

Called Tribune 8 July 1968

INSIDE WASHINGTON

Concern Grows for Pueblo Crew

By ROBERT ALLEN and JOHN GOLDSMITH

Editor's Note: The following views are those of the authors and are presented here to give readers a variety of viewpoints. The Tribune's opinions are expressed only in editorials.

Disturbing doubts are growing over the nature and extent of the "humane treatment" the 82 Pueblo crewmen are getting from their North Korean Communist captors.

Five months of direct negotiations and other publicized efforts not only have been fruitless in securing the release of the men, but equally disquieting is the scant information about their whereabouts and physical condition.

What little has been put together is not too reassuring.

U.S. authorities take pains to stress they know nothing concrete or positive. Officially, they carefully shy away from saying or intimating anything that might give rise to alarm.

But private hints indicate there is apprehension over the fate of the imprisoned crewmen.

No one goes so far as to say there is a possibility that casualties have occurred among them. But this dire likelihood is left dangling.

A highly significant comment on the matter was made by Sen. Robert Byrd, W.Va., deputy Democratic floor leader, in a broadcast to his state. For this reason it escaped general notice and the attention it merited. Following is Byrd's reply to a question about the Pueblo:

"I know of nothing new. The Joint Chiefs of Staff have turned thumbs down on any military moves because in their opinion these would result in the death of the men and the opening of a second front in Asia. Our government is continuing efforts to bring about the release of the men through direct negotiations and diplomatic channels. I imagine the North Koreans will hold the men until such time as they feel they have milked all of the propaganda value out of this affair."

"Do we know anything about the present health of the men?"

"I cannot say that we do."

"Are they all living, do we know that?"

"I cannot say that they are with certainty," replied Byrd obviously carefully weighing his words, "and I doubt that anyone knows for sure that they are."

From intelligence reports, it would appear that the 82 crewmen are incarcerated in more than one prison camp. There is also good reason to believe they have not been allowed to receive packages and mail sent them through the International Red Cross.

It is definitely known that all the Pueblo's communications and electronic equipment has been removed, and the vessel shifted to a small port near the Soviet border.

o o o

Attorney General Ramsey Clark is being bluntly challenged to state publicly what he proposes to do about prosecuting former Rep. Adam Clayton Powell, D-N.Y., "for misuse of federal funds."

This demand was made by Rep. Thomas Curtis, Mo., second-ranking Republican on the powerful Ways and Means Committee, and leader of the fight that led to Powell's expulsion from this Congress. Early last year a special committee, following an inquiry, recommended that he be seat-

ed on condition he repaid \$40,000 "wrongfully and willfully appropriated" and publicly apologized to the House.

But under Curtis' vigorous leadership, the House, while demanding the return of the \$40,000, refused to seat Powell. This action has been upheld by two lower courts. Powell's appeal is now pending before the Supreme Court.

In calling on Attorney General Clark to "come clean," Curtis cited information disclosed in this column some weeks ago. The column revealed that Assistant Attorney General Fred Vinson, head of the Criminal Division, following an exhaustive investigation by FBI agents and a federal grand jury, had recommended that Powell be indicted and brought to trial.

After a detailed study of these findings, Clark took them to President Johnson. They discussed them at length several times — and nothing has happened since.

The affair is shrouded in tight official silence and secrecy. But Curtis blows it wide open in a blunt letter to Clark demanding an explanation.

"It is difficult to perceive," declared Curtis, "how we are going to maintain law and order in our society if those in high places interfere with the normal course of justice."

Distributed 1968, Publishers-Hall Syndicate