs said they "never gave up hope."³ They all


²Ibid.

³Ibid.
lived one day at a time and never stopped believing that they would ultimately be returned to America and to values that had a greater meaning for them. The prisoners testified that was what enabled them to hang on. They soon learned to adapt to any type of horrendous treatment to which they were subjected. The Japanese were quite good at keeping the men constantly irritated so that they never felt free of their captors and were, therefore, in a constant state of anxiety.

If the Japanese were trying to demonstrate their racial and cultural superiority over America by the way they treated the prisoners, they chose a very ineffective method. As the prisoners commented themselves:

They are not our equals. They are 'savages, barbarians. We felt superior all the time. When we saw how they do things and what they had to do with we knew we would win; We got accustomed to the beatenings and slappings because that is routine in their country. Everyone seems to slap you, and the next moment they would share their food with you."

Religious philosophy did not seem to have been terribly important to sustaining the men in prison; they did not mention any religious teaching as being the basis of their ability to survive. The men were not questioned directly about their religious beliefs after their release. It is conceivable that religion was important at first and became less significant as prison life became more static.

American POWs of the Korean War suffered the same stresses of inadequate food, clothing, and shelter, physical punishment, confinement, lack of emotional outlets, and frustration over an uncertain future as did American prisoners of the Japanese in the Second World War or any other war in our history. But in Korea, they were also subjected to a large-scale, carefully organized, and compulsory program of political

indoctrination. This added a disturbing new dimension to the job of repatriating them back into civilian life.

The Communist Chinese introduced this political indoctrination program after they had taken over control of the POWs and the prison camps in 1951. It involved specifically denying the prisoners any emotional communication. They had no leaders and they were constantly kept in an arena of fear and suspicion. The Americans differed from each other in attitudes and responses to their ordeals. They were not, however, subjected to the kind of deliberate and direct brutality and hostility which would stimulate feelings of strong group resentment as was done by the Japanese in World War II and which only served to make the men act as a cohesive force.5

Since the war with Japan and the Korean War produced nearly the same type of readjustment problems as far as our repatriates were concerned, what was the essential difference between the two? It had to do with the element of communist "brainwashing." This new and different weapon raised questions about the readjustment of our prisoners. What drove some of the men to collaborate was the most important one. And, since the values and beliefs that these men held were instilled in them by our society, did their actions cast any reflection on how America must change to meet the new communist threat and prevent the corruption of our soldiers in any future wars with them?

Collaborating with the enemy involved transferring secret information to them and helping them with their propaganda broadcasts. Virginia Pasley in her book about the twenty-one prisoners who choose to remain

with the Communists rather than be repatriated, concluded that the reason some men collaborated was because they came from poor home backgrounds. This was true but statistics show that a large group of the "non-collaborators", the men who did not aid the enemy and who did come home, also came from poor backgrounds. In fact, nine years of education was the average for all our POWs at the time of their induction into the military. The Pasley study, which was published in 1951, was only trying to report facts. No one at that time could draw any sound conclusions on the information that was available.  

No light has been shed on the determinants of collaboration in studies conducted since 1951. Collaboration may have been the outcome of prison camp experiences or the social deprivation that characterized the upbringing of the collaborators. This resulted in their upward social mobility, in their wanting to get ahead and to cooperate with the authorities whom they thought could help them accomplish their goal, who in this case were the prison camp commandants. The fact that their parents had less education would verify this. So would the fact that they themselves desired and had managed to acquire more education than the non-collaborators. Collaborators, however, did not necessarily want more education for their children and that fact made such a conclusion hard to reconcile.  


7 Edgar Schein et al., W. E. Cooley, and Margaret Singer, A Psychological Follow-Up of Prisoners of War of the Chinese Communists. Part I: Results of Interview Study; (Cambridge, Massachusetts, Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Supported by Research and Development Division, Office of the Surgeon General, Department of the Army, Washington, D.C., March, 1960), pp. 32-35.
Concerning the second question, America has to develop a greater ruggedness. The Korean failure signifies a moral weakness in our character and it was, therefore, our fault that our soldiers failed. The heart of our nation is still sound, the moral fiber that is the strength of our country is still to be found within each individual. We still need to tighten our rules and make clear the principles upon which our freedom is based.\(^8\)

It is mainly the government which was responsible for our sad showing in Korea. Our political and military leaders had failed to review and modernize our military processes and as a result our military personnel were not prepared for the agony they were subjected to in the communist prison camps. There was little organization in the camps and the fact that the senior officers did not try to help the men under them is largely responsible for our failure there. Such organization would have helped to sustain the men in the camps.\(^9\)

Long before a soldier was inducted into the army and given the necessary physical and mental equipment to sustain his military existence, life itself had provided him with certain equipment to sustain his existence as a human being. His physical equipment had to be relatively sound or he could not have passed the strenuous physical examination of his induction board. The board made some errors but not many. How about his psychological equipment, though? Psychological weaknesses often did not show up during the induction process. It was just as important, however, to have a sound mind as it was to have a sound body because it

\(^8\)Eugene Kinkead, *In Every War But One* (New York, 1959), 219 pp.

determined whether he could make the adjustments to the multitudinous experiences he had to face, including prison. What was his amount of personal aggressiveness? What was his capacity to resist strain or fatigue? The traits of a man's constitutional endowment, included his intelligence, his body-mind integration (coordination), his temperament (whether he is sociable, withdrawn, aggressive, or depressed), and his learned or acquired habits or patterns of action. These factors determined whether he was able to survive in prison.

Perhaps the most important piece of psychological equipment a man carried with him when he was captured by the enemy was his emotional maturity. This meant his ability to act his age and be independent, to react to life experiences as an adult, and to take responsibility for his own actions. The degree of a man's emotional maturity determined if, and how well he adjusted to prison experiences and to civilian life after his return.10

Before a man went into the service his parents took care of all his needs; while he was in the armed forces, the government did, and while he was in prison, what little he got, was supplied by his captors. After he was discharged from the service he was totally on his own probably for the first time. This consideration is an important factor in his re-adjustment.11

Prison life began to change a man from the very first day by making certain demands on him. Basically, he had to change in three ways: he had to relinquish his identity, he had to become accustomed to being separated from the habits of living at home, in the United States and

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11 Ibid., p. 32
inter-personal relationships with family and friends, and he had to give up his freedom.

The way of life in the armed forces was partially responsible for denying a man his own identity. It destroyed his individuality and sought to make him function as a member of a unit. This was fine for functioning in combat because in war the safety of the group as a whole often depends on coordinated actions of all the men in it. In prison, however, one needed a strong individual identity because he no longer had the support of the group to sustain him. The Japanese captors sought to prevent the formation of such individuality and further broke down each man's identity in the hope of lowering his self-esteem and making him feel inferior and anxious.¹²

The resilient and outgoing men were able to take the separation from family and friends because they realized that everyone must eventually leave home. Those who could not accept this fact had trouble and became rigid and developed negativistic personalities. This is not to say that the experience of being separated from the family was not painful to the resilient and outgoing men, for it was; no one really likes to change his life-style and create entirely new relationships, but they learned to adjust.

The third demand that was made on the prisoners, loss of freedom and, thus, the ability to shape their surroundings according to their needs and desires, affected each man differently. Such freedom was for many men the only thing that kept them on an even keel and prevented small eccentricities from becoming accentuated into major psychological problems. In prison every variation in a man's temperament was

¹²Ibid., pp. 35-36.
quite evident and he was helpless to change this situation. Again, it was the prisoner who had previously been a rigid and self-centered person who could not adjust to his loss of freedom. This type of prisoner may even have suffered from a personality characterized by anxiety and fear expressed by rebelliousness and obstinacy or negativism. 13

13 Ibid., pp. 46-55.
Chapter III
Examining Medical Officers' Reports on Initial POW Attitudes and Conditions

Not since Andersonville in the Civil War had such a large number of Americans been subjected to the kind of starvation, torture, and humiliation as American POWs of Japan endured in World War II. The Army, the Veteran's Administration and all agencies of the federal government who were concerned with the successful readjustment of the POWs deemed it advisable to determine the effects of such imprisonment on the former prisoners' health.

Most American POWs of both Japan and Korea were returned to the United States by ship and went through the processing station at San Francisco. It was on board these ships that the doctors and psychologists had their first real opportunity to observe these men to determine the effects that prison life had had on them. In fact, it was to give these authorities more time to examine the prisoners that it was decided to bring them home by ship. It took fifteen days for the prison ships to reach San Francisco and it was hoped that during this time reorientation and readjustment could begin before the POW had to face the rigors of his future life at home and, thus, the emotional gap between the two types of existence could be bridged.

The POWs were classified by the examining medical officers as: (1) good mental health and morale; (2) no well-defined psychiatric disorder but with definite adjustment problems, including attitude problems, situational maladjustment, depression, guilt feelings, resentment, and concern over health; (3) psychological disorders such as psychosis,
psychoneurosis, psychopathic personality or mental disorder; and (4) mental deficiency.  

Most of the POWs usually appeared quite reserved, cheerful, and cooperative during the initial observations on board ship. They would salute officers whose only uniforms were their hospital coats; but they were not humble by any means. They would feel free to visit the hospital administration on board the ships or at home in San Francisco anytime, day or night, and they would avail themselves of the free milk and orange juice that was offered at the San Francisco movie theatres. It took every scrap of hamburger that could be found in the San Francisco area to keep them happy as they would often buy six to twelve at a time. Their table manners, which had not been used for some time, were atrocious, for they would use their spoons for everything.  

They were so used to disorder and were in such a state of confusion that they often were unaware that they were being careless about waste disposal, sanitation, or orderliness. Their clothes and personal effects were usually scattered about on the floor and they would think nothing of casually throwing cigarette butts, bottles, and paper around their barracks area. They were occasionally drunk and would sometimes misbehave; but in such actions they were no different from any other G.I.s who were returning from overseas. After all, they had been under great emotional stress and in an undernourished condition for a long time, and had lost their tolerance for alcohol.  

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15 Brill, pp. 429-438  
16 Ibid.
They showed little interest in newspapers, magazines, or any current issues whatsoever. Their interest in any one subject, as a matter of fact, was usually brief. They usually sought female companionship within a week after their return. Old G.I. habits and attitudes were readopted rather quickly. These traits were less noticeable in men who had been free for a long time prior to their interview and observation period. They were usually passive and unenthusiastic, sometimes to the point of being amusing in some of their actions. They would follow instructions exactly and without delay and with little "horseplay" or talking.

Their initial concerns when coming home were for food and cigarettes. They had thought and worried about these things in prison to the point of forgetting about all other concerns such as family, friends, home and everything. Perhaps this explains another POW trait that was observed when they first got home: their apparent concern only about themselves. Their want for cigarettes and food became so great during the prison stay that they were driven to steal them. Many POWs admitted that their being successful at this venture accounts for their being alive to tell about it. The prisoners appeared to have lost interest in sex, including homosexuality during this period of hunger.

The personality of most of the returning POWs ranged between superficial feelings of well-being and outright optimism. This may have been due to the euphoria of finally being free. The prisoners did not carry any particular grudge against the United States or anyone except the enemy.

17 Ibid.
18 Ibid., pp. 430-431.
Some POWs developed increasing feelings of anxiety (which grew the longer they were out of prison) and inadequacy. They were apprehensive about the future and felt they had much to catch up on when they returned home. Many wanted to remain in the service for awhile after their return; others wanted to go straight home to look things over before deciding. Most of the men said they were not worried and could take things as they came. After having come through their prison experience intact they felt they could survive anything. Many said they had acquired a feeling of accomplishment, had matured, and had learned something from being in prison about people and life because they did not have the view that civilian life puts on things. Specifically, they said they had learned to distinguish what was important in the world and to appreciate little things. They felt they had strong feelings of identification with their fellow POWs.\footnote{Ibid.}

The mental health of the POWs as a whole was surprisingly good considering some of them had been in prison for over three years. There were a few cases of crying spells during the interviews which the POWs tried to conceal and would admit to only after repeated questioning. There were, generally, very few cases of depression among the POWs and fewer cases of insomnia than might be expected. Also, there were few reports of bad dreams among the prisoners but some of the men had been in prison so long that they may have forgotten about them.\footnote{Bernard Cohen and Maurice Cooper, \textit{A Follow-Up Study of World War II Prisoners of War} (Washington, D.C., 1954) pp. 63-68.}

The physical state of the POWs was also generally good. There was
some evidence of peripheral nerve involvement (but not too severe), superficial sensory loss (patchy and generally in the lower extremities), diminished tendon reflexes, muscle weakness due to nerve involvement (but this was not common), optic atrophy, and multiple sclerosis. It was estimated that at least half the men had polyneuritis symptoms, many of which had disappeared by the time they were examined. The neuropathic cases responded well to diet and vitamin therapy. Optic nerve involvement did not improve. The neuropathy was thought to be due more to the severe beatings inflicted by the Japanese prison guards or forced work in the mines, factories, or loading platforms than to malnutrition.²²

It was in the group therapy sessions conducted on board the ships that the prisoners seemed to be best able to reveal their fears about returning home. The therapists had to initiate almost all the discussion in the sessions because of the reticence of the men. Because of the type of information the discussions were designed to provide, they were purposely focused on the attitudes and fears of the men as related to the present and future.

Some aspects of the POW experience had so disturbed the men, that they seemed to be unable to deal with them in the group sessions. They felt guilty about their character deficiencies and had already started to repress them by the time of their interviews. They were suspicious and apprehensive about being in the groups and they participated tersely and sporadically. They did not, as surprising as it may seem, over-glorify home; but their fears about their ability to deal with reality increased. Their first recognition of their feelings of isolation from

²²Brill, pp. 435-437.
"outsiders" came during their first non-repatriate contact with the other personnel on the ship. "I can talk for hours with one of the fellows who was 'up there', but I've nothing to say to those other guys," was the common feeling expressed by the POWs. They anticipated similar fears when trying to relate to family and friends again:

I don't think I'll be able to talk to the folks back home. I can't seem to make conversation anymore. ... They won't believe what we say back home anyhow. It's too fantastic ... They'll try to get us to talk about our prisoner-of-war experiences. If they do it to me I'll just walk away .... They'll treat us like some kind of fragile package.24

The returning POWs said they felt threatened by the homecoming; the fanfare they knew they would receive when they came home stimulated their feelings of guilt and unworthiness:

That first week is going to be rough—big parties with the relatives and all that sort of thing. It makes me feel funny because I know I don't deserve it ... I sure hope they don't make all that fuss over me. I'd rather be just left alone, maybe take a fishing trip for a few days.25

They emphasized their fear of using all the familiar forms of communication which they had used to keep their morale up: a combination of American "bebop", Korean or Chinese or Japanese, dog imitations, train imitations, and profanity. They were afraid they might offend someone by their loose talk.

All the men felt behind and out of things. Many had never seen television or even knew where their new homes were: "We're not familiar with the things back home anymore. We have a lot of catching up

23Lifton, p. 736.
24Ibid.
25Ibid.
to do . . . I don't know my way around at all. Hell, I could step off a street car and get killed."26

Their independence had been intensified during their long periods of closely regimented existence. These feelings were prominent and often expressed in forms of denial and reference to earlier conflicts:

I sure hope they don't baby me when I get home. I can see Mother now, telling me what to eat and where to go. I'd like to do what I want and be completely on my own . . . I'd like to go into business with a buddy, but I think I'll stay in the Army for awhile, just until I get used to things.27

The ones who had been in Korean and Chinese prison camps made comments about communism which were self-guarded and filled with guilt and hostility. They felt they were still vulnerable to their captors:

What should I do if the Communists send agents to my house? I'd like to tear them apart, but maybe it would be better to call the F.B.I. . . . People back home may think I'm a progressive or a Communist. If they accuse me of that I'll sock them in the nose.28

A poem from a Korean War prisoner dramatically expresses the suspicious self-imposed aspects of their isolation:

I know you are curious about life
in this strange land

As a prisoner of war in Korea, but how could you understand?

You ask about the treatment, was it good or was it bad? I answer, it's all over now and I am very glad.

You ask if I was captured, if I was wounded too, Yes I was badly wounded but what does that mean to you.

26Ibid., pp. 736-737.
27Ibid., p. 737.
28Ibid.
I realize your idle interest, curiosity and wonder too. But even if I tried, I couldn't explain all this to you.

I hope this answers your questions, please forget you ever knew That I was ever a prisoner for I want to forget it too.²⁹

Among the Korean War prisoners there was a group of "arch reactionaries" who tended to be anti-social anyway in their tendencies and they reacted in a stony-faced, silent, and even hostile manner, often with the air of a martyr, during the interviews on board the ships bound for the United States. Their participation was, furthermore, limited and had to be elicited. One prisoner, who said he was speaking for the group, commented to the therapist, "I'll tell you, Doc, we went through a lot up there. And nobody could really understand the way we look at things unless he was up there with us."³⁰ These men went to only one session rather than the usual two or three, because of their own request that they not be compelled to attend more than that.

There was also a special group of "progressives" who, contrary to the reactionaries, wanted to participate and actively sought to please the therapists and justify their behavior in prison. They attended two sessions and they talked of the future and made numerous references to their POW experiences. In this way they brought out a great deal of the hostility they felt for the Chinese and what the Chinese had subjected them to. They exhibited a strong residual guilt and saw the group sessions and intelligence interviews as an opportunity to get things off their chests.

²⁹Ibid.
³⁰Ibid.
The emotional attitude of most of the prisoners following their release may be considered an incomplete and modified form of apathy. It reflected, as in the case of the World War II Japanese POWs, a retreat from a disturbing and unsatisfying situation. Thus, the Korean War prisoner was just "playing it cool" as compared to the Japanese POW who "just put his mind in neutral." The indoctrination program the Korean War POW was subjected to constantly exerted pressure on him in the direction of his participation, rather than withdrawal. Thus, the apathy of the Korean War POW could never be as complete or "successful" a defense as psychologists like Ralph Greenson said was characteristic of the World War II Japanese POW. It was complicated by the anxiety and guilt the men were experiencing in response to the tightrope they were walking between sanity and insanity and between communism and democracy.31

The hostility these men were expressing was a good sign, though, compared to the apathy they had previously felt. It indicated (as Greenson pointed out in his World War II study) that the men were beginning to assert themselves again after the humiliation and impotency they had experienced in prison. It also had more ominous aspects, including a mounting apprehension about homecoming, and the resurgence of hostility that was previously repressed and would be difficult for them to handle in the future.32

The sequence of group identifications was significant to the type of readjustment the men faced. The close identification the POWs formed

31 Ibid.
32 Ibid.
with their peers developed greater impetus without the prison camp impediments. It offered, in its broadest aspects, a means or sense of belonging and a method of re-establishing interpersonal relationships from within the group. This identity was clannish and fearful though. It did not have the power-giving qualities of group attachment that made one feel like he was a member of "the best damn outfit in the Army." It rather created a feeling of "We repatriates against the world . . . if you were up there with me, you can be my buddy, if not, I must fear and distrust you,"\textsuperscript{33} and was unhealthy. It also generated jealousy and intra-group hostilities when, for example, the "reactionaries" expressed a long smoldering resentment for the "progressives" (whom the reactionaries thought had obtained material advantages at their expense) by threatening them with physical harm.\textsuperscript{34}

\textsuperscript{33}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{34}Ibid.
Chapter IV

Collaborators and Non-collaborators

General attitudes of the "collaborators" (those who aided the enemy) and the "non-collaborators" (those who did not) from the Korean War on how "good" or "bad" their prison experience was were widely varied. The collaborators seemed to think that conflict with the other prisoners was the biggest problem they had while in confinement. They said that if they had been more knowledgeable about the enemy and communism, and about the values and beliefs of their own country, they would have had an easier time getting along in prison. Collaborators had fewer cases of nerves in their group but there was more physical disability among them. As far as going back to work, the collaborators preferred to work on jobs where they were alone and, in fact, did take more jobs of this type. They were devoted church goers after the war but they preferred not to join veteran's clubs or maintain contact with other repatriates. By their own admission, their inter-personal difficulties were attributed to their own unwillingness to talk about their experiences. They did not feel that other people were necessarily unfriendly but they spent most of their leisure time after repatriation with their wives or relatives rather than with friends or dates. Finally, they had little interest in continuing their education when they got back. This may be due, however, to the fact that they had less education in their family background. 35


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The non-collaborator's estimation of his prison camp experiences and his resulting attitudes was conversely different from the view of the collaborators. They commented that it was the detention and monotony of the prison camp that was the hardest thing to get used to. They emphasized the need for character building and more discipline and more information about what it was like to be a POW to help them survive in prison. There were many nervous disorders among the non-collaborators but less physical disability. They preferred to work in the type of job where they would be in conjunction with others. They also chose to return to their home communities and remain there longer than the collaborators. They blamed their readjustment difficulties on the unfriendliness and lack of sympathy in others. This is surprising because this seems more like an attitude the collaborators, who were probably thinking that the American public was castigating them for their aiding and abetting the enemy, would have. Finally, the non-collaborators were anxious to finish their education and to have their children go to college, there was also more educated people in their family backgrounds.

The pattern of attitudes among the two groups indicates that the collaborators had considerably less trouble readjusting to others and handling inter-personal relationships than did the non-collaborators. This interpretation is in agreement with previously published data that the collaborators were more prone to involvement with other people and that is why they became involved with the enemy. This interpretation is also consistent with the histories of the two groups after repatriation. The non-collaborators bottled up their hostilities, withheld inter-personal

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36Ibid.
relationships, and thus had more difficulty relating to other people. The collaborators, on the other hand, had more trouble with guilt feelings and social ostracism and that is why they ended up in communities where no one knew them and in churches more often than the non-collaborators. This still, however, as stated previously, does not shed any clear light on the determinants of collaboration.\textsuperscript{37}

\textsuperscript{37}Ibid., pp. 89-90.
Chapter V

Initial Problems and Misunderstandings
Faced by the POWs

The job of informing the public on how to properly treat the returning POW was the most important task faced by people who were interested in helping the prisoner to readjust successfully to civilian life. In other words, the American public needed "attitude education" because, unfortunately, they had not developed an adequate understanding of the factors of mental health or the psychological strains involved in the POWs readjustment to civilian life. The most prevalent fear of the POW was that his family would not understand him, or him. He was afraid they would ask too many questions, stare at him, or tactlessly offer him too much help. Most Americans did not understand that the insecure prisoner would often disguise his fears in the form of over aggressive reactions. Most Americans were warm-hearted and well-meaning and did not want to hurt the ex-POW but they needed to be educated in order to avoid making mistakes. 38

There was a lot of bad publicity concerning POWs printed at the end of the two wars. So much so that many individuals were discouraged from helping the POWs because it was too much trouble or too inconvenient and was hopeless anyway. Headlines such as "P.O.W.s Seen as Big Problem." were intended to help the repatriates by publicizing their problems and needs and stimulating the community to calm and concrete planning and effective action in the community. After reading such articles, however,

38Pratt, pp. 221-231.
the community often viewed the return of hundreds of POWs with alarm and confusion. 39

Besides these initial misunderstandings by the public, the POW suffered from many other problems during his readjustment which resulted more directly from the conditions he suffered while in captivity. Overreaction on the part of family members to the returning POW was one such problem. The repatriate was in a state of heightened sensitivity upon first returning home and he would easily misinterpret his family's reactions. 40

Pampering the ex-prisoner and forced joviality was another problem. Such displays by family members would only succeed in irritating the repatriate after he had just begun to feel like a human being again. He wanted to be treated as a human being but instead people would treat him like some fragile package, being extra quiet around him or quickly muffling conversations about him whenever he would approach them so that they would not hurt his feelings. The trouble was that their actions would often alert him about their feelings toward him and would make him feel self-conscious. 41

He usually wanted to forget his prison experiences but people would constantly ask him to recite them. This was usually done out of the sole desire to find out what it was like to be a POW, but forcing him to relive his experiences only made the POW feel exasperated. Furthermore, when the POW would respond to their inquiries that he just could not

39 Ibid.
40 Interview with Dr. William Miner, Eastern Illinois University, June 26, 1976.
41 Ibid.
remember, people would think that he was trying to spare them the more grim details of his experiences. He honestly, however, may not have been able to remember the more ghastly details because of his protective amnesia which caused him to blot such experiences from his mind.\footnote{Ibid.}

In many families where the father was the former military expert, he would develop feelings of hostility when his son would recount one of his prison experiences, (often after being asked to do so by someone else) and felt like he had to match that experience with a tale about one of his own battlefield encounters. Arguments would then start because the father felt his position as head of the household was being threatened. Such arguments would often carry on to other areas.\footnote{Ibid.}

Parents of a returned prisoner would often, and perhaps unconsciously, try to reassert their authority over him. The parents usually did not realize that during all the months or years their son had been away he was making his own decisions. The returned POW had usually come to enjoy his freedom, especially after having been in prison. He was not about to submit to parental domination again.\footnote{Ibid.}

With such situations occurring, the POW increasingly tended to realize that his return home was a disappointing experience. He had reached home after going through bitter struggles concerning himself. He had probably just began to feel sturdy again; he had plans for himself and was invigorated and enthusiastic. His family, however, treated him either as the adolescent he once was, who did not know himself and

\footnote{Ibid.}
was to be mildly tolerated but ignored, or as an invalid, from whom nothing should be expected. The danger lay in the fact that the prisoner himself often adopted his parents' attitudes and slipped back into either his former childhood status or that which he had in prison, in which he had no control over his own destiny and consequently felt that he should give up and let other people control his life. 45

The family, friends, and associates of the returned POW also did not understand that the repatriate had changed while he was away. He had new values, new likes and dislikes, and new ways of doing things. They, as a result, acted in ways that presented an obstacle to the newly freed POW and only served to impede his progress toward readjustment. It was usually best, if possible, to let the prisoner work out his own problems in his own way. Trying to impose solutions to the POW's problems on him was actually doing him more harm than good. The repatriate usually had to start all over again and learn how to act by trial and error. 46

The greatest good that could be done by members of the family who loved and respected the POW was let him alone during this process and allow him to sense a true feeling of understanding and steadfastness from them. The prisoner came to depend on this treatment in time and realized that his family comprehended the struggle he was going through and neither condemned nor rejected him for what he did. The prisoner, through his actions, was trying to tell those who cared for him that he was frightened, confused, and anxious. For example, the returned POW

45 Ibid.
46 Ibid.
may have gone restlessly through one seemingly good job after another; or he may have avoided his old friends and associated only with his old prison buddies. Another POW may have avoided looking for work at all with the belief that there was something physically wrong with him, even after several assurances by different doctors that he was in good health.

Those who took the time to understand, found the returning POW was really no different from themselves. He was merely trying to find socially effective and acceptable solutions to problems that were much the same as the ones they had while, at the same time, trying to reconcile their personal ambitions, desires, and needs for security. Those who did not understand the repatriates, continued to see them as being strange and set apart from the rest of society because of their experiences and as people who should be absolved of any responsibility as normal adults.

Our people should have tried harder to put themselves in the prisoner's place and understand how he felt. This was especially true after World War II which was a more popular war. A climate of comprehension was needed which would have helped the POW to achieve his own self-reliance and come to grips with his task. In this way we all could have assisted each other because the American soldier's problems were actually our problems only in a different and more exaggerated form. Helping the repatriate to achieve his goals would actually have benefited our whole society.

There was much misunderstanding over the many minor tribulations that confronted the POW. For example, what to do about a job? Should he go back to his old one, or was he even ready to go back to work yet?
If the POW had a psychological problem, there was usually no visible wound to show this, but the prisoner would often be too embarrassed to explain his situation or even to have anyone know about it. (This was especially true of Korean War prisoners who had been accused of collaborating with their captors.) Perhaps he felt that he had to go to some place other than the town he had enlisted from, where no one knew him. He may, on the other hand, have felt it was better to remain where he was and brazen it out there or make up some excuse about the reason for his discharge. (This was especially true for prisoners released before the war was over.) Some prisoners had become involved in a hasty marriage during their last trip home before capture, and realized their mistakes when they returned. How was the POW to confront his new wife who had perhaps taken a job and was independent and enjoying her life style to the point that she did not want to give it up? If he was disabled, how was he to handle the temptation to become totally dependent on his wife or mother or someone else?

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47 United States Office of Education, Family Contributions to War and Post War Morale, Number V (Washington, D.C., 1945), pp. 1-6
Chapter VI
Psychiatric Problems of the POWs

Many prisoners who came home from the wars with "psychiatric" problems were not necessarily "insane." Being discharged for psychiatric reasons only meant that the prisoner's personal traits and temperament differed from the norm. Such an individual may simply have been unable to continue functioning in a military environment, but could and did function in a civilian one.

Nearly half the prisoners discharged from World War II for medical reasons were given mental discharges, so the problem of "insanity" was indeed large. These men caused their families and friends much bewilderment and were also very unhappy themselves. Their illness, however, was a type of "psychoneurosis" called "phenomenology", which was simply an emotional disorder. It was a state of affectlessness more commonly called "apathy". These men showed a striking absence of any kind of emotional drive. They showed no scar or wound, they followed all rules and regulations, and rarely complained or made demands. They simply refused to become startled or tremble or sweat profusely when under stress. The condition was more common among Japanese POWs than Korean War POWs.48

This mechanism had served as a defense against painful perceptions and for avoiding overwhelming feelings of annihilation in the prison camps. Records indicated that it was caused by the long periods of

traumatic deprivation the men suffered. The POWs exhibited aggressive and belligerent attitudes towards their captors soon after their capture but when such reactions brought only defeat and humiliation, they learned to subside. They were also severely forced to restrict their instinctual drives for such things as love and sex to avoid further frustration and disappointment. These drives were eventually diminished. As stated, the only instinctual pre-occupation that remained with the POWs throughout their captivity was for food as this was essential to their survival.49

The removal of the basic etiology factor was the only way to successfully treat this apathetic condition. In most cases this could be done with warm and human treatment and good food, possibly in an army hospital. In the more severe cases, the only hope for recovery was to send the patient home. Almost all Japanese POWs suffered the condition of apathy along with whatever other physical or psychological ailment they might have had.50

Many of the POWs who were suffering from psychoneurosis were subtly predisposed toward instability before they joined the army. Most had a stable personality but had become unstable during combat and/or imprisonment. Every person's life is spent making adjustments to one thing or another. Everyone is furnished at birth with three interacting factors for making adjustments: his body, with its organs and their different methods of functioning, his intelligence (which is different in quality and amount in each individual), and his emotions. These things combine to form the "personality" of the individual. How each person

49 Ibid.
50 Ibid., p. 301.
adjusts to life's different experiences and whether they are successful depends on how they were raised and the habits and patterns they acquired.\textsuperscript{51}

Men returning from prison after World War II and Korea had two types of psychological disorders: "organic," from a physical disease, and "functional," from different causes. Most POWs suffered from functional psychiatric disorders which presented real problems because the symptoms were often undetectable and, therefore, difficult to diagnose and treat.

People who were otherwise kind and intelligent surrounded the word "psychiatric" with a cruel and unjust stigma. The family of a repatriate with such a disorder adopted a "hush-hush" attitude and tried to prevent news of its son's disease from leaking out to friends or neighbors. To the family of a prisoner with such a disease, there was more disgrace than if he had been maimed. The prisoner himself was afraid people would think he was "weak-willed" if they knew of his disease, especially if he came back from the Korean War and was accused of collaborating with the enemy. What the term psychiatric really meant on a man's discharge papers was that he had sustained some damage to his adjusting equipment. It did not mean that his condition was serious or unalterable. He may have been able to function quite well in a civilian or limited military service environment. (The latter aspect, however, was never investigated in either war by the army because it was too costly and time-consuming.) The term psychiatric meant that the prisoner's mental illness was severe

enough to impair his judgement and behavior to the extent that it was desirable for others to make his decisions for him because he was not able to make them himself. This was done by "committing" him which is a legal term for a process which gives a man a chance to recover in a hospital. ("Insanity" is also a legal term, not a medical one.)

A mental disorder could actually include any disorder in which the root is mental. This means that even headaches and many forms of back-acne could be considered mental disorders if they stem from a mental condition such as the desire to avoid work by becoming sick. The disguised expression of any repression into which the person has no insight, such as lying, could also be considered a mental disorder. People with such conditions would not be considered "crazy" or "insane." Neither were the majority of the POWs with unhealthy mental conditions.

Most POWs who suffered from a disturbed condition were cured. Forty-five of every one hundred patients admitted to mental hospitals each year were usually cured, within a year, and one could seldom tell they had been sick. It was often easier to cure psychoneurosis than it was to cure rheumatism or high blood pressure. It was unjust to regard these prisoners returning from the war zone as hopeless, but this was the stigma that surrounded many of the disorders.

How did a psychiatric disability affect a discharged POW? It was important to consider this since psychiatric discharges accounted for about half of all medical discharges from World War II and Korea. Basically, there were six types of mental disorders found in returning

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52Ibid.
53Ibid.
POWs: psychoses, feeble mindedness, psychopathic personalities, nervous diseases, combat fatigue, and psychoneurosis.\textsuperscript{54}

The men in the first group who were considered "insane" or "psycho" did not present too many adjustment problems to the communities they returned to because they were few in number and were usually assigned to the care of a mental hospital.\textsuperscript{55}

Men whose intelligence had failed to develop normally were considered "feeble minded" or mentally defective. They were neither insane nor neurotic. Their intelligence development capacity was simply deficient, and had probably been so since birth. No institutional care was usually required of them, but care had to be taken not to demand more responsibility, work, or family adjustment of them than they were capable of handling. Their condition was believed to be permanent since it had not been sound to begin with.\textsuperscript{56}

Psychopathic personalities were continuously anti-social. They often had difficulty in readjusting to their families and communities and often developed criminal tendencies.\textsuperscript{57}

Those with nervous diseases often displayed either physical or mental symptoms and sometimes both. This condition was caused by either a disease or injury to the brain or some part of the nervous system obtained by a blow to the head. People with this disease usually underwent a marked personality change that was likely to affect their community readjustment.\textsuperscript{58}

\textsuperscript{54}Pratt, p. 100.
\textsuperscript{55}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{56}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{57}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{58}Ibid, p. 101.
Impairment of part of the nervous system usually required active medical treatment but did not require that the POW seek institutional treatment. They could usually be treated at home or in the office of their family physician. The emotional or personality impairments usually remained long after the physical injury had healed. The personality and emotional symptoms would usually arrange themselves into certain group symptoms called constellations and these would eventually disappear also. An individual in this later stage was said to be suffering a "post traumatic syndrome." 59

Epilepsy (convulsions or fits) was a type of nervous disease caused by such things as: brain tumors, gunshot wounds, skull injuries, or could occur in a person who had no evidence of any brain or nerve damage. This latter type was called "idiopathic epilepsy." Patients with idiopathic epilepsy were not hospitalized either unless the seizures were frequent, severe, or caused marked changes in personality that resulted in anti-social behavior. Care had to be taken when this type of POW sought employment so that he would not be working around dangerous machinery where he could injure himself if he had a seizure. There was no reason, however, for the POW or his family to feel that his case was hopeless since most conditions usually subsided themselves or a cure was found. 60

Combat fatigue was a condition that could result in people who were otherwise normal and stable human beings. It was an emotional disease exhibited in the form of anxiety, confusion, or depression. It was thought

59 Ibid.
60 Ibid.
that this condition could only occur in soldiers engaged in actual combat. It could, however, also be brought on by prolonged thirst, hunger, exposure to cold or humidity, or a state of constant alert and taut nerves over a period of days under the constant threat of death. Immediate active treatment of combat fatigue kept the number and severity of cases down and shortened the period of recovery. Unfortunately, the facilities for administering the necessary treatment were usually not available in the prison camps. 61

Psychoneurosis, however, was the most common psychiatric ailment affecting our POWs. This included the men suffering acute or chronic anxiety states, psychosomatic disorders, obsessive thoughts or compulsive actions, and others who have numerous fears and phobias. Most of the men suffering with this problem were probably disposed to some emotional instability long before they entered into military service. Only twenty percent of the POWs with this disease in World War II could attribute it entirely to causes encountered during combat. 62

Anxiety is one of the main classes of psychoneurosis. Anxiety is the vague uncomfortable feeling one gets when something disagreeable is about to befall them. It is believed to stem from the feelings of hatred and anger that are aroused whenever our desires are thwarted. Most people encounter anxiety every day and either accept or overcome it. Sometimes the feelings of anger and hatred that are aroused in a person get so violent they become frightened when they consider what the consequences of their action might be. If the person does not react but

61 Ibid.
62 Ibid.
turns his aggressive feelings inward, feelings of guilt, depression, and tension may result. Terror and panic are examples of anxiety reactions. This is what often happened to the Japanese or Korean War POW and by the time he was returned home his acute manifestations were likely to have turned into chronic ones. Chronic anxiety often flared up during the POW's attempt to readjust. This often resulted in startled responses to sudden noises or moves and an acute reaction was brought out.

The ex-POW may have decided (consciously or unconsciously) to make his anxiety feelings known by adopting some psychosomatic condition. In this way the POW hoped for attention regarding some set of physical symptoms and, therefore, relief for his real emotional symptoms. The only way to successfully restore such a person to health was to discover and treat the real causes of his sickness, not the symptoms.

Another successful way of treating a person with a psychiatric disability was to learn to understand the meaning of his different actions and to respond to him accordingly. People often became awed or frightened by his "mysterious" reactions and illogical nature and this did not help him. Such people did not understand that his reactions were no different from what theirs might have been given the same provocation; and they often placed stigmas on him because his problems were psychiatric. The kind of atmosphere that was created at home for the POW often did more than anything else to expedite his recovery.

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63 Menninger, pp. 121-133 and 257-265.
64 Ibid., pp. 65, 129-152, 344, and 558-559.
65 Ibid.
Chapter VII
Readjustment to Civilian Life

Many POWs returning from the wars found that home was not as glamorous as they dreamed it would be. They quickly regained their lost weight and sexual drive; but there were also constant complaints about problems with persistent fatigue, exertion, dyspepsia, palpitation, difficulty in thinking or concentrating and memory lapses. Many POWs mentioned burning pains in their legs soon after returning; there were a few cases of persistent swelling of the ankles as well. Observers noticed symptoms of polyneuritis occurring in previously starved POWs. Other physical ailments included optic atrophy and restricted vision (these conditions occurred for approximately a year after the POWs were returned), restlessness, increased irritability, alarm, and nightmares. These complaints were generally experienced among the POWs. Many of them expressed feelings of resentment toward striking workers. They felt they could not catch up with the highly complex American society that had developed while they were away. They wanted to return to the slower pace of the Orient. Many POWs drank heavily after their return but they seldom became alcoholics.

The most important mental reaction seemed to be the persistent attitude of paranoia and shallow optimism. This attitude had been generally displayed during the time the men spent in captivity. They had become less trusting of their fellow humans. Anxiety replaced some
of their hysterical emotional reactions, but most reported that they
became increasingly optimistic with time. This was out of keeping with
the handicaps and difficulties they were having readjusting. The POWs
reported that they were less satisfied with their repatriated life than
they expected to be.

The experience of being a POW seemed to have a long handicapping
effect on the personality adjustment of even the best integrated men.
The responses to a questionnaire sent to the former prisoners a year
after their return showed that although some of them had adjusted ade-
quately and productively, few were completely well and happy and suitably
employed.

The flaws began to appear in the repatriates soon after their return.
They soon realized that readjusting to civilian life and freedom would be
difficult. For many POWs, it was only the dreams of mom and her cooking
or riding in their cars with their girlfriends that had sustained them
through the ordeal. They had idolized hundreds of sorely missed memories
of episodes in life back home.

The repatriate may have found that his girl had made new friends or
perhaps had a new job and that he was not as important to her as he once
was. Someone had probably taken over his old job. Perhaps all his old
friends had moved away or married or were in the army, too. This dis-
illusionment had served to make the POW irritable. Like most people,

he reacted by taking out his feelings on others. Many POWs became bitter

66 Major Stewart Wolf and Lieutenant Colonel Herbert Ripley, "Reactions
Among Allied Prisoners of War Subjected to Three Years Imprisonment and
Torture by the Japanese." The American Journal of Psychiatry, Volume CIV
(September, 1947), pp. 190-191.

67 Ibid., p. 192.
and bewildered over their disillusionment, and they began to yearn for the security of military life again. They began to see that their reactions were hurting not only themselves, but their family and friends as well.

Upon first returning home, there were likely to be temporary mixed feelings of gladness over being freed at last and leaving the army and, at the same time, resentment at having to do so. The POW was usually happy to be home again but it made him unhappy to leave his prison buddies. These feelings were compounded basically over a fear at the loss of group support. The POW was fearful about the future. What new groups did he have to face and identify with? Where could he find the security he needed to lessen some of his anxiety? These were the problems he had to overcome before he could be considered successfully re-adjusted.

One thing the prisoner discovered when he had returned home was that he had forgotten how to discipline himself. He was used to having other people do this for him—either his platoon leader or the commandant of his prison camp. He found it difficult to make everyday decisions for himself, but eventually he would learn to accept this responsibility. 68

Another problem the returning POWs faced was fear about the future. They worried about being able to establish themselves in civilian life again even when they knew they could have their old jobs back. They wondered whether there was any future in the old job. After being away so long, they also had to worry about their ability to perform a job. Those who were not married wondered if they should and if they could

68 Pratt, pp. 118-119.
support a wife. Some who had started college before they joined the army wondered if it would be worthwhile to continue.

Some of the POW's fears were real, but most were just misplaced anxiety about their ability to function on their own. The POW may have felt uncomfortable because he found it difficult to associate with other people. He had been cut off from the local gossip and did not know what was happening in his old home town. Letters, newspapers, and magazines from home were rare in prison. A gulf may have existed with old friends and acquaintances and he may have sensed this.

After having just come through a war, the prisoner was naturally aggressive, too. When he returned to civilian life he had to learn to control his aggressive feelings. It was difficult for many to make this shift in personality. Some of the POWs who were unable to control their tempers when they got home got into trouble. These men were not psychopaths, but it did sometimes take several unpleasant experiences to remind them that they were no longer in the service. Some of these men, although they did not become criminals, did adopt blunt, brusque speech patterns and domineering belligerent mannerisms that offended people. These exhibitions of pugnacity produced rebuffs in civilian life. Eventually, most of the returned prisoners did learn to channel their aggressive spirits into the energetic pursuit of sports, music, the arts, social intercourse, and their jobs. 69

The repatriate also returned with some trivial annoyances, such as "loose" language and a pre-occupation with women and sex. These were quite normal traits for the POWs to bear though, considering the type of "rough-

69 Ibid., p. 121
and-ready" existence they had been living, without any opportunities
to drain off their sexual frustrations through contacts with the opposite
sex. If ignored, both of these traits usually passed away harmlessly.70

When a POW built up an idealized image of home life, he created
problems for himself. The impact of disillusionment struck hardest among
the men in this group; their idealization became so fictitious that
they were, in effect, building themselves up for an inevitable let down.
When it did come, they felt betrayed by the folks back home who were not
as perfect as they had been built up to be.71

After a prisoner returned and remembered the annoyances of home
life (the way his parents demanded to know where he was going every time
he went out or the neighbors with their blaring radio every Sunday morning
when he wanted to sleep late), he often became moody and restless. The
POW did not realize that these problems were actually within himself, so
he looked for something outside himself on which to blame his troubles.
What was more plausible than to blame the problems of civilian life on
civilians? He decided that the home folk did not really understand him.
Since civilians did not understand him, he may have decided to go where
people did understand him, to places such as the VFW, the American Legion
and other ex-servicemen's clubs. There he could find people like himself,
old army buddies and fellow prisoners, with whom he could savor the
atmosphere of his former military life. Here he could discuss his com-
plaints about civilian life with people who would understand, and not
be offended.72

70 Ibid., p. 122.
71 Ibid., pp. 123-124.
72 Ibid., pp. 124-128.
Many prisoners returned from Japanese and Korean prison camps with complaints and problems that stemmed from defects in their personality and adjustment equipment. These ailments were psychological in nature but they were not severe enough to require hospitalization. Still, some type of psychiatric help was needed to prevent them from becoming chronic. This was usually acquired by allowing the POWs to live at home and treating them as outpatients in a private psychiatrist's office or a mental health clinic.\(^{73}\)

Some of these POWs with personality and adjustment defects were returned home before the war was over and there was a tendency for the people in their hometowns, as well as the prisoners themselves, to feel that they were shirking their responsibilities as soldiers since there was no visible reason to account for their being home. Sometimes, these prisoners and their families would create false stories concerning some physical reason for their discharge.

There was one point when facesaving excuses no longer worked for these POWs, and that was when their employers asked to see their discharge papers. Employers soon learned that attempts to try to change the wording on psychiatric discharges to "unsuitable for military service" or "Section II of the Medical Department" actually referred to psychiatric problems. A prejudice against these POWs was unjustified because most still made excellent employees.\(^{74}\)

Some POWs felt that they should be afforded special privileges and demanded to be treated as heroes. This attitude was usually attributable

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\(^{73}\) Ibid., pp. 144-145.

\(^{74}\) Ibid., pp. 136-139.
to the former prisoner's desire to maintain the feeling of security he had as a member of his POW group and his desire to be identified with that group. This was one reason that some prisoners were apprehensive about leaving the service. This attitude was understandable and usually did not last long unless the ex-POW was very insecure. It usually disappeared after he discovered that the public was truly grateful to him for his sacrifices.

The demand of these insecure prisoners to be treated as heroes sometimes exceeded reasonableness, however, when they demanded the same privileges of free medical and dental care as they had when they were in the service, or exemption from traffic laws and other regulations. If such men joined veteran's organizations with thousands of other men who felt the same way, they could create real trouble. Together their demands for special privileges sometimes developed into powerful political movements of national prominence.75

Some POWs became chronic complainers when they returned home, griping about every little matter. Most of this also stemmed from their difficulty at readjusting. Little could be done for this type of repatriate unless and until his behavior patterns reached anti-social proportions; then institutional help had to be sought. Until then the families of these repatriates and the public at large had to bear with their malevolence.

Some POWs suffered from fits of depression or were overly quiet and apathetic. They disliked leaving the house or mixing with others. These men had simply lost insight into themselves; they were not completely

75 Ibid., p. 140.
insane or even in need of hospital care. They were not, however, ready
to go back to work or to completely rejoin the community either.

Some repatriates were preoccupied with complaints about their bodies. They constantly had headaches, queer·prickling or tingling sensations
in the head or neck, spots before the eyes, feelings of weakness in the
muscles, vomiting spells, or dyspepsia. The repatriate insisted he could
not go back to work until these symptoms were relieved. These ailments
were not imagined; they were very real. Sometimes the repatriate would
go to doctor after doctor and try remedy after remedy with no avail
until it was realized that the cause of his problem was psychological.
The repatriate was unconsciously expressing his difficulty at readjusting. 76

The perplexing attitudes and mannerisms the repatriates sometimes
adopted often annoyed their families and friends. The repatriate would
tell and re-tell certain experiences to the point of boredom or become
extremely sensitive to complaints and criticisms of themselves and be-
came glum and withdrawn. Here again relief was to be found in the
psychological realm, not the biological.

Getting reacquainted with his family was probably the hardest but
the most important task the POW had to accomplish when he returned home.
Most of the men returning from Japanese and Korean prison camps were
re-united with wives. In fact, there were more married men serving in
World War II than in any previous war. Many wives had gotten a job
while their husbands had been away. They worked out of a desire to help
the war effort, to relieve the boredom of their husband's absence, or
because they could not live on the meager salary their husbands made in

76 Ibid., p. 143.
the service or the compensation the government sent them for their husband's being a POW. Working also gave many women a sense of creativity and independence which they had never felt before. Many loathed housework for years before going to work and working in the war plants gave them an excuse to leave it.

When the POW returned home the question arose whether the wife should continue to work or allow her husband to take over the chief "bread winning" role again. Many POWs had become dependent while they were in prison and, although they did not like the idea of letting their wives support them, they gave their approval. Most POWs did feel insecure, having their wives working, and after criticisms from the neighbors and in-laws they insisted that their wives quit their jobs.

Getting reacquainted with the children posed another potential problem. If the children were small when the prisoner left, the task of re-establishing old relationships was easy. If the POW had left behind a ten or twelve year old son, the problem was more difficult. His son had probably taken over the role as head of the family and the return of the POW father may have created a family jealousy triangle. To resolve this situation, the returning POW had to learn to be patient with his son and discover his son's individual needs and then try to meet them and establish a friendship with him again. This was not an easy task and many POWs failed.77

Similarly, if the POW's daughter was not able to get along well with her mother before he had left for the war, she may have unconsciously

clung to him as a substitute. Her mother, however, became an obstacle to this endeavor. The separation and eventual capture of her father during the war may have temporarily healed the breach between daughter and mother since neither woman could have him. With the return of the POW, the old feud started up again.78

As in the case of the son, many of the POWs had younger brothers who acquired the senior position in the family while they had been away. The young brother may have resented the resumption of position when his POW brother returned. It took a lot of time and understanding from all family members to get over the unhappiness caused by the splitting up of families that resulted from the two wars.79

Both husband and wife had been changed by their experiences while they were separated during the war. The wife had been forced to live on a budget while the returning POW was anxious to enjoy the pleasures of freedom again, regardless of the cost. If his wife cautioned him, she appeared to him to be nagging and parsimonious. If the POW was only in prison a short time he had probably not forgotten the security of having Uncle Sam provide everything and had not learned to discipline himself to doing without the non-essentials.80

Many wives had returned to their parents when their husbands had gone off to war. At her parents house, she had resumed life in a similar fashion to her pre-marriage days and rebuilt strong emotional ties to them. When her husband returned, she may have felt she was not adequately prepared

78 Ibid.
79 Ibid.
80 Pratt, pp. 172-194.
for the task of resuming the responsibilities of marriage.  

On the other hand, many POWs yearned for the emotional support of their mothers and fathers and wished to return there to live rather than to their own homes. Mates with such feelings had been initially immature and were not capable of functioning without the support of their parents. It was not realistic for them to continue their marriages unless these feelings were resolved.

Both husband and wife had changed emotionally, as well as psychologically during their separation. Usually, through his military travel and imprisonment, the POW had matured more than his wife. His interests were wider, his geographic horizons were broader, and if he had been an officer at the time of his capture, or was in charge of a group of prisoners thereafter, he was more independent. If his wife was domineering, trouble was imminent because he was no longer passive and would resent her efforts to resume the old relationship.

Many prisoners had become hardened by their military and prison experiences and were less affectionate, perhaps, than when they had left. If they were married to a woman who needed frequent displays of affection, trouble again was in store. Unless the wife could understand this, or one or the other of them could change, it was usually better to discontinue the marriage. A common example of this loss of affection in the POW was his lack of visible emotional response to the news of the death of some close friend or neighbor. Death had become a common occurrence in the prison camps and the POW had learned to accept it as the final, unalterable end over which there was no use brooding; the POW had to adopt such an

81 Ibid.
82 Ibid.
attitude to survive. This seemed a strange and disquieting attitude to many wives who were unaccustomed to it. The POW's attitude would usually change but most wives and POWs themselves did not realize this at the time.

Many POWs appeared gruff and disinterested and generally bored with life when they returned. This did not mean that they had become unloving. Such behavior had become second nature to many men while they were in prison. This attitude, too, would usually change in time, after the prisoner was left alone for a while to realize that home was where people really loved and cared for him. 83

The POW who had married shortly before he had been sent overseas was more likely to have problems settling back into his marital and community relationships than the prisoner who had been married for several years before the war. The couple had probably married on impulse, neither knowing the other very well. The POW in this situation was more likely to be immature, less sophisticated, and less emotionally stable than the POW who was returning to a wife he had been married to for several years. The relatively new responsibilities of marriage may have overwhelmed the former type of POW and he was more likely to try to run out on these responsibilities.

Among the first problems the new couple faced upon the prisoner's return was the practicalities of independent living. They had probably not been able to set up much of a home before the husband entered military service, so the new bride usually went to live with her parents or in-laws.

Finances still played a major role in their plans after the POW returned home, too, especially if they had a child. Such marriages

83Ibid.
usually ended in separation or divorce. 84

It was necessary for the people who really cared about the POW to understand what had happened to him since he left. What had prison life been like, what had it meant, and what had it done to him? How had his superiors tried to strengthen him against the strains of military life and the possibility of imprisonment? It was necessary to delve far back into the life of the POW to understand the problems he had when he returned. 85

What could the family and friends of the repatriate do to help him? They could start by not over-reacting to him. Many POWs were returning with conspicuous limitations of motion, such as a lost arm or leg or a serious disfigurement of the face. The family could take some comfort in knowing that the repatriate was not usually released from the Veteran's Administration or service hospitals until everything that could possibly be done for him was done. Families were usually given advance notice of the POW's return to lessen the emotional shock. If the family received no advance warning and they greeted the POW with repulsive reactions, this was usually more constructive and at least more honest than treating him as if his injury did not exist. Much could still be done by people who were interested in helping the POW lose his fears of being rejected.

The activities of such men were understandably limited by the handicap they incurred, but only to the degree that was necessary. The family, friends, and employers of the repatriate had to find adequate ways to compensate for his limitations.

84 Ibid.
85 Greenson, pp. 290-291.
Assurances that a handicap did not matter usually did not help the repatriate who was extraordinarily sensitive to feelings of rejection regardless of how cleverly they were disguised. They looked for such attitudes in people's actions, rather than their words.

When the POW returned to his old job or sought a new one, attention had to be paid, for the first time, to the feelings and needs of the individual. More than just earning a living was involved this time. The process of matching an employee's qualifications to the required skills of a particular occupation began shortly before World War II but had to be thwarted by the war effort and the need for large-scale and rapid production. The returning POW was different in many respects from the man he had been when he left home to go to war. He was returning with new attitudes toward individual feelings and needs. These differences had to be understood and wisely dealt with by the employer as well as the family if he was interested in having efficient and productive employees. 86

Some of the troubled attitudes the POWs exhibited about returning to work were: job restlessness resulting in wandering from job to job for a couple of years usually before settling down to one, excessive demands for special consideration, insistence on quite high wages, neurotic choosiness towards certain jobs, attitudes of touchiness and actual insubordination to their superiors at work, and finally, grievances concerning disillusionment with civilian life. These problems led to much friction and misunderstanding between the POWs and their employers. 87

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87 Ibid.
Doctor Holland Whitney and Doctor Matthew Brody, consulting neuropsychiatrists, of the Sperry Gyroscope Company in Great Neck, Long Island, were the first eminent specialists to take a serious and intelligent look at the problems the POWs encountered when they tried to readjust to civilian occupations. 88

The POWs had definitely been changed by their experiences, some beneficially, but most harmfully so. The extent of the change varied from small to great depending upon the individual. The POWs were honored with parades and medals and, for those who were less able to take care of their own livelihood, pensions; but they needed more than tokens of their country's esteem. They needed to be retrained to fit into the new industrial society; but no real effort was made to do this prior to 1946. POWs of America's previous wars were left pretty much to fend for themselves, and they did quite well. POWs of World War II and Korea, however, had to be made useful to themselves and their country again. They had to be given the ability to support themselves, enjoy the fruits of their labors, and share in the life they had fought to preserve. 89

Whether the POW found a good job or not depended on his own particular talents, where he finally located, and the opportunities that were present there. Federal law, union contracts, public opinion, and the wishes of industrial management all combined to give veterans the best job opportunities possible after both wars.

Some POWs tried to return to work within weeks after their discharges. Some did well, but many failed. Physical, emotional, and/or medical

88 Pratt., p. 150.
89 Ibid.
problems caused most of the failures. They had probably been urged back to work by some well meaning but ill advised friend or relative who considered them lazy or shiftless, or by their own desire not to remain idle.

Going back to work in civilian life presented quite a new and different experience to the POW. While in military service and in prison, he was working far away from home, family and friends. He had no freedom, no privacy, and usually worked under the threat of danger. Many POWs relished the opportunity to return to civilian work again so they could complain about their jobs without fear of being courtmartialed. They sometimes put this freedom to the test as soon as they got home and got into trouble. Most POWs got over these early job difficulties with time and special handling. One type, however, the psychopathic personality never got over his difficulties. He probably had been a potential trouble-maker long before he entered the service. After hiring one of this type of POW, an employer was usually reluctant to hire any more POWs. 90

The handicapped POW had special difficulties to overcome. Not only did he have the usual problems faced by all the other repatriates, but he also had the special problems presented by his injury. Whether he was able to compensate for his disability depended on his personality and the handicap. The best formula for his recovery was the combined efforts of the repatriate himself, the community, and industry in dealing with him not as a cripple but as a human being who was crippled. Consideration had to be given to what the repatriate could do, not what he was unable to do. The handicapped POW had to be taught a skill to become an active member of the community. If the prisoner could not be rehabilitated from

90 op. cit.
his war wound, he had to be given pensions that could sustain him. 91

A POW's handicap was not always physical, but may have been emotional. Such a problem was usually caused by the POW's inability to meet some demand that was placed on him or to satisfy his own internal needs. Such a person did not really understand his own problems but he did know that something was not right. An impairment like this was not always detectable and there was no way for the prisoner to evaluate an emotional problem like he did a physical ailment. 92

The physical and mental traits that could best determine whether a POW was suitable for employment were: his school record, his previous work record, his military achievements, how long it took him to begin seeking work, his self esteem, what he thought of his employer, and the severity of his disability. His savings record, marital status and attitude toward his dependents gave evidence to the degree of the POW's maturity. His plans for the future, and his reliability as evidenced by his ability to stick to a job or whatever he was doing after his return were also evidence of this. 93

It was the responsibility of American industry in aiding the recovery of POWs to provide them with the technical training to equip them with the necessary skills and work habits to return to work. Industry had to analyze the kind of jobs it would require in the future in order to retrain people. Each job also had to be analyzed individually to determine its physical, mental, and emotional requirements. All of this had to be done to place the right man in the right job. After the POW had acquired a job, a follow-up study was necessary to determine if the

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91 Ibid.
92 Ibid.
93 Ibid.
POW had been suitably placed. In summary, the problem of job placement required careful consideration of the POW as an individual, both his assets and defects, as well as a job analysis, a job placement study, and a follow-up job placement study if necessary.94

Community agencies did much to help the POWs make the necessary and often difficult transition to civilian life. Where there were no special social agencies for the POWs, as in small towns, for example, schools, churches, civic organizations, and town or village centers could and did provide necessary services. So did informal committees of the YMCA and YWCA, local Red Cross chapters, the United States Employment Service, and various Catholic agencies.95

These different agencies, in their competition to help the POWs, had to be careful not to confuse the returnees so that they did not know where to go for help. Care also had to be taken when creating such agencies because many times the services of governmental and other agencies were ignored or duplicated. Publicizing the POWs' problems and the services of these agencies often created these problems. All publicity resources had to be used, though, because the job of helping the POWs was so immense. If communities coordinated their efforts on an area wide basis, these problems were usually eliminated.96

The job of informing the public on how to properly treat the recent POW was the most important task faced by those people who were interested in helping him readjust to civilian life. Civilians in certain communities got a false impression of the prevalence of particular problems because of

94 Ibid.
95 Pratt, pp. 221-231.
96 Ibid.
the improper way in which things were publicized. They often assumed that all repatriates had problems when, in fact, many did not. They needed to be informed that most prisoners did not need special assistance to solve their problems, but that if they did, there was much the people could do to help them.

There were countless ways to educate the public in this light. Discussion groups were held among community health and social workers concerning the feelings and needs of the POWs. Courses were offered for employers of the repatriates and there were organizations for women (who were the usual companions for these men after their return) on how to conduct themselves and make the repatriates feel secure. Short stories in magazines, authoritative articles by psychiatrists and others in national magazines, radio soap operas, and assistance through women's clubs, churches, and servicemen's organizations all helped to educate the public about POW problems. 97
Chapter VIII

Conclusion

The readjustment problems that were encountered by the prisoners-of-war were undoubtedly caused by their identification problems of which the chief aspect was their defensive isolationism. These problems produced further difficulties for the individual POW in the behavioral category and for the entire POW group in their underlying distrust of the outside world. These also produced confused reactions, paranoid syndromes, and a lack of participation in military and civilian affairs, and were expressed in the POWs as fearful withdrawal and belligerent negation with anti-social overtones. These problems were more marked in the case of the Korean War prisoners than in the case of the prisoners of the Japanese in World War II because of the complex and confusing pressures which the Korean War POWs were subjected.

The prisoner-of-war identification syndrome was exaggerated by the repatriates and used as a rationalization for all the adjustment problems the men faced. If a POW could not identify with his community, he fell back and identified with his prisoner-of-war group and showed more interest and enthusiasm for meetings and reunions with them than his occupational or social interests.

The two mistakes that have been made in this country concerning the POWs and their subsequent readjustment are: that nothing meaningful could be done to help them readjust, and since some repatriates had successfully readjusted, nothing further needed to be done for them. The psychological
effects of imprisonment were very damaging. They could be handled by qualified people and successful readjustments could be made back into civilian life.

Readjustment was not accomplished without many heartaches, and even today, some POWs remain emotionally and physically crippled by their experiences. Perhaps they will never completely recover, but a genuine understanding by the family and friends of the prisoner was invaluable in hastening the readjustment process and sometimes averting chronic invalidism.

There were few places the concerned loved ones of the repatriate could turn to for help in those days. There were few books on the subject and they tended to be too general. They had to be because no single work could possibly cover all the problems that arose. If the POW's problem stemmed from a definite psychiatric disability, the Red Cross or Veteran's Administration or one of the local psychiatric or mental hygiene clinics usually provided the only possible source of help. The local Family Welfare Society or Family Service Societies (both of which were privately funded and professionally staffed and affiliated with the Family Welfare Association of America) provided some help for the problems that affected family relationships that were not psychiatric in nature. There were other social agencies besides the Family Societies in many communities which were equally willing and able to help the repatriates and their families to readjust.

Help for the individual POW, however, began by a realization that each man was distinct and had reacted differently to his military and prison experiences, based largely upon his emotional maturity before the war. His treatment, therefore, usually began with a psychiatrist or
social worker compiling a case history which included many of the experiences of his early life.

The most important objective of the person who wanted to help the POW to readjust was to secure the best possible understanding of his complex problems. This helped to create the intelligent and sympathetic atmosphere the returning POW needed in his first difficult months at home.

What was really required was the use of common sense and patience. Those with exaggerated sentimentality quickly lost interest in the prisoners. It had to be realized that the aftermath of a war such as Korea or World War II was just as important as the war itself and that the well being of the returning POWs was of no less importance than that of the soldier who was entering combat for the first time.

Many people in America contributed their valuable time and effort to community projects for aiding the returned prisoners of World War II and Korea. It took cooperative planning to solve the readjustment problems of the POWs, and these problems were among the most difficult that this country had ever faced.
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