

Secretaries Rusk and McNamara, in their double-header appearance on Meet the Press, seem to have opened a new diplomatic door to the peaceable retrieval of the Pueblo crewmen. In remarks presumably selected to mesh with the secret talks at Panmunjom, they raised the possibility that, before its capture on Jan. 23, the Pueblo had penetrated North Korean waters. From Jan. 10 to 21, Mr. McNamara said, the Pueblo held radio silence and "in that period we lack knowledge" of its moves.

From that new point, Mr. Rusk went on to state that if the United States discovered the Pueblo had been inside the 12-mile limit, it would "make those facts available." Mr. McNamara opened the prospect of disciplining the skipper "if he violated his instructions consciously or through negligence."

These three elements—admission, apology, discipline—mark a new public position for the United States, which since the incident had maintained that no intrusion had taken place and therefore there was nothing to apologize for and no one to criticize. The three elements also match the three North Korean demands: that Washington "admit," "apologize" and "punish."

It should be noted that the two Secretaries were not making an unconditional offer to North Korea. They made plain that, first, the crewmen must be released and, secondly, the United States must be the party to determine what the Pueblo's conduct had been. These conditions make sense. As Mr. Rusk said, no fair judgment can be made on the basis of "confessions" and tapes put out by Pyongyang. Only by hearing the Pueblo story from its own men and logs, in an atmosphere free from North Korean intimidation, can the truth be learned.

Nothing the two officials said offered the slightest excuse for the piracy North Korea committed by seizing the Pueblo. Regardless of where it had earlier sailed, at the time of capture it was on the high seas, protected—or so it had every reason to believe—by international law and practice. We are dealing with a country with a profound disrespect for the conventions honored in the family of nations.

Americans will surely be gratified at any favorable turn in the prospects for the crewmen's return. However, it is extremely disturbing that the forthrightness shown yesterday by Mr. McNamara and Mr. Rusk was missing from Ambassador Goldberg's remarks in the Security Council on Jan. 26. He said:

Now Mr. President, I want to lay to rest—completely to rest—some intimations that the Pueblo had intruded upon the territorial waters and was sailing away from territorial waters and that the North Korean ships were in hot pursuit. This is not the case at all and I shall demonstrate it by this map.

Now, we will show by times and the course of the vessel exactly what occurred and you will see from this that the location of the Pueblo was constantly far away from Korean shores, always away from the 12-mile limit until it was taken into Wonsan by the North Korean vessels.

Such a statement does not enhance the public's confidence in an Administration with more than its share of trouble in that regard. Nor does it allow the room for diplomatic maneuver which the new McNamara-Rusk position provides.

Mc Namara admitted discrepancy in def. of "intl waters" between N. Korea & U.S. Also that Pueblo had undoubtly trespassed, but
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not at that particular time

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