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Pueblo Crewmen Recount North Korean Attempts

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—In the "Gypsy Tea Room," the Pueblo's crewmen sipped Korean wine and beer. They sat at a wooden table and listened to the quiet, even friendly, voices of a group of smiling North Korean civilians.

"They asked me to go to Russia and visit Moscow," Communications Technician Peter M. Langenberg told the Navy court of inquiry here today. "I said sure. That seemed to satisfy them."

Another crewman, Engineman 3d Cl. Richard E. Arnold, told the court, which is investigating North Korea's capture of the intelligence ship, "They asked me if I'd receive [North Korean] guests when I returned to the United States. I told them, yes, I would. I believe I'd call the F.B.I."

A third crewman, Yeoman 3d Cl. Stephen P. Ellis, said quietly, "They asked me if I'd want to come back to Korea after returning to the United States. I told them, no, I don't think that would be possible."

Quartermaster Praised

A glimpse of what the Pueblo's crewmen called the "Gypsy Tea Room" emerged today in an all-day court session that focused on the crew's 11 months of imprisonment in wooden barracks near Pyongyang, North Korea.

Once again, the five admirals on the court heard repeated stories of beatings and kickings, of machine guns placed between the eyes of a young enlisted man to force a confession, of day and night confession.

One crewman broke down and wept. Gunner's Mate 1st Cl. Kenneth R. Wadley, a 30-year-old sailor who looks 10 years older, buried his face in his hands after completing his 30 minutes of testimony.

"The crew couldn't have gone through the 11 months over there without Law [Quartermaster 1st Cl. Charles B. Law Jr.] and Commander [Lloyd M.] Bucher," he whispered, rubbing a handkerchief over his eyes. "That's all I have to say."

Quartermaster Law, 27, the acknowledged leader of the enlisted men in prison, suffered some of the heaviest beatings at the hands of the North Ko-

reans and is now afflicted with permanent and severe eye damage as a result of malnutrition.

Today, for the first time, the crewmen were questioned in some detail about the "Gypsy Tea Room," a bare 12-by-15-foot area set aside by the North Koreans apparently to soothe and befriend the Pueblo crew.

During their imprisonment, virtually every Pueblo crewman was called separately from his prison cell and taken across a small athletic field to the building where the tea room was set up.

Each crewman apparently remained in the room 10 to 15 minutes. Women sometimes offered cookies, beer and wine. Cigarettes were offered. Two

or three Korean civilians stood beside the American and asked questions.

Lied to His Captors

"They asked me what I thought about our daily life in the compound and what position I thought the United States was in," said Gunner's Mate Wadley. "I responded that our daily living was good and I lied — I told them the United States was in a bad position."

Little apparent indoctrination occurred, but there were numerous questions.

The crewmen testified that they had been asked if they would accept a North Korean visitor in the United States, if they would enjoy visiting Pyongyang or Moscow, if they

would discuss their prison conditions upon returning to the United States.

Their replies, either affirmative or negative, were generally accepted by the North Koreans with little comment.

"The Gypsy Tea Room was evidently an effort to befriend us," Lieut. Edward R. Murphy Jr., the Pueblo's navigator and executive officer, said recently. "It also, I think, had an intelligence effort to it. I think they were trying to fill certain intelligence channels in the United States."

Sought Crew's Opinions

"They required certain information of us," he went on. "They wanted to know what our opinions were, what our

to Probe and Befriend Them in 'Gypsy Tea Room'

growth had been, what our ideas about socialism were."

"Of course, we knew at the time it was better to parrot their garbage than to argue, because it wasn't going to do any good, anyway," he said. "They didn't understand the realism of life. They did, in my case, offer me an opportunity to visit with one of their own people [apparently in the United States] or somebody sympathetic to North Korea. They gave me the man's name.

"They also asked me to sign a statement, which I signed, a statement saying, 'I promise not to tell what I have discussed here with nobody,' and that's what I signed."

"When you went in there," Quartermaster Law, recalled

"They had a bottle of beer and a shot of this ginsin liquor and cookies.

"They had a pack of their fancy cigarettes there. They asked me questions of what I was going to do if I got released and did I think our Government would ever get us released. I was there somewhere between 5 and 10 minutes. I was there long enough to smoke half a cigarette."

The Code of Conduct

At least some of the crewmen may have sipped too much wine. Yeoman Ellis said, under questioning, that a prison mate "seemed to be in a happy mood" upon returning from the room.

"Did he seem intoxicated?"

the court's assistant counsel, Comdr. William E. Clemons, asked.

"I'm not sure," Yeoman Ellis replied.

Commander Clemons asked Yeoman Ellis the one question that is now asked of every crewman who appears before the court: "What is the single most important reason that you departed from the code of conduct?"

"I think mostly fear of physical torture and the feeling that the Koreans would try anything to get us to do what they wanted," Yeoman Ellis replied.

The code advises American servicemen to give only name, rank, service number and date

of birth to their captors. The Pueblo crewmen broke the code days after the Pueblo was seized on Jan. 23, 1968, and signed confessions that the Pueblo had been engaged in espionage in the claimed territorial waters of North Korea.

Technician Langenberg replied to the question unhesitatingly, "I could see no reasonable alternative. They made it quite clear that they wanted these confessions and would do anything to get them."

"With the information they captured on the ship, they had an overwhelming advantage on us," he said. "We had no possible ground to fight them. They had this information in their hands."