

GUILTY AS CHARGED

The Vietnam portion of Hanoi Jane's autobiography is a tissue of lies.

Introduction

For three decades Jane Fonda obfuscated, distorted and lied about virtually everything connected with her wartime trip to North Vietnam: her motive, her acts, her intent, and her contribution to the Communists' war effort. With the aid of clever handlers, she so successfully suppressed and spun her conduct in Hanoi that many Americans didn't know what she had done there, and, more important, the legal significance.

Three years ago, our book, *"Aid and Comfort": Jane Fonda in North Vietnam* (McFarland & Co.), laid bare the incontrovertible facts, applied to them the American law of treason—and proved, beyond a reasonable doubt, that Jane Fonda was indictable and convictable for treason.

Now, with the recent publication of Fonda's autobiography—which does not contain a single cited source to support any claim she makes, or any quotation she uses—the woman justly dubbed "Hanoi Jane" makes statements and provides details that inadvertently lend support to every key allegation we leveled against her.

Especially noteworthy is that in her book—which spans nearly seventy years of Fonda's life—she devotes only a paltry eight per cent to her controversial two-week trip to Communist North Vietnam (chapters "Hanoi," "Bamboo," and "Framed"). Since her conduct in wartime Vietnam continues to inflame people to this day, one might have expected some substance to what she writes about this period in her life. Instead, the American public is served up transparent lies and calculated omissions.

Motive

In *"Aid and Comfort"* we discussed at length the important distinction between "motive" and "intent." In essence, it's the difference between wanting to kill your neighbor because he's been sleeping with your wife (motive), and acting in furtherance of that motive by putting a bullet in his head (intent). Our explanation of the distinction between the two concepts was necessary because one of the elements of the crime of treason is an intent to betray the United States. We wanted to make it clear that, whatever motivated Fonda to make the trip to Hanoi, it was irrelevant to whether a jury could have found she had the requisite intent.

Still, we wondered why an American citizen would have traveled to the capital of a ruthless enemy of the United States who was torturing American prisoners of war and

killing our fighting men. Accordingly, we raised the question and explored some answers:

Why did Jane Fonda travel to Hanoi during her country's war with North Vietnam? While no one can know for certain—perhaps not even Fonda herself, because of the complex psychological drives at work within her—and while motive (as distinguished from intent) is not a defense to the crime of treason, still, it is useful to consider why Fonda acted as she did in Hanoi. That consideration is rooted in an examination of Fonda's background, in which much can be found to explain her radicalization and her later propaganda broadcasts and other pro-Communist, anti-American conduct. Based on that background, we offer an opinion: Jane Fonda's desperate psychological need to overcome early parental rejection, to acquire a sense of identity and self esteem, and to fill her empty value system, caused her, first, to become an antiwar militant, and then to journey to wartime North Vietnam.

How right we were.

In a mere two sentences, on page 290 of her book, Fonda gives her reason for going to North Vietnam: "Heightened public attention—even if it took controversy to achieve it—was what was needed to confront the impending crisis with [threatened American bombing] of the [North Vietnamese] dikes. I would take a camera and bring back photographic evidence (if such was to be found) of the bomb damage to the dikes we'd been hearing about."

Fonda wants us to believe that at the time there was no "heightened public attention," no "controversy" about bombing the dikes; that no one else in the international antiwar, anti-American, pro-Communist movement was "confront[ing] the impending crisis"; that the North Vietnamese were not doing all they could to prevent destruction of their dikes—but that somehow an actress with a "small 8-millimeter film camera" and a "still camera" could, in her autobiography's oft-repeated mantra, "make it better."

Fonda's rationale is also belied by the preceding 289 pages in which she repeatedly confesses that she "would become whatever I felt the people whose love and attention I needed wanted me to be"; that she had "a lifelong feeling of not being good enough"; that she believed herself to be "weak and worthless;" that "it was always men I was concerned about pleasing."

The man she was intent upon pleasing then was antiwar activist Tom Hayden. "Tom felt strongly that I should go," she writes. "Perhaps it would take a different sort of celebrity to get people's attention."

So actress Jane Fonda, thus encouraged by her antiwar-activist husband-to-be, Tom Hayden, and wearing the proud mantle of a "different sort of celebrity," journeyed to the belly of the Communist beast, where she gave it sustenance in the form of propaganda—sustenance that our American prisoners of war refused to give their

Communist captors even at the price of physical and mental torture and, in some cases, death.

Propaganda

The use of propaganda was an integral strategy of the North Vietnamese Communists. They used it to rally their own citizens. They used it to undermine successive governments in the South, to strengthen Hanoi's ties to China, to the Soviet Union, and to other communist regimes. They used it to shake morale in American and allied forces and to enlist sympathy and aid from non-Communist countries around the world. Indeed, as we wrote in "*Aid and Comfort*":

[D]espite the "public relations" risk of torturing American prisoners of war, the North Vietnamese chanced it because of the high value they placed on propaganda." (More about Hanoi's torture of American prisoners of war below).

In the fifty or so pages Fonda devotes to her trip to Hanoi, not once does she acknowledge that the Communists were using her for propaganda, even though upon arriving there, it supposedly had just occurred to her to "wonder whether this is a group of seasoned cadres whose job it is to manipulate me."

At the very least, Fonda was a willing accomplice to such manipulation. She would participate in multiple photo-ops, press conferences, official meetings, guided tours and radio broadcasts. She would satisfy the Communist propagandists beyond their wildest dreams.

But it was her Radio Hanoi broadcasts and her meeting with seven American POWs that most profited the North Vietnamese regime. Fonda made about eight broadcasts, some live, some taped. She would have us believe that not until several days after her arrival in Hanoi—and then only as a result of what she had seen on the ground—did the idea of radio broadcasts arise. She claims the broadcasts were solely her idea:

As we step from the Viet Duc hospital into the sunlight, I have made up my mind. "I want to speak on your radio," I say to my hosts. "I want to try to tell U.S. pilots what I am seeing here on the ground." * * * I must try to make what I am seeing as personal an experience for them as it is for the soldiers on the ground in South Vietnam. I have come to bear witness, and while I have not planned this, I feel it as a moral imperative.

Lies and Omissions

The Broadcasts: speaking
“extemporaneously” from Hanoi

“Aside from a few notes I have scribbled to myself,” Fonda writes in her autobiography, “I speak extemporaneously, from my heart, about what I have witnessed and how it made me feel.”

This claim, as we show in “*Aid and Comfort*,” is ludicrous:

Consider some of the statements made by this young actress who lacked political sophistication, who was ignorant of history, who had an almost non-existent knowledge of international affairs, and who probably had never before written anything more complicated than a check: “neocolonialism,” the 1954 Geneva Accords, what constituted a military target, different types of aircraft and ordnance, the “Anglico” reference, and more. It is obvious that in Hanoi, Jane Fonda was acting as a willing tool of the Communists, to a considerable extent simply reading “canned” material created by professional Communist propagandists (albeit with perhaps an occasional ad-lib). Indeed, some of the words and syntax are those of a person or persons for whom English was not a first language, and it is doubtful that the political language came from Fonda herself.

Fonda’s alleged pilot
and ground-troop audience

Fonda also lies about *why* she made the propaganda broadcasts.

If, as she claims in her autobiography, the purpose of her broadcasts was to apprise pilots and ground troops of what our bombing was doing to the North, why did she broadcast the following statements (among others like them)?

- The Vietnamese people were peasants—leading a peaceful, bucolic life before the Americans came to destroy Vietnam.
- The Vietnamese seek only “freedom and independence”—which the United States wants to prevent them from having.
- The Vietnamese fighters are her “friends.”
- The million infantry troops which the United States put into Vietnam, and the Vietnamization program, have failed.
- The United States seeks to turn Vietnam into a “neocolony.”

- Patrick Henry’s slogan “liberty or death” was not very different from Ho Chi Minh’s “Nothing is more valuable than independence and freedom.”
- Nixon violated the 1954 Geneva Accords.
- Vietnam is “one nation, one country.”
- The Communists’ proposal for ending the war is “fair, sensible, reasonable and humanitarian.”
- The United States must get out of South Vietnam and “cease its support for the . . . Thieu regime.”
- “I want to publicly accuse Nixon here of being a new-type Hitler whose crimes are being unveiled.”
- “The Vietnamese people will win.”
- “Nixon is continuing to risk your [American pilots’] lives and the lives of the American prisoners of war . . . in a last desperate gamble to keep his office come November. How does it feel to be used as pawns? You may be shot down, you may perhaps even be killed, but for what, and for whom?”
- Nixon “defiles our flag and all that it stands for in the eyes of the entire world.”
- “Knowing who was doing the lying, should you then allow these same people and some liars to define for you who your enemy is?”
- American troops are fighting for ESSO, Shell and Coca-Cola.
- “Should we be fighting on the side of the people who are, who are murdering innocent people, should we be trying to defend a government in Saigon which is putting in jail tens of thousands of people into the tiger cages, beating them, torturing them And I don’t think . . . that we should be risking our lives or fighting to defend that kind of government.”
- “We . . . have a common enemy—U. S. imperialism.”
- “We thank you [the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese] for your brave and heroic fight.”

- “Nixon’s aggression against Vietnam is a racist aggression [and] the American war in Vietnam is a racist war, a white man’s war.”
- Soldiers of the South Vietnamese army “are being sent to fight a war that is not in your interests but is in the interests of the small handful of people who have gotten rich and hope to get richer off this war and the turning of your country into a neocolony of the United States.”
- “The only way to end the war is for the United States to withdraw all its troops, all its airplanes, its bombs, its generals, its CIA advisors and to stop the support of the . . . regime in Saigon”
- “There is only one way to stop Richard Nixon from committing mass genocide in the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, and that is for a mass protest . . . to expose his crimes”
- “In 1969—1970 the desertions in the American army tripled. The desertions of the U.S. soldiers almost equaled the desertions from the ARVN army”
- American soldiers in Vietnam discovered “that their officers were incompetent, usually drunk”
- “Perhaps the soldiers . . . who have suffered the most . . . [are] the black soldiers, the brown soldiers, and the red and Asian soldiers.”
- Recently I talked to “a great many of these guys and they all expressed their recognition of the fact that this is a white man’s war, a white businessman’s war, that they don’t feel it’s their place to kill other people of color when at home they themselves are oppressed and prevented from determining their own lives.”
- “I heard horrifying stories about the treatment of women in the U.S. military. So many women said to me that one of the first things that happens to them when they enter the service is that they are taken to see the company psychiatrist and they are given a little lecture which is made very clear to them that they are there to service the men.”

Whoever scripted this blatant anti-American, pro-Communist propaganda, one thing is certain: it had nothing to do with apprising pilots and ground troops of the consequences of American bombing in North Vietnam. Fonda’s transparently crude attempts to undermine our war efforts in Vietnam could have had only one purpose: to provide aid and comfort to our enemy.

Encouraging mutiny and desertion:
“ . . . something I did not do.”

Fonda's denial of having encouraged mutiny and desertion is a lie.

Doubtless because the accusation has dogged her for over three decades (we made the same charge in "*Aid and Comfort*"), Fonda found it necessary to disabuse her readers by tossing in a single throwaway sentence: "[S]ome will later accuse me of treason for urging soldiers to desert—something I did not do."

Here is Fonda speaking live over Radio Hanoi, and on tape, virtually inviting South Vietnamese soldiers (and, by implication, American troops) to desert:

We read with interest about the growing numbers of you [South Vietnam Army troops] who are understanding the truth and joining with your fellow countrymen to fight for freedom and independence and democracy [i.e., with the Communists]. We note with interest, for example, that as in the case of the 56th Regiment of the 3d Division of the Saigon Army, ARVN soldiers are taken into the ranks of the National Liberation Front [the Viet Cong], including officers who may retain their rank. We think that this is an example of the fact that the democratic, peace-loving, patriotic Vietnamese people want to *embrace* all Vietnamese people in forgiveness, *open their arms* to all people who are willing to fight against the foreign intruder. [Emphasis ours]

How can the Communists "embrace" and "open their arms" to South Vietnamese and American troops unless they desert?

As to encouraging "mutiny"—a word never mentioned, a subject not even addressed, in Fonda's autobiography—Fonda's Radio Hanoi broadcasts, unlike her veiled nuances devoted to desertion, are not so subtle: "[Although] we do not condone the killing of American officers . . . we do support the soldiers who are beginning to think for themselves."

Which soldiers were those? Beginning to think about what? The juxtaposition of these two thoughts—killing officers and thinking for themselves—can have no meaning other than applauding, even encouraging, the "fragging" (murder by hand grenade) of officers by enlisted men.

"I...wanted to...stop the killing."

Fonda is insistent in her autobiography about having gone to wartime North Vietnam only because she wanted to help stop the killing and end the war.

Another lie. Worse than a lie—a perverse irony. By providing the North Vietnamese Communists with an abundance of timely anti-American, pro-Communist propaganda, *Fonda's trip actually lengthened the war* and, concomitantly, increased the deaths and casualties on both sides.

Fonda, herself, along with Hayden and their acolytes, have for years taken credit for restraining the Nixon Administration from destroying the dikes—an action which, by all accounts, would have shortened the war and perhaps even ended it, reducing at least one year’s casualties.

That Fonda’s propaganda efforts played an important role in prolonging the war and increasing the death toll is attested to by North Vietnamese Colonel Bui Tin. In a postwar interview with *The Wall Street Journal* reproduced at length in “*Aid and Comfort*,” the Colonel, a dedicated Communist cadre for most of his life, friend to high-ranking North Vietnamese civilian and military personnel, and one of the first officers of their army to enter Saigon on the day it fell, had this to say:

Wall Street Journal: Was the American antiwar movement important to Hanoi’s victory?

Bui Tin: It was essential to our strategy. Support for the war from our rear [China] was completely secure while the American rear was vulnerable. Every day our leadership would listen to world news over the radio at 9 a.m. to follow the growth of the American antiwar movement. Visits to Hanoi by people like Jane Fonda . . . gave us confidence that *we should hold on in the face of battlefield reverses*.
(Emphasis ours)

The identical point was made by North Vietnamese Defense Minister General Vo Nguyen Giap, the architect of France’s defeat at Dien Bien Phu. This was the man most responsible for the Communists’ military strategy in their war with the United States.

Stop the killing? End the war? Jane Fonda’s treason unquestionably prolonged both. What she “ended” were the lives of countless Americans, as well as the Vietnamese for whom she purported to have such sympathy.

Most chilling of all, perhaps, is that the consequences of Fonda’s actions did not begin and end with Vietnam. In facilitating a Communist victory in Vietnam, Jane Fonda, self-described woman of conscience, contributed to the genocidal bloodbath that would soon follow in Cambodia.

American POWs:
“healthy and repentant”

In writing “*Aid and Comfort*,” and now this rebuttal to the Vietnam section of Fonda’s autobiography, we have often attempted—without success—to rank her treasonous acts from bad to worse; everything she did in Hanoi, and immediately thereafter, was reprehensible.

But among the worst lies she told while in North Vietnam concerned her deliberate exploitation of American prisoners of war.

It is no surprise that in her autobiography (which doesn't contain a single index reference to "prisoner of war" or "POW"), Fonda devotes little more than one page to her widely publicized meeting with seven American POWs—a significant omission.

Which is why the subject merits our special attention.

Here is the essence of what Fonda has written:

- "The POWs appear to be healthy and fit."
- "All of them have called publicly for an end to the war and signed a powerful antiwar letter"
- "A few of them tell me they, too, are against the war and want Nixon to be defeated in the upcoming elections. They express their fear that if he is reelected, the war will go on and on . . . and that bombs might land on their prison."
- "I am asked to convey their hopes that their families will vote for George McGovern."
- "I ask them if they feel they have been brainwashed or tortured, and they laugh."

This meeting was so palpably a charade that even Fonda, after noting the presence of at least one guard, "realize[d] that the men could have been lying to protect themselves, but I certainly see no signs in any of the seven that they have been tortured, *at least not recently.*" (Emphasis ours).

Here is what really happened that day in Hanoi, as related in "*Aid and Comfort*" [our footnotes appear in brackets]:

"At least three POWs were unwillingly made to meet with Fonda. One prisoner didn't even know where he was being taken:"

I was informed . . . to get ready to leave. We were put on a bus, blindfolded and driven away. Others were loaded on the bus at another stop and the bus left again. We were unloaded, lined up and had the blindfolds removed. We were then taken into a room and seated. The next thing that occurred was the appearance of Hanoi Jane and she began to speak. [Email in possession of authors]

Fonda . . . was doing a script, at one point she got lost in what she was saying, went back and used *exactly* the same words again for about two sentences to get back on track. I never got a chance (nor did I want to) say anything, it was a listen and be on display thing . . . anything else would have brought on problems. [“Problems” was a euphemism. Lack of cooperation at this show interview would have resulted in more torture. The source of the former POW’s quotation is an email in possession of authors] [Emphasis in original]

What was Fonda’s “script”—conveniently omitted in her nearly 600-page autobiography? While pointing at a chart,

. . . Jane Fonda’s theme was that we [the United States] were committing genocide on the Vietnamese people. She also asserted that we were bombing the dikes which was against the rules of war. [Email (from one of the POWs) in possession of authors]

Fonda was quick to lie about her meeting with the Hanoi Hilton POWs, even as she continued to parrot the North Vietnamese propaganda lines being fed to her:

This is Jane Fonda speaking from Hanoi. Yesterday evening . . . I had the opportunity of meeting seven U.S. pilots. Some of them were shot down as long ago as 1968 and some of them had been shot down very recently. They are all in good health. We had a very long talk, a very open and casual talk. We exchanged ideas freely. They asked me to bring back to the American people their sense of disgust of the war and their shame for what they have been asked to do.

They told me that the pilots believe they are bombing military targets. They told me that the pilots are told that they are bombing to free their buddies down below, but, of course, we all know that every bomb that falls on North Vietnam endangers the lives of the American prisoners.

They asked me: What can you do? They asked me to bring messages back to their loved ones and friends, telling them to please be as actively involved in the peace movement as possible, to renew their efforts to end the war.

One of the men who has been in the service for many, many years has written a book about Vietnamese history, and I thought that this was very moving, that during the time he’s been here, and the time that he has had to reflect on what he has been through and what he has done to this country, he has—his thought has turned to this country, its history of struggle and the people that live here.

They all assured me that they have been well cared for. They—they

listen to the radio. They receive letters. They are in good health. They asked about news from home.

I think we all shared during the time I spent with them a sense of—of deep sadness that a situation like this has to exist, and I certainly felt from them a very sincere desire to explain to the American people that this was a terrible crime and that it must be stopped, and that Richard Nixon is doing nothing except escalating it while preaching peace, endangering their lives while saying he cares about the prisoners.

And I think that one of the things that touched me the most was that one of the pilots said to me that he was reading a book called “The Draft,” a book written by the American Friends Service Committee [Quakers], and that in reading this book, he had understood a lot about what had happened to him as a human being in his 16 years of military service. He said that during those 16 years, he had stopped relating to civilian life, he had forgotten that there was anything else besides the military and he said in realizing what had happened to him, he was very afraid that this was happening to many other people.

I was very encouraged by my meeting with the pilots [because] I feel that the studying and the reading that they have been doing during their time here has taught them a great deal in putting the pieces of their lives back together again in a better way, hopefully, and I am sure that when—when they go home, they will go home better citizens than when they left.
[*Hearing Report*, 7670]

Back in the United States, Fonda telephoned the wife of one of the POWs:

She [Fonda] called me after that meeting to let me know [my husband] was fine. I said I just didn’t see how he could be fine held in prison, kept from his country, his home and his family. She hung up on me. [Email in possession of authors]

Fonda’s live broadcast from Hanoi, directed at American troops (both free and captive) throughout Vietnam, was replete with blatant falsehoods.

- The prisoners were not “all in good health” or “well cared for.” By Fonda’s own admission, one of them had been in captivity since 1967, *when torture was routine*.
- Nor did Fonda have “a very long talk” with the POWs. Again, by her own admission, her diatribe took “twenty minutes or so.” “It was a listen and display thing,” one of the POWs reported later.

- The meeting was not “very open and casual,” and she and the POWs did not “exchange ideas freely”—because, by her own admission, at least one guard was present at all times.
- Each POW did not make antiwar statements and did not attack his Commander-in-Chief (although two may have).

Small wonder that Fonda’s autobiography conveniently skips lightly over her meeting with the seven American POWs, the better to perpetrate lies she had told three decades ago.

“I see no signs...they have been tortured”—“at least not recently.”

Having spent all of a week in Hanoi being chaperoned by Communist functionaries and being shown only what they wanted her to see, after having engaged in a twenty-minute charade in the company of seven American prisoners of war and at least one guard, suddenly Jane Fonda is an expert on torture! While this meeting, and Fonda’s absurd statement above, was post-1969, when admittedly much of the torture had abated, American prisoners of war were *even then* being maltreated, not to mention being denied virtually every protection of the Geneva Convention that Fonda was so fond of invoking on behalf of the enemy.

Chapter Three of “*Aid and Comfort*” spells out the documented maltreatment and brutal torture of our American POWs. Words like “inhumane” and “barbaric” are inadequate to describe what these men endured without surcease—some of them for five or six years. As we were writing that chapter, which details everything from disease, lack of sanitation, near-starvation and withholding of medical treatment to diabolical torture devices *whose primary purpose was to extract propaganda*, we had to take periodic breaks—such was our emotional turmoil.

Here is one POW’s matter-of-fact description:

The techniques varied from the use of the ropes to cuffs of a ratchet type that could be tightened until they penetrated the flesh, sometimes down to the bone; aggravation of injuries . . . such as twisting a broken leg; forcing a man to sit or kneel for long periods of time without food or sleep; beatings with fanbelt-like whips and rifle butts . . . [applying] an assortment of straps, bars, and chains to body pressure points

But Jane Fonda didn’t confine herself to skepticism about our POWs having been tortured. Later, as we wrote in “*Aid and Comfort*,” she went on the attack:

[W]hen the last accounted-for American POW was out of Vietnam, officially April 1, 1973, stories of the brutal treatment to which they had been subjected began to surface. True to form, Fonda castigated them. Hanoi Jane called these

Americans—who had suffered indescribably, and walked into freedom with their heads held high and their wounds, psychological and physical, mostly hidden from public view—“liars, hypocrites, and pawns.” She was livid at the charge that these men had been tortured: “*Tortured men do not march smartly off planes, salute the flag, and kiss their wives. They are liars.* I also want to say that these men are not heroes.” One of the first contingent of POWs said that, indeed, he had not only been tortured, but that the Vietnamese had tortured him—broken his arm—for the specific purpose of forcing him to see her during her visit to North Vietnam. Jane’s response was a shrug: “Nobody’s perfect, not even the Vietnamese.” [Peter Collier, *National Review*, July 17, 2000. This POW’s statement has not been corroborated]. [Emphasis ours]

Fonda’s impugning of POW torture stories persisted: “At home, there were some Americans who refused to believe that POWs were tortured. Others believe that their torture was somehow justified. In 1973, shortly after the American POWs were repatriated, antiwar activist Jane Fonda, after hearing reports, of Americans tortured in the camps in North and South Vietnam, commented to *Newsweek* reporters: ‘There was most probably torture of POW’s [*sic*] guys who misbehaved and treated their guards in a racist fashion or tried to escape were tortured. Some [U.S.] pilots were beaten to death by the people they had bombed when they parachuted from their planes. But to say that torture was systematic and the policy of the North Vietnamese is a lie.’” [Robert C. Doyle, *Voices From Captivity*, 192, citing *Newsweek*, April 16, 1973, 51. See also “Jane Fonda and Tom Hayden— Candid Conversation, “*Playboy* (April 1974): 67].

In the face of the irrefutable evidence that Fonda callously lied about the suffering of America’s POWs, the spin she puts in her autobiography about those lies is obscene. Ignoring most of what is quoted above, she writes only this:

I made a mistake I deeply regret. I said that the POWs claiming torture were liars, hypocrites, and pawns. I said, “I’m quite sure that there were incidents of torture But the pilots who are saying it was the policy of the Vietnamese and that it was systematic, I believe that is a lie.” I firmly believe that the POWs I met with had not been tortured. But what I didn’t know at the time was that prior to 1969 there had in fact been systematic torture of POWs.

Like *Casablanca’s* Captain Renault—a regular “winner” at the roulette table, who was “shocked, shocked” to learn that illegal gambling had been going on at Rick’s Café—Jane Fonda, well-informed antiwar activist, a vocal and dedicated part of the pipeline which channeled domestic Communists and fellow travelers in and out of North Vietnam, supposedly hadn’t the faintest notion, even as late as 1972, that her comrades in Hanoi systematically tortured—as a matter of policy—American prisoners of war.

“I was not interested in military installations.”

In an autobiography replete with lies and omissions, one lie in particular shows contempt for readers who have even the slightest familiarity with Fonda's politics. Nothing has been more emblematic of Jane Fonda's trip to Hanoi—nothing has caused her to be more justly scorned—than the photographs (there are several, taken moments apart) of Fonda sitting atop a 37 mm North Vietnamese antiaircraft gun surrounded by reporters and a gun crew. In the version we used on the cover of "*Aid and Comfort*," Fonda is looking through the gun sight at an imaginary American plane, her face ecstatic, her hands folded almost in prayer. If there was anything about her trip to Hanoi that Fonda needed to lie about, it is this photo op.

So she did. What follows is the spin she puts on it.

She arrives at Hanoi's airport. Her hosts briefly go over the itinerary for her visit. "I noticed that the trip to an antiaircraft installation is still on the agenda for the last day, despite my message [a "pretrip letter"] from Los Angeles saying I was *not* interested in military installations. I tell them that I don't want to keep that visit on the agenda."

Not surprisingly, nowhere in her autobiography does she quote from or disclose the contents of this alleged "pretrip letter." (Interestingly, when her itinerary was published in a Congressional *Hearing Report* [which we reprinted in full in "*Aid and Comfort*"], there was no entry that scheduled a visit to any antiaircraft installation—which gives the lie to her story.)

Even though she claims to have noticed the itinerary item practically from the moment her feet touched the ground, Fonda acquiesced in the AAA visit because "Altering the plans [not scheduled for another two weeks!] appears to cause consternation. Decisions have been made. I am too tired to protest." Still, she decides, "I am going." Lots of Americans, she writes, are taken to military installations; lots of them have to wear helmets.

As she arrives at an antiaircraft gun installation on the outskirts of Hanoi and sees a weapon used to shoot down American aircraft, she purports to be surprised at "a horde of photographers and journalists." The Communist soldiers sing. Fonda's translator translates: "All men are created equal. They are given certain rights; among these are life, liberty and happiness." [We are not making this up.] Fonda is so moved by this musical version of our Declaration of Independence that "I begin to cry and clap. *These young men should not be our enemy. They celebrate the same words Americans do.*" [Emphasis is Fonda's]

One good performance deserves another. The AAA gunners ask Fonda to reciprocate with a song of her own. Somehow Fonda has managed to anticipate this request before leaving the United States. She has memorized *in Vietnamese* an antiwar song written by South Vietnamese antiwar activists. "Everyone laughs and claps, including me," she writes.

The performance is over. “Someone, I don’t remember who, leads me toward the gun, and I sit down, still applauding. It all has nothing to do with *where* I am sitting. I hardly even think about where I am sitting.”

These three sentences are the only explanation in some 600 pages of Fonda’s autobiography of why—allegedly first against her will, and then unthinkingly—she provided the North Vietnamese Communists with a picture worth, not the proverbial thousand words, but rather one that provided an immense propaganda coup for the regime that had been, and was at that moment, maltreating our prisoners of war and killing our troops.

As Fonda walks away, we are asked to believe that the implications of her conduct suddenly dawned on her. She writes, “*Oh my God. It’s going to look like I was trying to shoot down America planes.*” [Emphasis Fonda’s]

The spin in her autobiography is that she pleaded with her translator to make sure her hosts saw to it that the potentially embarrassing photographs were not published. This self-serving assertion is belied by the fact that she went to the gun emplacement installation in the first place and allowed herself to be photographed.

Thirty-three years later comes this grudging admission: “It is *possible* that the Vietnamese had it all planned.” [Emphasis ours] But, she continues, “can I really blame them?” And besides, Fonda adds as an afterthought: “the gun was inactive, there were no planes overhead.”

In other words, what she did was okay because “the gun wasn’t loaded.” But, metaphorically, it was.

Regrets

In recent months, while promoting her autobiography throughout the United States, Fonda has purported to apologize for some of her conduct in North Vietnam. But her words have always been equivocal and ambiguous—a technique she established many years ago and honed to a fine art ever since. In “*Aid and Comfort*” we wrote:

Fonda’s seeming apology on Barbara Walters’ TV show “20/20” in 1988 was hollow and insincere—not to mention, incomplete. Her pose, she told Walters, on a North Vietnamese anti-aircraft gun used to shoot down American planes was “a thoughtless and cruel thing to have done.” She was sorry she had hurt the prisoners in the Hanoi Hilton, she had been “thoughtless and careless.

During an interview in 2000 Fonda told Oprah Winfrey, “I will go to my grave regretting the photograph of me in antiaircraft carrier [*sic*] which looks like I was trying to shoot at American planes. That had nothing to do with the context that photograph was taken in. But it hurt so many

soldiers. It galvanized such hostility. It was the most horrible thing I could possibly have done. It was just thoughtless. I wasn't thinking; I was just so bowled over by the whole experience that I didn't realize what it would look like.

. . . On February 9, 2001, Fonda was at it again on Walters' "20/20" show. Walters said Fonda had been "against the war," and the actress agreed, leaving the implication that being against the war justified her propagandizing for the enemy from its own soil. Yet millions of loyal Americans, who also opposed the war—including some much more prominent than Fonda—never traveled to the capitol of a country that was killing our troops and torturing our prisoners.

Fonda said, "It just kills me that I did things that hurt those men," apparently referring to our POWs. It's obvious she never bothered to find out how she hurt "those men"—men who were injured, sick, debilitated, and treated by their captors in a manner that . . . [we] could hardly bring [ourselves] to describe. She made no effort to learn the toll her activities took on the morale of our prisoners and men still in the field, nor the punishment some received for upholding their honor and refusing to meet with her. Worse . . . after repatriation was concluded on April 1, 1973 and the details of our POWs' ordeal were revealed, Fonda called the returned POWs "liars and hypocrites" for reporting that they had been brutally tortured. Finally, Fonda told Walters and her viewers that hurting the prisoners was "not my intent." . . . [We] spend dozens of pages discussing Fonda's intent. One wonders what Fonda's answer would have been if Walters had asked Fonda what her intent *was*. So, once more, the Jane and Barbara show allowed Fonda to offer yet another glib, superficial "apology," just like her earlier ones, aimed at convincing the gullible that Hanoi Jane is truly sorry for what she did in North Vietnam. She is not. She never was. Once the full truth is known, even the gullible will not take seriously any more Fonda "apologies."

What makes Fonda's regret ring so hollow and self-serving are her revealing words in a 1989 interview, in which she stated categorically: "I did not, have not, and will not say that going to North Vietnam was a mistake . . . I have apologized only for some of the things that I did there, but *I am proud that I went.*"

Jane Fonda is 68 years old. When she started writing her autobiography, she had an opportunity to take genuine stock of her life and set the record straight once and for all. Here was a chance to prove that she really *was* sorry for what she had done. That she understood the meaning of the words "apology" and "making amends" and how her actions really *did* have serious consequences. That regrets, if sincere, require action, not just lip service.

Not only did Fonda lack the integrity and strength of character to seize this unique opportunity, but she was contemptuous at the mere suggestion that she had much to apologize for. How can one take seriously anything this woman says about an apology when, *on page one* of the North Vietnam section of her autobiography, she writes: “My only regret about the trip was that I was photographed sitting on a North Vietnamese antiaircraft gun sight”?

Conclusion

“*Aid and Comfort*”: *Jane Fonda In North Vietnam*” was a time-consuming book to write. It required thoroughly researched facts, complex legal and constitutional analysis, hundreds of supporting and elaborating footnotes, and an appendix setting forth every one of Fonda’s broadcasts. We have often been asked why, given other writing projects and more pressing interests, we chose to do it.

Our answer was threefold.

First, Fonda was the most prominent American citizen to give the North Vietnamese invaluable antiwar, anti-United States, pro-Communist propaganda, which cost many American lives. Because she got away with it, it was all the more important that we set the historical record straight by proving that she was indictable and convictable for treason.

Second, we felt strongly that a moral reckoning for Fonda’s conduct in Hanoi was long overdue, one that we hope will follow her to her grave—as it should.

Third, we believed then—we continue to believe—that what we think of as “Fonda-ism” must be fought whenever it appears. *Webster’s New World Dictionary of the American Language* defines “ism” as “a doctrine, theory, system, etc.” By “Fonda-ism,” we mean the belief that American citizens can *with impunity* interfere with their country’s foreign policy by making common cause with enemies bent on destroying it.

It is often difficult to make the case against people of Fonda’s ilk because, like John Kerry, they don’t admit their perfidy—let alone in writing. Fonda, in word, deed, and now autobiography, has made it easy.

By herself, Jane Fonda is unimportant—confused, defensive, narcissistic, empty—a woman who admits in her autobiography that “Maybe I simply become whatever the man I am with wants me to be: ‘sex kitten’ [Roger Vadim], ‘controversial activist’ [Tom Hayden], ‘ladylike wife on the arm of corporate mogul’ [Ted Turner].”

But Fonda-ism is crucially important because Americans who give aid and comfort to our enemies put at risk, not only our cherished institutions, but—in today’s world—our very existence.

