

Soviets Say Course At Fort Sill Makes 'Beasts' Of Young Officers

A Soviet newspaper published an article on a special school at Fort SM, describing it as a "Camp of Murders."

The article, which appeared in Trud, a publication of the All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions in Moscow says the class transforms young artillery officers into "beasts--cruel unfeeling animals."

The training described in the article is thought to be the 5^{1/2}-day "escape and evasion" phase of Sill's 23-week officer candidate school.

The special training is aimed at showing officers the treatment they might expect as prisoners of war.

The Trud article showed a soldier, suspended from a rope, dangled head down inside an empty barrel. It says, "If the year 1943 were substituted for the year 1967 in the captions beneath the photograph, one might think that the picture was made by German SS troops in concentration camps."

The article said the man was twisted

around on the rope, knocking his head against the side of the barrel.

The article said a gallows dominates the camp and future officers must dangle in the noose. It said, "He will have a rattle in his throat and twitch. True, he won't be allowed to die. He is only permitted to look death in the face."

Other alleged brutalities such as beatings are described in the article.

Lt. Col. Richard G. Wheeler, Fort. Sill information officer, said the officer candidates are "exposed to a POW exercise that closely approximates treatment they might receive as prisoners of war in actual conflict,"

The young officer candidates are, he said, forced to crawl through mud, are taunted, interrogated and finally allowed to escape.

"There's no cruelty," he said.

Wheeler said the training is designed to prepare the men to withstand possible indignities from enemy "beasts."

From Randy Dunham, Class 1969-10: The Activities of OCS Class 501-68

On the Thursday of their week in the field, the Candidates, while moving from the East to West Range, were attacked and captured by the aggressors. After being captured, the Candidates were bound around the elbows and herded into a small group and told to sit.

While the aggressors were giving their indoctrinations, the Candidates were busy untying each other. When the aggressors told the Candidates to get up and move into the trucks, to be transported to the POW compound, the Candidates rose and immediately dispersed in every direction.

A few of the candidates were captured immediately, but it was a futile attempt on the part of the aggressors to capture all of them because they were outnumbered 8 to 1. It took approximately 9 hours to locate the remainder of the class and both ranges were closed for the entire day, which didn't tend to humor anyone, except perhaps the Candidates.

During the next 9 hours after the great escape of the candidates: 2 candidates were found at Moway House trying to get to their final objective (Ketch Lake), 6 were captured by the Military Police who believed them to be escaped prisoners from the stockade, and one Candidate went to a Colonels' house and explained the situation to his wife—she in turn gave him some coffee and soup and sent him on his way. Several were found in the PX, and the last candidate was found in the ATC area where he had gone, met a friend, ate in the mess hall, showered, and slept for about 3 hours.

Actual link to this article: <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,837226,00.html>

TIME Magazine: The Nation Friday, Sep. 01, 1967

Preparing for the Worst

Feet tied and hands clutched painfully behind their backs, the U.S. Army officers snaked and wiggled on their stomachs over the dusty, rock-strewn ground. "This way, sickie, crawl to me!" cried one captor. "You're ugly, you know that, sickie? Crawl—remember, we've got a lot worse waiting for you."

The men were not Viet Cong captives but trainees in a gruelingly realistic prisoner-of-war course at Fort Sill, Okla. Roughest of its kind in the Army, the course is designed to toughen artillery officer candidates for the kind of torture and humiliation under which many prisoners cracked in Korea. In the year since the course began, about 6,000 officers have completed it.

Ready for the Worst. "Before Viet Nam," explained a training officer, "the artillery always had the infantry out in front. Now sometimes we have to do all our own patrolling and perimeter defenses. We want to be prepared for the worst." With as many as 200 American servicemen presently held by the Communists in Viet Nam— though no Army Artillery Officers have as yet been captured by the enemy—the instructors have devised a fiendishly ingenious array of tortures and tests to ensure that their men know what to expect.

The course begins at dawn. After calisthenics and classroom work, the artillerymen are trucked out to the fort's forested hills, turned loose, and told to evade mock aggressor forces patrolling the 7¹/₂-sq.-mi. area. Of 133 artillerymen who took the course one day recently, fewer than 30 got away. The rest were marched, often barefoot, to a simulated P.O.W. compound.

Under constant taunts from their captors, the Artillerymen were forced to crawl, wallow in mud, hang by their legs from a horizontal bar, sit for seemingly endless minutes with their legs wrapped painfully around a pole. The guards badgered them for information beyond the maximum—name, rank and serial number—sanctioned by the Geneva Treaty. A sympathetic "Red Cross" representative tried to wheedle additional intelligence out of them, but most immediately spotted him as a phony. "Kiss the Mud." When persuasion failed, pressure replaced it. "Get up, hit it, up, down, roll over, crawl in circles, up, down, faster, talk, talk, talk." The captives were lined up in front of a row of odoriferous barrels partly filled with slime and crawling with spiders. "Get in headfirst, you dumb sickies," they were told. "Kiss the mud. Now do push-ups."

Thrust into a tiny, darkened hut, the captives found that a barrel placed in the middle of the floor had no bottom and led into a black hole. Climbing through, they descended into a sewer pipe barely wide enough for their shoulders. Slowly, the artillerymen clawed their way through the 75-ft. pipe to freedom. But their ordeal was not yet over. Though they had started the day at 5 a.m., they still had to run a mountainous ten-mile course, evading aggressors armed with blank bullets and dummy grenades. Most of them made it back to their mess hall just in time for the next day's class work.