



Written by **John F. McManus**

Reprinted with permission from The Birch Log, August 13, 1981

MIAs and Reparations

Belmont, Massachusetts — Last May, Vietnamese officials claimed to have just discovered the remains of three American airmen missing since the Vietnam War. The first such remains reported since 1978, these bring to only 74 the number of missing Americans whose skeletons have been returned since the fighting ceased in 1973. There are, however, over 2500 Americans still listed as Missing In Action (MIA) after service in Southeast Asia. There is good evidence to believe that some may yet be alive.

It was July 7th before a team of Americans was permitted by Hanoi to collect what was left of the three bodies. Two weeks later, the Pentagon positively identified the remains as those of Navy Commander Ronald Dodge, Air Force Captain Richard Van Dyke, and Navy Lieutenant Stephen Musselman.

Commander Ron Dodge

The case of Commander Dodge is particularly infuriating. Shot down over North Vietnam in May 1967, he was observed on the ground by American pilots in the air who maintained radio contact with him until he was captured. In September 1967, the French magazine *Paris Match* featured his picture on its cover. Though bandaged, he was well enough to be walking. The East Germans later showed him in an anti-American propaganda film.

There was no doubt that the Hanoi government knew who Ron Dodge was. Of the 2500 we left behind, he was one of 179 men about whom our government could produce undeniable evidence of survival in captivity. Yet, for the eight years of negotiating supposedly in good faith for the return of our MIAs, Hanoi has provided next to no information whatsoever. Meanwhile, reports about live Americans in captivity still come out of Asia.

They Want Reparations

Vu Hoang, the Vietnamese official in charge of locating American remains, recently re-confirmed one of the reasons why his government has been so uncooperative. In an interview published by UPI on May 30th, Hoang complained about Washington's refusal to aid the post-war reconstruction of Vietnam. He insisted that Vietnam's scarce resources could not be diverted to searching for missing Americans. That long-standing attitude appears to be only a partial explanation for the barbarous conduct of the Communist regime.

Hanoi certainly kept records about captured Americans. They used prisoners for propaganda purposes. But, after the French-Vietnamese hostilities ended in 1954, the Reds began the vile practice of charging increasingly higher fees for disinterring and returning the bodies of fallen Frenchmen. The return of the remains of Dodge, Van Dyke and Musselman may be a signal for us



to begin paying the same kind of ghoulish ransom.

No “Body Blackmail”

Mrs. Mary E. Foley is the wife of Air Force Colonel Brendan Foley, listed as missing since November 1967. In testimony before a Congressional Subcommittee investigating the cause of MIAs during 1977, she bravely stated that instead of aid and trade, “we should offer them a locksmith to open up the file cabinets that hold the information that we seek.” She called Vietnam’s refusal to cooperate “body blackmail.” Her greatest fears about her husband may yet be realized.

Vietnam has already received considerable aid from this country through such agencies as the World Bank. Secretary of the Treasury Donald Regan wants a dramatic increase in our contribution to this agency. Doing so will guarantee that American dollars end up in places like Hanoi. Aid of any kind to Vietnam—be it reparations, ransom, or anything—dishonors our dead and missing, and serves to assure that their families must continue to wait and wonder.