

E NEW YORK TIMES, MONDAY, DECEMBER 30, 1968

Many Pueblo Crewmen Granted Weekend Leave in San Diego

SAN DIEGO, Dec. 29 (AP)—The Navy reported today that more than half of the crewmen of the U.S.S. Pueblo received overnight liberty to be with their families for the weekend. Thirty-six of the 82 crewmen spent the evening with wives and parents last night. A few others received leave Friday night.

That was the first night such leaves were allowed since the men returned to the United States last Tuesday after 11 months in captivity in North Korea.

All of the leaves were confined to the San Diego area. The liberty was limited to crewmen who had completed their medical testing. The intelligence debriefing will continue for several weeks but Navy officials said about half the crew would get liberty every night from now on.

Told Not to Talk

A Navy spokesman said that the men had been instructed not to talk with reporters about anything, even the weather, and not to discuss their capture or imprisonment, even with their families.

"They have been pretty well briefed of the fact that everything they have to say should be saved for the court of inquiry," an official said at the naval hospital where the men are staying.

The court of inquiry will convene at the conclusion of the intelligence debriefing. The court sessions will be public, except those dealing with national security.

The Navy also said that one of the Pueblo's officers had been promoted and another selected for promotion. They

are Lieut. (j.g.) Timothy Leon Harris of Jacksonville, Fla., who was an ensign when the ship was captured, and Lieut. Stephen R. Harris of Melrose, Mass., who has been selected for promotion to lieutenant commander sometime before July.

Final Tribute Paid Hodges

CRESWELL, Ore., Dec. 29 (UPI) — The body of Duane Daniel Hodges, a crewman on the U.S.S. Pueblo who was killed when she was seized, lay today in a hillside cemetery after this tiny farming and lumbering community paid final tribute to one of its sons.

Most of the town's 917 residents jammed into a school auditorium yesterday for the funeral at which a letter from the 82 surviving officers and crewmen was read.

"We can tell you that he died under hostile fire, performing honorably the job he was assigned," the letter said. "He was not captured alive but died while we were still with him. Your son died fighting for his country and none of us could expect more of him or any other man."

Pueblo Apology

To the Editor:

Like all Americans I rejoice that the crewmen of the Pueblo have at last been released.

Apparently the United States agreed to sign a statement of guilt, but retained the privilege of repudiating the validity of the document.

Surely this statement should have been signed, accomplishing as it did the release of the men after far too long an imprisonment. The question remains whether American credibility and prestige are well served by our Government's vehement repudiation of the statement. If our national signature means nothing in this instance, the world may speculate over its value in other circumstances.

This is apart from the question of our guilt or innocence. Perhaps no one is certain whether or not the Pueblo violated North Korea's territorial waters, a situation that is unchanged by any accusation or denial. Had we admitted the violation (real or contrived) last January, with a statement that it was accidental and an apology, our credibility would have been far less impaired, and presumably the Pueblo crew could have been spared such a long confinement.

The Dec. 23 statement, however, would have been better signed with little fanfare than denied with fervor. In short, we "do protest too much."

P. FRANK WINKLER
Cambridge, Mass., Dec. 24, 1968