

# Bucher Defends Silence of Guns in Pueblo 'Seizure'

By BERNARD WEINRAUB

Special to The New York Times

CORONADO, Calif., March 11 — Five admirals on the court of inquiry here pressed Comdr. Lloyd M. Bucher today on his decision to keep the Pueblo's two .50-caliber machine guns silent when North Korean submarine chasers and torpedo boats opened fire on Jan. 23, 1968.

In an all-day appearance before the inquiry, Commander Bucher said slowly: "My orders were specifically not to uncover the guns and start a war there. I had been acting in faithful response to the orders."

With the inquiry moving into its closing days, Commander Bucher sat before the five admirals and the court counsel, Capt. William R. Newsome, and discussed the overriding issue in the inquiry: Whether or not the Pueblo's skipper should have surrendered the ship without a fight.

Today the admirals completed most of their questioning of Commander Bucher. Tomorrow the Pueblo's 41-year-old skipper—who remains physically weak and nervous—is scheduled to read a final statement to the court of inquiry.

The admirals are then set to recall several more Pueblo crewmen before ending the eight-week-old inquiry on the naval amphibious base here.

## SSeizure, Not Surrender

Speaking heatedly at times, Commander Bucher gripped the table before him and said: I never surrendered the ship. I never struck my colors. We were seized. The Koreans pulled the colors down. I've used the word surrender but I don't feel surrender is as accurate a term as seizure.

Earlier, Commander Bucher said the Pueblo crew was poorly trained in the code of conduct for American servicemen.

"Do you feel there was proper indoctrination of the code of conduct for members of the crew?" Captain Newsome asked Commander Bucher in mid-morning at the naval amphitheater here.

"Your asking me hindsight evaluation," replied the Pueblo's 41-year-old skipper. "Considering what happened, neither myself nor the crew had adequate training in the code of conduct."

"What training did you have?" asked Captain Newsome.

"I had none," replied Com-

mander Bucher.

## A Key in the Inquiry

The code of conduct—which has emerged as a key subject at the eight-week-old court of inquiry—tells all American servicemen to yield only name, rank, serial number and date of birth if captured.

The Pueblo's crewmen have testified that they signed confessions in North Korea because guards beat them repeatedly and threatened torture and death. Moreover, crewmen said, the Pueblo's detailed personnel records and hundreds of secret papers fell into the hands of the North Koreans so "there was no sense denying what they already knew."

Sitting before the five admirals and clenching his hands tightly, Commander Bucher answered random questions from Captain Newsome and the admirals—questions that dwelt on the capture of the Pueblo, the skipper's duties, the secret "research space" on the ship, the

crew's behavior in the wood and brick three-story detention barracks in Pyongyang and the final bitter days in prison before release.

Commander Bucher spoke evenly in his appearance today. At the noon break, he stepped outside the sun-drenched amphitheatre and said slowly: "If I had the same set of circumstances and the same set of orders I would have done things exactly the same way."

Commander Bucher told the five admirals that on Dec. 21—two days before the crew's release—there were the first indications that the ship's 82 survivors would be returned.

## Tried to Ease Bruises

"It came after severe beatings," said Commander Bucher. "The guards began running around with hot paraffin packs trying to clear up our bruises and black eyes. I knew something was up."

"The general then called us in and said when we go home we should not forget our humane treatment."

On Dec. 22, Commander Bucher was removed from his room. "I was stripped and checked thoroughly for secret papers," the Pueblo's skipper recalled. "I was given another set of clothes and marched out of the building toward a bus."

Commander Bucher and the

crew were taken at 10 P.M. by bus for a two-hour trip to the Pyongyang railroad station. They rode on the train through the night—each man in a separate berth—to Kaesong.

Shortly after 5 A.M., Commander Bucher recalled, the crew arrived in Kaesong where they boarded buses for the 10-mile ride to the bridge that spans the armistice line between North and South Korea.

"I was taken off the bridge by myself and they wanted me to identify Hodges' body," said Commander Bucher. Fireman Duane D. Hodges was the only Pueblo crewman killed, 11 months earlier, when North Korean submarine chasers and torpedo boats opened fire on the intelligence ship.

## 'Great Show' of Identification

"They removed the windings from the body," Commander Bucher said slowly. "I said 'that is Hodges' and they put the windings back on. They made a great show of this with photographers and cameramen."

"They put the lid back on the rough hewn casket, put it on an ambulance and drove it across the bridge."

"I stood at the building, the first one at the end of the bridge, a building with a lot of doves perched on it," said Commander Bucher. "Then a general whose surname is Pak strode out of the building and he screamed and yelled for about 20 minutes."

"I was freezing," Commander Bucher recalled. "My feet were encased in those canvase shoes. I didn't think I could stand up much longer. They gave me a 20 second translation of his diatribe and they took me back to the bus."

"Twenty minutes later they told me to walk across the bridge, not to run or look back or I would be shot," said Commander Bucher. "The repatriation occurred 10 hundred hours [10 A.M.]"

Pueblo crew members of income tax on pay for the period of their captivity was introduced today by Representative Wilbur D. Mills, Arkansas Democrat who is chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee.

Some of the Pueblo crew have been reported in financial difficulties because income tax was not withheld from the ac-

cumulated pay given them on their release and largely spent in a short time.