

**BEATINGS,
TERROR
RELATED
BY PUEBLO**

NEW ORLEANS
STATES-ITEM

FINAL

SPORTS

MARKETS

VOL. 92—NO. 168

MONDAY, DECEMBER 23, 1968

PRICE 10c

CAPTAIN

By PHILIP BROWN

SEOUL (AP)—The commander of the USS Pueblo said today he and his men were beaten in the final weeks of their North Korean captivity in "the most concentrated form of terror that I've ever seen or dreamed is possible."

Cmdr. Lloyd M. Bucher told a news conference of the beatings after he and his surviving 81 crewmen reached South Korea and were dispatched to a U.S. military hospital for medical checkups.

Some of the men still had black eyes and bruises and others suffered from malnutrition, Bucher said.

"I WAS BEATEN less than anyone else," he said.

"I was mostly terrified of possible beating and I was kept in solitary

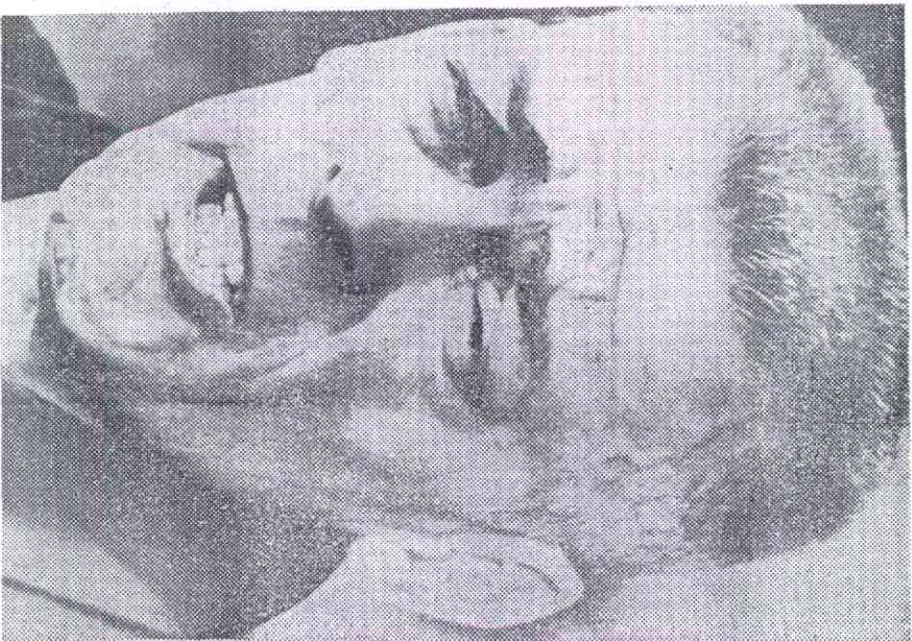
confinement during the entire 11 months and there were many occasions when I didn't think I was going to make it."

He said he was punched and kicked by the North Koreans but never hit with a stick or a club as some of his men were.

"COMMENCING WITH the week before last, we went through the most concentrated form of terror that I've ever seen or dreamed is possible.

"I wasn't prepared totally 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

(Turn to Page 4, Column 6)



CMDR. LLOYD MARK BUCHER
AP WIREPHOTO.
Says Pueblo didn't intrude

Continued from Front Page

have carried black eyes and bruised ribs. I had one man last week who was beaten with a four by four timber. . . .

"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 quickly," Bucher said.

TO WIN the release of the men after 11 months of captivity, a U.S. representative at the armistice hut in Panmunjom signed a statement apologizing for "the grave acts of espionage committed by the U.S. ship . . . after having intruded into the territorial waters of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea." But first he repudiated the statement and said he was signing it only to free the ship's crew, a procedure to which the North Koreans agreed.

Bucher also told his news conference that at no time did the Pueblo sail within 13 miles of North Korea, let alone inside the 12-mile limit set by the North Korean government.

"The day we were captured we were some 15 to 16 miles from shore when the North Korean ships showed up and began their harassment tactics," 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."

Four men were wounded when the Pueblo was captured, and one later died.

The Pueblo, a former Army cargo ship equipped with advanced electronic detection

The men were in a hospital near Seoul for the medical checks before being flown to rejoin their families for Christmas in San Diego, Calif.

A U.S. military spokesman in Seoul said he did not know how soon the Pueblo men would leave for the United States. But it was thought here they might leave tomorrow.

The spokesman said there were no immediate plans to let the men talk to their families by telephone from Korea.

equipment, remained in North Korea. The Communists said it had been confiscated and would not be returned.

ARMY HELICOPTERS, each carrying 10 crewmen, took the men to the U.S. 121st Evacuation Hospital at Ascom City, 10 miles outside Seoul, from a U.S. advanced base just south of the demilitarized zone where Bucher gave his interview.

As the helicopters landed, an Army band played "California Here I Come," and medics hustled the men into the hospital building.

A jet transport was waiting at Osan Air Base for the flight to Honolulu and San Diego.

THE GOVERNMENT was flying the families of many of the men to San Diego for a Christmas reunion, but questioning of the crewmen may continue for weeks after that.

A light snow was falling as Bucher and his men walked across a concrete bridge into the southern half of the demilitarized zone at 11:30 a. m. Korean time.

They carried with them a coffin containing the remains of Fireman Duane H. Hodges, 22, of Creswell, Ore., the crew member who died in North Korea after being wounded during the ship's capture off Wonsan by four Communist gunboats on Jan. 23.

BUCHER CAME first over the bridge, accompanied as far as the boundary line at the U.N. Command side by about eight North Korean observers.

The slow procession of men

over the bridge took slightly more than a half hour and was accompanied by propaganda broadcasts over North Korean loudspeakers. Two tape recordings, which sounded like Bucher's voice, were replayed continuously confessing "crimes" against North Korea, apologizing for them and telling the North Korean "thank you very much from the bottom of our hearts" for lenient treatment.

From the distance at which newsmen were kept, none of the men appeared seriously hurt. They strode over the bridge deliberately. Some ran to the helicopters from the buses that took them to the landing pad.

THEY WORE gray shirts and trousers with dark blue overcoats and blue-top tennis shoes. After they crossed the bridge, many donned heavy U.S. Navy parkas provided in the freezing temperature.

The men waved and smiled to newsmen and gave a thumbs-up signal.

"I can't begin to tell you how happy my crew is to see this side of the line that divides this country in two," said Bucher, who also smiled and waved as he entered his news conference.

THE 41-YEAR-OLD Pueblo skipper, with his gray hair in a short crew cut, shed his North Korean clothes for a blue U.S. Navy casual outfit, with "Bucher, U.S. Navy" and "Pueblo" marked on the jacket.

"We were attacked on the open seas and captured on the open seas," Bucher told the newsmen. "All records we had on the ship proved that." But he added that the records were "conveniently either destroyed by them (the North Koreans) or at least never produced."

Asked about secret equipment and documents on the intelligence ship, Bucher said: "We made an attempt to destroy everything. We did not complete it."

HE SAID THE crewmen were subjected to beatings and terror in captivity, and many still had black eyes and bruised ribs from beatings as recent as last week. Bucher himself walked with

IV. 19. 24. 25. 26. 27. 28. 29. 30. 31. 32. 33. 34. 35. 36. 37. 38. 39. 40. 41. 42. 43. 44. 45. 46. 47. 48. 49. 50. 51. 52. 53. 54. 55. 56. 57. 58. 59. 60. 61. 62. 63. 64. 65. 66. 67. 68. 69. 70. 71. 72. 73. 74. 75. 76. 77. 78. 79. 80. 81. 82. 83. 84. 85. 86. 87. 88. 89. 90. 91. 92. 93. 94. 95. 96. 97. 98. 99. 100.

a slight limp. He said he had been kicked occasionally and the Koreans are "quite good at soccer."

Bucher said he was kept in solitary confinement "the entire 11 months" but he was not beaten as much as the other crewmen.

"I was mostly terrified of

possible beatings," he said. "We went through a harassment period that was never ending. Continued repetition of charges against us, which, eventually, of course, were admitted 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 or intentionally the instructions that I had received.

"Any doctoring of the record that has been done since that time (the capture) in the phony press conferences we held up north . . . would never stand up to the court of law."

The North Korean radio meanwhile boasted that the U.S. imperialists bent the knee again to the Korean people. The Korean Central News Agency claimed the Pueblo crew, before their release, "confessed their crimes of espionage and intrusion into North Korea's territorial waters" at a news conference.

IT SAID HODGES "met his death by foolishly and recklessly resisting, disobeying the order of the naval force of the Korean people's army."

Washington released a text of the statement signed by Maj. Gen. Gilbert Woodward, the chief negotiator in the series of 29 meetings to obtain the release.

It said the U.S. government acknowledged "the validity of the confessions of the crew of the USS Pueblo . . . shoulders full responsibility and solemnly apologizes for the grave acts of espionage . . . and gives firm assurance that no U.S. ships will intrude again in the future into the territorial waters of the Dem-

ocratic People's Republic of Korea."

BUT BEFORE signing it, the North Koreans allowed Woodward to reaffirm the U.S. insistence of its innocence in the affair.

He declared: "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."

SECRETARY OF State Dean Rusk said in Washington that North Korea's acceptance of the document under those circumstances was a "strange procedure" but that it apparently appealed to the Korean Communists because they see "propaganda value even in a worthless document."

Rusk said efforts will be made to regain the ship, but State Department officials said no more private meetings were planned at Panmunjom to obtain its release.

President Johnson issued a statement expressing gratification at the release of the men and calling their detention "totally unjustified." He thanked their families for "the understanding they showed through the long, painful period during which their government has sought to free the men" and expressed hope they would be reunited before Christmas.

"All Americans are delighted and relieved," said President-elect Nixon.