

Associated Press

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Pueblo Men Beaten, Bruised

SEOUL, Dec. 23 (AP)—The 82 Pueblo crewmen feasted on steaks and all were reported in good shape today, although their commander said some still bore black eyes and bruises from beatings by their North Korean captors.

The men received preliminary medical checkups at the 121st Evacuation Hospital at nearby Ascom City and prepared to leave for Christmas reunions with

their families in San Diego, Calif.

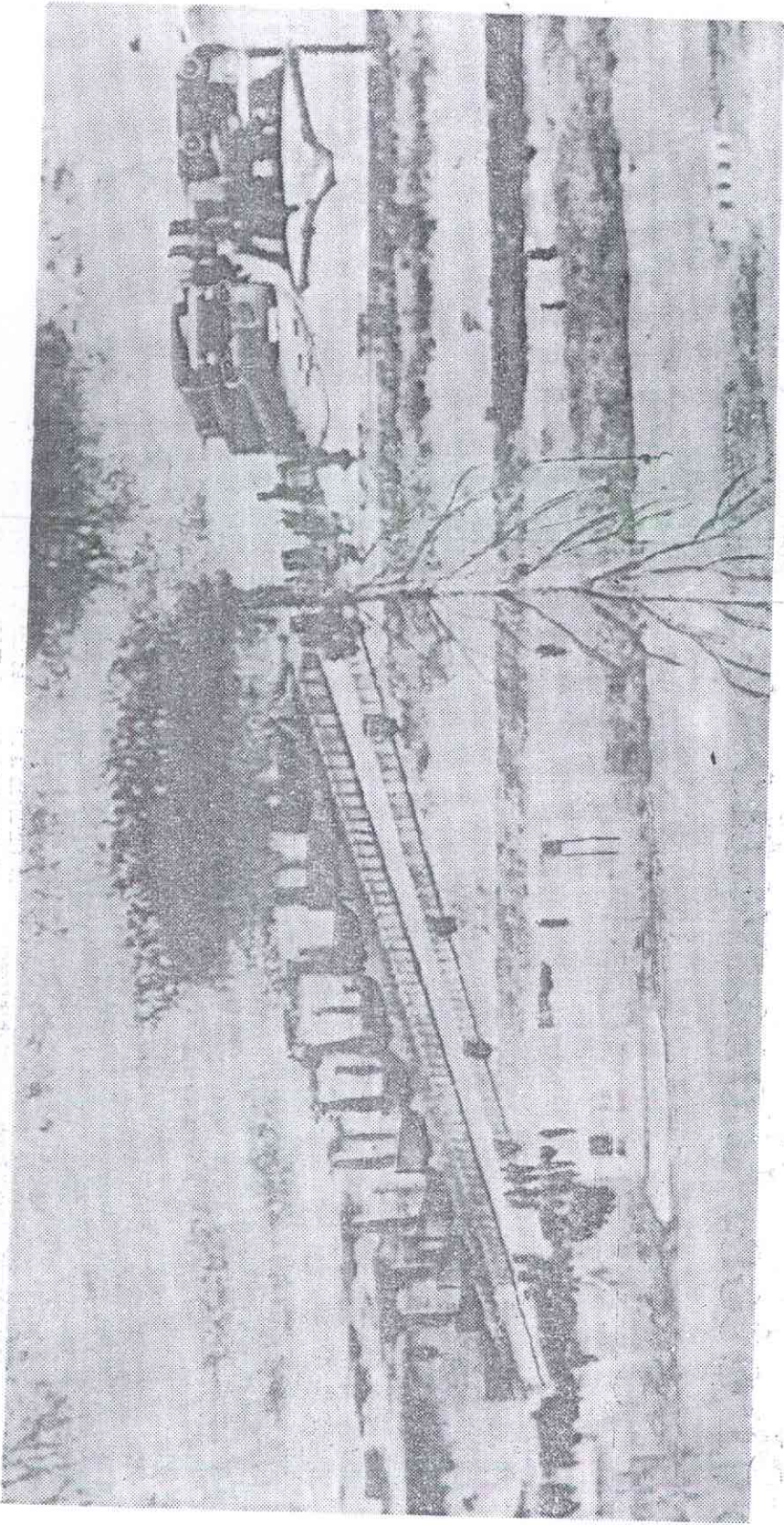
Their skipper, Cmdr. Lloyd M. Bucher, 41, unfolded at a news conference a tale of terror, beatings and harassment at the hands of the North Koreans who seized their Navy intelligence ship Jan. 23 and held them in a prison camp.

Bucher said that his men were beaten as recently as a week ago, but he added that he had heard one man was

beaten Sunday, the day before the North Koreans turned the crew loose on the basis of an apology which the United States repudiated before it was officially delivered.

(In East Berlin, the official East German news agency ADN charged the United States with a breach of faith in international relations because Secretary of State Dean Rusk declared

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The 82 surviving Pueblo crewmen make their way to South Korea across "The Bridge of No Return."

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Pueblo Crewmen Beaten and Bruised

PUEBLO, From A1

the apology signed to gain release of the men was "worthless." ADN said Rusk's statement showed what value "the United States imperialists attach to international documents and agreements which, on top of everything, are signed by themselves."

[In discussing the release on television Sunday night, Rusk noted that the North Koreans permitted the U.S. representative at the Korean truce site to repudiate the apology before signing it.]

Fear of Beatings

"I was beaten less than anyone else," Bucher said at his news conference today. "I was mostly terrified of possible beating and I was kept in solitary confinement during the entire 11 months and there were many occasions when I didn't think I was going to make it."

He said the North Koreans never hit him with a club, as

some of the men had been, but he was punched and kicked.

"Commencing with the week before last, we went through the most concentrated form of terror that I've ever seen or dreamed was possible," Bucher added.

"I wasn't totally prepared for the beatings. . . I thought that they were totally brutal with no mercy of any kind. They were done for one purpose and that was to terrify people. I had about half of the crew last week beaten badly. There are still many people in the crew today who have carried black eyes and bruised ribs. I had one man last week who was beaten with a four-by-four."

"I think that there are many in my crew who are in very bad physical condition and just from a nutritional point of view," Bucher went on. "The bruises and that sort of thing I think are going to heal up quickly."

A spokesman at the hospital said the men all seemed in "quite good shape" after pre-

liminary medical examinations.

He noted that each had a small snack soon after the release across the "Bridge of No Return" from North Korea. Their first real meal was consumed at the hospital and it consisted of "steak and all the accompaniments," the spokesman reported.

At his news conference, Bucher denied that his ship ever was in North Korean waters and said he made false admissions of guilt for the North Koreans to broadcast "to save some people from some fairly serious misfortunes."

"We were never closer than 13 miles of land or offshore islands," Bucher said. "We were attacked on the open seas and we were captured on the open seas. It is pure and simple as that."

As for the capture, he said: "I surrendered the ship because it was nothing but a slaughter out there and I couldn't see allowing any more people to be slaughtered

or killing the entire crew for no reason."

Fireman Duane H. Hodges, 22, of Creswell, Ore., was fatally wounded during the seizure. His body was returned with the 82 survivors.

Butcher said the crew made an attempt to destroy everything of importance aboard the vessel but "truthfully, we did not complete it."

The skipper was asked about a picture that had reached the United States showing some of the crewmen with their fingers in an unusual position.

"They were trying to tell you that we'd been had," Bucher replied. "We continued that campaign throughout the time we were there whenever we had the opportunity to do so. We realized that if we were discovered it was going to be 'Katie, bar the door,' but we felt that it was important that if we could in some way get that information out so that there would be absolutely no room for doubt in your minds, the American people's minds, that we'd been had."

Several Countries in Line For U.S. Thanks on Pueblo

From News Dispatches

A State Department spokesman said yesterday that the United States probably would thank several nations—including the Soviet Union—for whatever help they may have given in obtaining the release of the Pueblo crew.

After the North Koreans seized the intelligence ship last January, the United States made a world-wide effort to get other governments to assist in securing the release of the vessel and its crew.

The 82 surviving crewmen were finally freed Sunday night when the United States signed a confession of espionage and territorial vio-

lation against North Korea after repudiating its statement in advance.

State Department spokesman Robert J. McCloskey said at a news conference yesterday that he does not know of any plan by the Government to try to explain this strange deal—which North Korea had agreed to—to other governments.

But he said it is possible that messages would be sent expressing appreciation for "what they may have done" to help get the men out.

The United States made repeated approaches to the Soviet government for such assistance, the most recent within the past two or three weeks.

U.S. officials said the action of Russia and other countries may have been influential, but they believe more decisive with the North Koreans was the U.S. willingness to sign North Korea's statement.

Members of Congress generally voiced delight at the release of the Pueblo crewmen, coupled with criticism of their North Korean captors.

"Words cannot express my feeling of happiness at their long overdue release," said Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield (D-Mont.).

Sen. Thomas J. Dodd (D-Conn) said the "fraudulent Panmunjom confession" should be treated with contempt.

Pueblo Captain's Stand: 'Captured on Open Sea'

SEOUL, Dec. 23 (AP) — Following is a partial text of the news conference given today by Cmdr. Lloyd M. Bucher, captain of the USS Pueblo, after he and 81 other surviving crewmen were released:

BUCHER: I can't begin to tell you how happy my crew is to see this side of that line that divides this country in two We are just so completely emotionally happy that this day has arrived for us that it would be impossible for me to describe adequately the feelings of my crew.

Before I say anything further I would like to say that I had perhaps the finest bunch of men that I've ever had the pleasure to serve with together with me in captivity in North Korea. Those guys were simply tremendous . . .

I know that some of the things that you're most interested in are the reasons for our capture and this sort of thing . . .

My orders . . . directed me to conduct electronic intelligence gathering operations in the Sea of Japan along the coast of North Korea and to remain outside of 13 miles from all land or offshore islands.

During the entirety of the operation I followed these orders to the letter. I never once, nor did that ship, ever once intrude into the territorial waters of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, as they call themselves, not at any time during the entire operation. I assured myself constantly of the position of that ship. The day we were captured we were some 15 to 16 miles from shore when the North Korean ship showed up and began their harassment tactics. We—I surrendered the ship because it was nothing but a slaughter out there and I couldn't see allowing

any more people to be slaughtered or killing the entire crew for no reason . . .

I'm sure that the orders that we received were followed meticulously as I was capable of doing. In fact, I had prepared an order to my officers and officers of the deck prior to the time we departed on this operation to the effect that at no time would the ship approach closer than 14 miles from land without my presence on the bridge. And we on two or three occasions went between 13 and 14 miles from land, but to the best of my knowledge, which is professional—I have spent many years at sea—I

can tell you that we never once came as close as 13 miles from the land of North Korea or from their offshore islands. Not once.

And, of course, these instructions together with other instructions were captured along with us and any of the instructions of this nature or evidences of this nature which would prove that we had remained outside of their territorial waters were conveniently either destroyed by them or at least never produced.

And I could not convince them from the beginning that these orders were effective on the ship, my orders were effective, and we went through a harassment period there that was never-ending, continued repetition of charges against us which eventually, of course, were admitted to by myself in order to save some people from some fairly serious misfortunes.

But I never doubted in my mind that the United States Government ever considered that I had disobeyed willfully, intentionally or unintentionally the instructions that I had received.

I've been in the Navy too long to think I would have been doubted in my capacity that I had been assigned.

I think that I ought to know what has been said here in the United States since our capture . . . I don't have the slightest idea what was said about me or about the crew . . .

I had people come to me and say, on so many occasions, that they never really appreciated how good it was to be an American until they had the misfortune to have been captured and stuck in a country that is completely devoid of humanity, truthfulness . . . I wonder if there are any questions . . . ?

Q—Could you tell us if you got rid of some or part of the secret equipment?

BUCHER—We made an attempt to destroy everything. Well, there, truthfully, we did not complete it.

Q—Commander, you say that you admitted the lies to save certain people from misfortune. Could you tell us these people and their misfortunes?

BUCHER—Well, there were threats, either direct or implied threats, made against the personnel of my ship and these threats were pretty vivid . . .

Q—Were the members of your crew physically beaten?

BUCHER—Yes, they were beaten on several occasions.

Q—Commander, we heard that there was a man who was beaten yesterday.”

BUCHER—Last week, several members of my crew including myself were beaten.

Q—What form was the beating?”

BUCHER—Physically, with fists generally. With boards and clubs at other times.

Q—How many times during your 11 months were you beaten?

BUCHER — I was beaten than anyone else. But I don't know, sir, that I was beaten all that much. I was mostly terrified of possible beating, and I was kept in solitary confinement during the entire 11 months and there was many occasions when I didn't think I was going to make it . . . I was never hit with any kind of a stick or club.

But the Korean people are very effective with their kick. A few times, several times. They are quite good at soccer and they drill this business of karate . . . Commencing with the week before last, we went through the most concentrated form of terror that I've ever seen or dreamed is possible . . .

Well, I wasn't prepared totally for the beatings that were handed out. I thought

that they were totally brutal with no mercy of any kind. They were done for one purpose and that was to terrify people. I had about half of the crew last week beaten badly.

I had one man last week beaten with a four-by-four. Although at the same time I would emphasize that our life there was not made so miserably that it was unbearable.

I think that there are many in my crew who are in very bad physical condition and just from a nutritional point of view. The bruises and that sort of thing I think are going to heal up very quickly.

Q—When did you first get the idea that you were going to be released?

BUCHER — Well, we got the idea about four days ago. Most of the things that would happen to us would be preceded by a change in the treatment by the guards or by the officers that were in charge of our incarceration and these little clues and hints that something was going on began to occur about last Wednesday or Thursday. I think Thursday, for sure, and we knew that we were coming home. Thought we were coming home, hoped that it wasn't a trick. Thought that we were for sure coming home Saturday.”