

Racist Red Cross

Hugo Hill

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SAIGON (LNS)—Have you ever wondered why the North Vietnamese government doesn't permit the International Red Cross to inspect its prison camps?

The official reason is that there is no declared war in Vietnam and that captured American pilots, therefore, are not prisoners-of-war (POWs), but criminals under the jurisdiction of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.

That's not a bad reason, but there's a better one.

It was unwittingly provided me by Christian Hauser, head of the International Red Cross delegation in South Vietnam. Mr. Hauser, a Swiss, convinced me that the International Red Cross is not the neutral body that it claims to be, but is rather a stronghold of white racism.

Being already familiar with the torture routinely inflicted on captured Liberation soldiers (NLF) in the south, I went to see Mr. Hauser in order to learn the Red Cross position.

"I have never heard a reliable report of torture," said Hauser, who has been here for 15 months.

"Really?" I exclaimed.

"Well, let's say it's very rare," he replied thoughtfully.

"You've surely seen the handcuffed prisoners displayed in the streets," I continued. "Has the Red Cross protested that?"

The innocent Swiss: "I've never seen such a thing."

(I have seen it at least half a dozen times, without ever looking for it.)

"In general," I inquired, "how would you characterize the treatment of POWs by the Saigon government?"

Hauser thought about it for a minute, and then replied; "I think it is as good as you can expect from Asiatics."

"Does it meet the standards of the 1949 Geneva Convention?" I asked.

Hauser leaned across his desk and explained solemnly, "You have to remember that the Geneva Convention was written by white people—white people who had little experience with Negroes and yellows. Rules for white people are one thing; we're civilized. But in these countries things are different. Asiatics have a different attitude toward suffering and death."

Hauser speaks for the International Red Cross here. If he says everything is all right, then, officially, everything is all right. Any ex-prisoner can give a vivid account of torture, but Hauser, who doesn't speak Vietnamese anyway, would not be likely to take the word of an "Asiatic."

The Red Cross chief believes that white people are more civilized than "Negroes and yellows," the evidence of napalm, defoliation and B-52s notwithstanding.

Why then should the independent North Vietnamese government (yellow) let the International Red Cross judge its treatment of American pilots (white)?



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