

Introduction

I can't remember who wrote the commentary on the below. If I could I would credit them. It is often said that Hanoi Jane apologized for her treachery. She didn't. An true apology goes something along the lines of "I was wrong, please forgive me." What follows below is a lame rationalization for her actions and a statement that she is sorry to have hurt someone, not that she was wrong in hurting them.

The Apology?

In the early 1970s, Jane Fonda and her partner Tom Hayden were in the forefront of the visible anti-war movement. Both were very involved with the Vietnam Veterans Against the War, and were a force behind the Winter Soldier Investigation of alleged American war crimes. In 1972 both traveled to Hanoi.

In 1988, some 16 years after her tour of Hanoi when she made her famous radio broadcast and had her picture taken behind the same anti-aircraft guns that were shooting down US pilots, Jane Fonda appear on 20/20 and was interviewed by Barbara Walters. Two versions of this interview exist, one an actual transcript, the other a press release.

The transcript reads:

Barbara Walters: "There are still people who . . . I guess feel you have never apologized. Would you like to just say something to them now?"

Jane Fonda: "Well . . . it's not . . . I would like to say something not just to . . . the Vietnam veterans . . . in New England . . . but . . . to . . . to men who were in Vietnam who . . . who I hurt . . . or who's pain I caused to . . . deepen because of things I said . . . or did . . . I . . . I feel that I owe them an apology . . . my intentions were never to hurt them . . . or to make their situation worse, it was . . . it was the contrary . . . I was trying to help end the war . . . but there were times when I was thoughtless and careless about it and I . . . and I am very sorry . . . that I hurt them . . . and I want to apologize to them and to their families"

This was released to the media as:

"I would like to say something, not just to Vietnam veterans in New England, but to men who were in Vietnam, who I hurt, or whose pain I caused to deepen because of things that I said or did," Fonda said.

"I was trying to help end the killing and the war, but there were times when I was thoughtless and careless about it and I'm . . . very sorry that I hurt them. And I want to apologize to them and their families."

In both versions, there is a direct references to the veterans in New England and this points to the reason for the timing of the apology. At the time, Fonda was filming "Stanley and Iris" on location in a number of blue-collar New England towns. Production on the movie was being severely disrupted by protesting veterans and this was causing a serious problem for the film. Fonda decided that something had to be done, so she went on 20/20.

The difficulty still remaining for many vets is the nagging doubts about the apology. Was it a

sincere effort to atone for a now recognized hurt, or was it merely a cynical attempt to solve crippling production delays? The timing of the apology allows for the inference of a self-serving motivation. Ms. Fonda had 16 years to consider the results of her actions. On the other hand, perhaps the protests themselves made her more aware of how deeply many veterans resented her actions in 1972. Only Ms. Fonda knows for sure.

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