PUEBLO CREW FREED; CAPTAIN DENIES GUILT

U.S. Signs, Repudiates
Statement of Apology

U. S. ADVANCE CAMP, Korean Demilitarized Zone (AP)

— The Pueblo's captain emphatically denied after his release Monday that his ship had ever intruded into North Korean territorial waters before it was captured Jan. 23.

Cmdr. Lloyd M. Bucher told a news conference that at no time had his ship entered waters within 13 miles of the North Korean coastline or of North Korean offshore islands.

Bucher said he had received orders to remain at least 13 miles off the North Korean coast and that he had carried out these orders.

WASHINGTON (AP) — North Korea released the 82 crew members of the USS Pueblo Sunday after the United States signed a statement of guilt and apology for violating North Korean territory—a statement which the United States repudiated in advance as false.

Secretary of State Dean Rusk declared this "strange procedure" was used to obtain the freedom of the men and it apparently appealed to the North Koreans because they see "propaganda value even in a worthless document."

U.S. officials said privately this was a "kooky" arrangement, conceding that what it means in fact is that the U.S. negotiator at Panmunjom, Korea, Maj. Gen. Gilbert H. Woodward, had signed on instruction from the State Department a document which in the U.S. view contains lies.

The arrangement with the North Koreans covered the release of the 82 surviving members of the intelligence ship Pueblo and the return of the body of Seaman Duane D. Hodges.

Hodges lost his life at the time

four North Korean naval ships captured the intelligence vessel Pueblo last Jan. 23.

Three of the crew members had been reported wounded. State Department officials said Sunday night that North Korea had reported all three are all right.

The State Department announced the release of the Pueblo crew as taking place at Panmunjom.

It said "they will immediately be given medical examinations and returned to the United States." Officials said they would be in San Diego, Calif., by Christmas Day and their families will meet them there.

The statement which Woodward signed at Panmunjom Sunday, simultaneously with the freeing of the crew members, admitted guilt as North Korea charged and apologized, and set Cont. in Sec. 1, Page 2, Col. 3

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out assurances of no future intrusions.

Before he signed the statement, however, the State Department said, he read a formal statement of repudiation which had previously been

given to the North Korean negotiators.

"The position of the United States government with regard to the Pueblo, as consistently expressed in the negotiations at Panmunjom and in public," Woodward declared, "has been that the ship was not engaged in illegal activity, that there is no convincing evidence that the ship at any time intruded into the territorial waters claimed by North Korea, and that we could not apologize for actions which we did not believe took place."

"The document which I am going to sign was prepared by the North Koreans and is at variance with the above position, but my signature will not and cannot alter the facts. I will sign the document to free the crew and only to free the crew."

While the crewmen are to be hurried back to the United States and may see their families by Christmas, they will be subject to extensive "debriefing" on their captivity and their actions while prisoners. This interrogation may last several weeks.

VALUABLE PRIZE

The ship itself—a valuable intelligence prize to the North Koreans—is not being released.

First word that the crewmen were to be released came at 8 o'clock Sunday morning when a State Department spokesman released this terse announcement:

"A meeting was held at Panmunjom last night. The crew of the Pueblo is scheduled to be released at 9 p.m. EST Dec. 22. Until then we have nothing more to say."

North Korea delayed the release by half an hour after accusing the United States of violating the agreement by announcing in advance the planned hour of the release.

the Pueblo conducted espionage left ambiguous whether he was operations after intruding into signing the North Korean guilt came to that decision may be the territorial waters of that and apology statement or sim-Communist country. The United ply the acknowledgement of exploited the seizure of the ves-States denied that the ship vio- freeing the men. lated territorial waters and also The overwrite formula was men to the point where they no denied that its intelligence oper-discussed at three meetings in longer had anything to gain.

October and renewed at the The ship itself, which was der international law.

had gone on since shortly after at the same time denounce it. the ship was seized.

apologize for such to the new administration. "crimes" and give assurance Woodward added that the that there would be no further United States would like to see Rusk also offered this explaintrusions by U.S. vessels.

JOHNSON INFORMED

freed was developed in the State as offering propaganda advan-true: Department and sent to Wood-tages or whether, as some State ward in instructions signed by Department officials think, they has now-no reliable evidence Secretary Dean Rusk. Officials did not want to go through nego- that the Pueblo in any way viosaid President Johnson was ful-tiations all over again, they nev-lated her sailing orders and inly informed of this and all other ertheless made clear on Dec. 19 truded in the waters claimed by developments and actions in the that they were prepared to ac- North Korea. negotiation.

They said also that Presi-mula. dent-elect Nixon was informed after the proposal was made to tached two conditions. One was of which were harshly rejected, the North Koreans. But he was that all 82 crew members and we had come squarely up not consulted in advance. He the body of the slain seaman against a most painful problem: was informed through Robert D. had to be returned by Dec. 23. how to obtain the release of the Murphy, his representative in The other was that Woodward crew without having this govthe State Department.

Woodward to the North Koreans accept the North Korean ver-true. on Dec. 17 along with an alter-sion of the Pueblo operations native-an offer for Woodward even though he was signing the to write across the face of the statement they prepared. North Korean document an ac- Saturday the North Koreans

men had been released and to and go through with the rest of North Korea had charged that sign his name. That would have the deal Sunday.

Dec. 17 meeting. It was renewed loaded with secret electronic Negotiations between the U.S. along with the scheme for Wood- gear when it was captured, is and North Korea at Panmunjom ward to sign their document and not being returned at this time.

North Korea demanded that if they did not accept one or the cast when the men were rethe U.S. admit espionage, ac-other of those proposals by the leased: "We regret that the ship cept crew confessions of espion- end of December the whole ne- itself, USS Pueblo, has not yet age and territorial violations as gotiation would have to go over been returned; that will have to

TWO CONDITIONS

cept the double statement for-

would make a public statement ernment seem to attest to state-The proposal was made by saying the United States did not ments which simply are not

knowledgement that the crew-said they would release the men

One reason why they finally sel and imprisonment of the

Rusk said in the statement he Woodward then told them that recorded here Sunday for broadbe pursued further."

RUSK EXPLANATION

the men returned by Christmas. nation for the signing of the guilt-and-apology document The strange formula under whether the Christmas angle written by North Korea and at which the men finally were appealed to the North Koreans the same time saying it was not

"This government had and

"After 10 months of negotiations, during which we made ev-Officials said Woodward at ery sort of reasonable offer, all

> "Then, within the past week, a way which does just that was found, and a strange procedure was accepted by the North Ko-

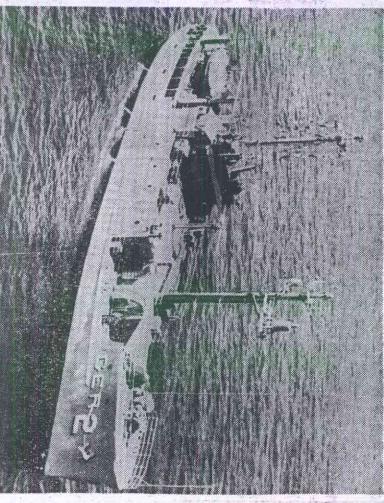
> "Apparently the North Koreans believe there is propaganda value even in a worthless document which Gen. Woodward publicly labeled false before he signed it."

The State Department state-ment said that Woodward signed "for one reason only... to obtain the freedom of the crew who were illegally seized and had been illegally held as hostages by the North Koreans for almost exactly 11 months."

The statement which Woodward put his name to "on behalf of the government of the United States of America" admitted that the Pueblo "had illegally intruded into the territorial waters of the Democratic Peoples Republic of Korea.

It also said that the United States government "shoulders full responsibility and solemnly apologizes for the grave acts of espionage committed" and gave "firm assurance that no U.S. ships will intrude again in the future into the territorial waters" of North Korea.

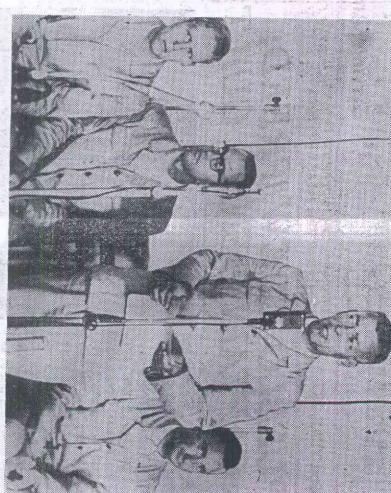
North Korea Plans to Keep Ship



THIS PHOTOGRAPH of the intelligence ship U.S.S. Pueblo was taken prior to its capture by the North Koreans II months ago. The 82 surviving crewmen of the vessel were released Sunday night. The ship will presum-

ably remain in Communist North Korean hands. The body of a wounded crewman who died in captivity will probably be returned home for burial.

Pueblo Captain Addresses News Conference



STANDING, Cmdr. Lloyd M. Bucher, captain of the captured U.S.S. Pueblo, is shown as he addressed an Aug. 13 press conference in Pyongyang, North Korea, according to North

Korean sources who provided the film. He was surrounded by other Pueblo crewmen who are unidentified. The 82 surviving crewmenbers were released Sunday night.

Pueblo Men Are Released After U.S. Signs Apology