WHAT OTHER CONCLUSION WOULD YOU COME TO?

I have known Senator John McCain for 33 years. I have known Senator John Kerry for the same length of time. Sen. McCain I met in person, in a prisoner of war camp. In the Spring of 1971, Senator McCain and I were in a camp the Communists told us was a punishment camp in which we had been placed because we were "reactionaries" with "bad attitudes." In the same camp, I came to know about Senator Kerry, but only by reputation.

In the 2000 presidential election I supported John McCain because, from my personal knowledge of him gained in that camp, I knew that he was fit to serve as President. In the 2004 presidential election, again based upon my knowledge gained in that camp, I oppose the election of John Kerry because I believe that he is unfit to serve as President.

In November of 1970 U.S. forces staged a commando raid on the prisoner of war camp at Son Tay, in North Viet-Nam, only 20 miles from downtown Hanoi. The North Vietnamese, in panic, began shutting down the outlying prison camps and moving American prisoners to the most secure location available the infamous Hoa Lo prison in Hanoi, the prison we called "the Hanoi Hilton." There, with all 348 of the prisoners captured in the North together in one place, the Communists attempted to impose order.

Their attempts were resisted. By January 1971, an attempt by the Communists to forbid religious services in our cells led to a series of confrontations known by some as "the Church Riots." Finally, on March 19, in order to put a lid on things before they got out of hand, the Communists took 36 men whom they identified as the ring leaders to a small camp a few miles south of Hanoi. Somehow, I was included in that number.

In this camp, which we called "Skid Row," the Communists appeared to have dispensed with the periodic interrogations which we referred to as "attitude checks." The "attitude check" needs to be explained. Throughout our imprisonment, we were constantly interrogated by political officers, a position which has no counterpart in the armed forces of non-communist countries. It is a central belief of Marxism-Leninism that our beliefs are the product of "objective material conditions." If one is not a Marxist, it was only because he has not yet been exposed to Marxist doctrine under the appropriate material circumstances. Thus, Communist armies travel everywhere with a baggage train of socialist missionaries eager to make converts.

Every prisoner of war camp in North Vietnam had at least one political officer, as well as some junior officers who assisted the political officer. It was their task to show us that we were wrong to oppose the spread of communism. I am sure that in the early years, they were confident that they were on the verge of a big break through, that just a few more interrogations would bring us to see the light. Eventually, they had to face the fact that it wasn't working. In reality, it was the very structure of Marxist dogma that doomed the project before it was started.

Marxism is based upon economic beliefs that are, simply put, demonstrably wrong. Since it calls for behavior that is contrary to human nature, Marxists understand that they cannot create the society they claim to believe in without changing human nature, or, as they put it, "creating the new, Socialist, man." That is the job of the political officer, the socialist missionary. Unfortunately for the missionary, the new socialist man cannot be created if he is deceived by knowledge that is contrary to Marxism. A person who lives under Marxism will not hear opposing ideas debated.

Thus, the political officer, appointed to teach in the Socialist version of Sunday School, has no capacity at all to defend the ideas he is selling. Since they did not know how to argue, we would try to confound them during these interrogations. I am certain that the record of our years of "attitude checks," in which we frustrated and taunted the political officer, had as much to do with our being chosen for the "punishment camp" as did our participation in the Church Riots.

All torture was preceded, and usually accompanied, by an interrogation. Any interrogation created anxiety, even if you could be reasonably certain that it would not end in torture. Thus, we were relieved when it seemed that our anti-Communist "bad attitudes" had earned us a reprieve from the cycle of interrogations.

The reprieve did not last. In late May 1971, two months after our arrival in the punishment camp, I was called out for interrogation. I entered the interrogation room to find a junior officer, a Communist's helper, whom we called "Boris." For some time, Boris rambled on about the anti-war movement and of my "crimes." Usually, we would try to entertain ourselves in an interrogation by leading the interrogator along until he commits himself to a point which, if examined, is contrary to the party line, then show this to him. This involved considerable risk while there was still the actual threat of torture, but in the long run we thought that our cause would best be served by letting them see that we were not changing, that we remained "reactionaries."

The thinking was, that any slight inclination toward the Marxist view would be seized upon by the political officer, who would then put unrelenting pressure upon you to go further. Besides, we were still at war, and we could still contribute something by letting the enemy know that he might be wrong. In fact, just presenting him with such an idea could torment him when he knew that the idea appeared to be true, but was the opposite of what the party taught him.

We sparred for about an hour. Then Boris reached behind his back and pulled out some clippings from a left wing newspaper in the U.S. He showed me several articles about an event, which had been held in Detroit, called "The Winter Soldier Hearings." He left me to read the articles while he left the room. The articles reported alleged "testimony" from people who claimed to be Vietnam veterans who allegedly claimed that they had done things which, if true, would have lead to courts martial for each of them. That is, they were typical communist propaganda.

Suddenly, I read an article about my mother testifying. Unlike the leftists, she did not condemn the U.S., she merely stated that she hoped the war would end soon and I would be released. The next

article mentioned testimony from my father. His was like my mother's testimony, merely expressing hope that the war would end soon and that all who suffered from war would find relief. Nothing they said fit with the virulent anti-American sentiments that the leftists had expressed. But having their testimony included in with the "testimony" of those who claimed to be veterans, and the left wing activists present, seemed to give a dignity to the whole proceeding that it did not merit.

When Boris returned he asked me what I thought. I told him that I was from Detroit, but did not recognize any of the names so I assumed that they were Communists brought in from around the country. "Not so," he cried. Look at this. He showed me a picture of an unforgettable face. "This man was an officer in your navy. He says that the war is illegal, immoral and unjust. Read what he says." I read the words of John Kerry.

What John Kerry said, according to the clippings, was that the U.S. should abandon South East Asia, unilaterally and immediately. This, of course, would not only leave the Prisoners of War in the hands of the Communists, but far worse, there was not a sane person in the universe who did not know that the instant the countries of South East Asia were abandoned, the blood bath would begin. I told Boris "this man should be punished. He says that he did criminal things. America is a free country and a free people do not allow such crimes. We are not like Communists." I told Boris that there would be a blood bath if we pulled out unilaterally.

Boris got angry and began threatening me. He said that my own countrymen, Jane Fonda, Sen. Fulbright, and the subject of the article, John Kerry, insisted that the threatened "blood bath" was a myth invented by the reactionary government of the United States. He told me that Kerry had admitted that we were criminals, as the communists never ceased to tell us, and that we should be punished. The interrogation continued for another hour. Finally, Boris, frustrated, put me back in my cell, while still muttering threats at me. It was the longest interrogation I had without torture.

When John Kerry said that Vietnam vets were criminals, did he not know that the Communists would use his words against the POWs? He feels insulted when someone questions his patriotism. *What other conclusion would you come to*, if you were in my shoes?

Anti-Communists predicted a blood bath if the Communists took over Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam. The left, including Jane Fonda and John Kerry, told us that this was a myth. Which one proved to be true? When liberals in the United States Congress voted to withdraw all material support to the free people of South East Asia, did innocent people die?

Up until the moment that John Kerry embraced the anti-war movement -- which in my situation, what else could I believe other than that this meant embracing the cause of the Communists -- the evidence against Communism was overwhelming. In the attempt to build the "new socialist man" millions of innocents were willfully slaughtered, and millions more lived squalid and hopeless lives, impoverished by economic policies that a freshman economics student could tell you would not work. If John Kerry did not embrace this, if he did not embrace what the liberals in Congress did in

1975, then what the hell was he embracing?

Given the evidence that John Kerry has presented to us, his own words, his own actions, I am forced to one of two conclusions. Either John Kerry's patriotism is questionable, or his judgment is questionable. Without deciding which is true, I can say that I personally believe that in neither case is he qualified to be President.