

railroad man, for example, who willingly worked overtime to repay Kim Il Sung, beloved iron-willed leader, for the bountiful blessing he had heaped upon the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Afterwards, the men had to discuss the movie with their "Room Daddy," the political officer assigned to lecture them twice a week and give them North Korean tracts to read. The men laughed at the films, ridiculed the literature, thumbed their noses at the lecturers who would tell them such tales as that President Benjamin Harrison had a razor strop made of tanned Indian hide. The Room Daddy for Law's room, whom they called "Possum," became so incensed at the men's defiance he took away their copy of the Communist Manifesto.

#### Bucher Leads

The inspiration was Bucher. In ranks he would feign misunderstanding of the guards' orders and do the opposite—left face instead of right, stumble hopelessly out of step, flaunt an obscene finger gesture, which he called the Hawaiian good luck sign, in front of the North Korean officers. Once he pretended to have lockjaw. He passed word to the crew not to laugh at one another's antics, or his own. He wanted to see what he and the men could get away with so they would be able to sabotage confessions and recordings and propaganda photos.

The men caught on. In a photo released by North Korea to show how well fed and happy the men were, there stood the men of Room 13—Law, Goldman, Bill Scarborough, Layton, Peppard, Berens, Howard Bland and Iredale—all flashing the Hawaiian good luck sign.

Ramon Rosales, on kitchen duty, infuriated the guards (and fetched a beating) by leaning against the wall and casually tossing metal bowls and plates all around the room. At other times Rosales would sharpen a kitchen knife slowly, menacingly, all the while leering at the guard. And once during a lecture the Room Daddy scoffed at Rosales's religion and told him there was no God.

"Yes," said Rosales, "there is a God."

"How do you know? Have you ever seen him?"

"I see him every day," said

## Some of the dots over the i's were dashes. They said, 'this is a lie.'

Rosales. "I see him in the plants and in the trees. God is life."

And at night Rosales knelt behind his bed and prayed for life. Others did the same. Others invented games to allay the boredom. Schumacher designed, in his mind, a complete house. Kisler and Alexander designed a boat, a 19-foot sloop, and charted a world cruise. And Don Bailey, the 13-year veteran sailor who had operated the teletype, lay on his cot and thought hard thoughts about the Navy he had served with such pride. All the beatings he had suffered in prison had not hurt nearly as much as his dismay that when he was pleading for his ship's life, no help came from the largest Navy in the world.

#### The Escapers

Many of the men, in the privacy of their rooms, spent their time trying to figure a way to escape. In late April Bucher appointed an escape committee consisting of Skip Schumacher, Tim Harris and Gene Lacy.

From the window of Room 13, Law's room, the men studied the featureless terrain, noticed some

power lines, determined they might lead to a dam where there would be a river flowing to the sea. They hoarded scraps of food and Ronald Berens swiped a straight razor from the duty officer's desk for a weapon. That was one plan.

Another, devised by Bob Hammond and Bob Chicca, the Korean-speaking Marines, relied on the monsoons for cover. The monsoons didn't come.

Rogelio Abelon, the Pueblo's Filipino steward, had a notion he could slip out, pass as a native, get to South Korea and direct a raid on the compound. Impractical.

Lee Roy Hayes and Angelo Strano, a CT, commenced building a crude radio using razor blades and other materials at hand and one night blew out all the electricity in the compound trying to magnetize a nail.

The truth was all their plans were futile. The prison was too well guarded, too remote from cover, too far from the South Korean border. Even so, the men pondered escape, dreamed about it, discussed it. They believed their captors' repeated assurance that their only hope of going home was for the United States to apologize for "intrusions" that had not occurred, and the men knew their government would never do that.

#### Hunger Rations

By late spring the men began to show the effects of their prison diet. Commissaryman Harry Lewis guessed the nutritional intake was about 500 calories a day. The food was what was in season. Some sort of plant resembling spinach. Turnips. Something like cabbage. Something else, the men decided, like grass. They ate three slices of bread a day and an occasional fish.

Uniformed Korean women prepared the food, broke it up and shredded it outdoors on the ground, with the compound dogs poking around and sniffing. They boiled it into a thin stew and hauled the result to the mess hall in galvanized buckets. The empty buckets, unwashed, were then refilled with drinking water. The men called the daily dish "cream of petroleum soup." "It wasn't," said Commissaryman Ralph Reed, something you'd want a second helping of.

The ancient disease of sailors appeared. Scurvy. And diphtheria. Dysentery. Diarrhea. Hayes got infectious hepatitis. Rosales got viral meningitis and could not move. Rigby developed a rash over 90 per cent of his body, with running sores. Law's eyesight failed. Time was, Chuck Law could pick out a star and call its name quicker than the commanding officer. No longer.

Bucher asked, demanded, pleaded that doctors treat his men. Occasionally they did. They eventually replaced Russell's eye glasses, and Hagenson's, which had been knocked from their faces on the day of capture. They treated Rigby with some sort of mud pack but it only irritated the rash. They did nothing for Rosales. After 44 days Woelk returned from the hospital and was told he could rest whenever he chose, though a guard kicked him the second day he was back. In the hospital they had filmed Woelk undergoing a mock operation, complete with staged blood transfusion, and had photographed him in bed with a big

tray of food such as he only saw that once. They also photographed him with his grinning doctor—and, he later learned, mailed the picture to his parents. In late May, Woelk underwent a second operation. He had his tonsils removed. This time they used anesthesia.

#### Cruelty Eases

In the cycle of good treatment and bad, April and May were bad months except for one day, May Day, when the men were allowed to visit one another's rooms, and June and July were good months.

The guards relaxed. The cooks added a piece of fruit to the daily menu. The men were issued tiny pocketknives so they could clean their fingernails—and cut the grass, which they enjoyed doing, even with a pocketknife, since it was something to do. One officer asked Bucher if he had any ideas of other constructive things the men could do and Bucher suggested they take some boats out and go fishing. The officer didn't think that was such a good idea.

An added reason for the mid-summer improvement in prison atmosphere was that Super-C was most happy and self satisfied. He had been promoted. Now he became GG—Glorious General.

On July 16, in the flush of new rank and glory, GG announced to Bucher that the men would be allowed to receive mail. They would also be allowed to write home, though of course GG and his men would read each letter and add a few lines of their own. Bucher put out the word: try to discredit every false statement.

The men went to their rooms and set to work. Wheezy, Max, Silver Lips and another interpreter called The Imperialist because when he entered a room he shouted "You imperialist sonabitchee!", translated the letters into Korean. GG and other officers added their propaganda and said how kindly the men were being treated. Then the men copied the letters—three times, as GG was certain the CIA would intercept at least two.

#### A Coded Letter

What GG didn't discover, however, was that in the propaganda portion of Hayes's letter some of the dots over the i's were actually dashes, and they spelled in Morse code "this is a lie." Peppard preceded the propaganda

in his letter with the request that his father say hello to an old friend, Garba Gefollows—garbage follows. Kisler sent his regards to Uncle Ben and Aunt Jemima as well as Jack Sprat, and said he was eating so well he soon would look like a chubby neighbor of his—who actually weighed 70 pounds. Russell told his fiancée he planned to repaint his car when he got home because the present color sickened him. Red. Bucher told Rose that their family friend, Andy Farkas (her old nickname for him), was a good officer and could be trusted to follow orders.

At home, the families got the message. Bob Chicca's wife, Ann, even encoded a reply. She listed the name Jamie as a pet dog, and Bob knew he had a son. Jamie was the name they had picked out if the baby was a boy.

During the era of good feeling, in July, GG enjoyed having long conversations with Bucher. They discussed world politics, mythology, history. Some sessions lasted 13 or 14 hours. No interrogation, just talk. Bucher found

GG to be well informed and clever, but if it was a psychological game he was playing, Bucher was confident the general was losing it. By his reckoning, Bucher expected a reversal of the good treatment to commence in August. To forestall it, during a long session with GG, he said, "General, why don't we have a press conference?"

GG thought it a great idea. They scheduled it for August, so there would be time to rehearse. Some of the men, Schumacher for one, didn't want to participate, but GG was persuasive. He told Schumacher he had confiscated a poem during a search of Schumacher's room, and if he didn't go along, he would show the poem to the guards who certainly would kill him. Schumacher's poem, titled "The Captain's Lament," ended with the couplet: "Instead of victory, sorrow is our lot, trapped by the pirates of the runny snot." Schumacher said he would participate.

The fact was, Bucher wanted the men to cooperate—or appear to cooperate. When GG gathered the whole crew in a room to tell them about the conference, Bucher stood up before his men and said, "Yes, sir, general, we'll push on with speed and hope for good luck through the Hawaiian good luck sign," and flaunted the finger in GG's face.

#### GG Was Happy

The crewmen who did not take part in the conference were gathered in a large room to watch it on closed-circuit television. Officers stood around the room and studied the men's reactions. Bucher had put out the word that none dare laugh, and so while the participants in the conference butchered the English language and flashed the finger whenever possible, the men watched the TV screen with perfectly straight faces.

GG was delighted. He decided there should be another press conference the following month, in connection with the 20th anniversary of the founding of his government, and he would invite foreign reporters as well. He would also—and this would come as a surprise to Bucher—raise the claim of six intrusions by the Pueblo to 17.

Meanwhile, GG had another chore for the men. He wanted them to write to political figures and news organizations back in America asking them to pressure the government to apologize for what the Pueblo had done.

Some of the men had had enough. When the officer came into Room 13 and told the men of the new demand, Ronald Berens stood up and said he wouldn't do it. A guard, The Bear, swung a club and gave the sailor a lasting scar under his eye. Berens wrote the letter.

#### A Stubborn Sailor

In Room 5, Earl Kisler also had had it with the North Koreans. It galled the husky, jut-jawed seaman that a puny little country, as he regarded North Korea, could push around the United States. It also galled him that the United States had not retaliated and "wiped that country off the face of the earth." The officer told Kisler he would be required to write a letter to Newsweek magazine. Kisler said nuts.

They took him downstairs to the second floor and sat him in a chair in a room with Robot, a guard, and Highpockets, an interpreter. Highpockets asked Kisler if he had changed his mind. Kisler said no.

With a stick about three-quarters of an inch in diameter Robot whacked Kisler repeatedly in the head, face, shoulders. Then he beat him with a rubber-soled San

dal, all the while screaming at him and saying they would kill him. The guards knocked Kisler out of the chair and made him get back in it until he could no longer find the chair. He lost consciousness several times. Once he found himself on the floor against the wall and they were kicking him in the chest.

Highpockets read a formal statement saying Kisler was insincere and had been all along and would have to stand trial. Had Kisler changed his mind? "No." They shoved the sailor out the door and told him to find his way upstairs to his room. Groping down the hallway, his bloody head "the size of a pumpkin," as one shipmate observed, his face unrecognizable, Kisler finally staggered to his room. His roommates told him he had been gone two hours.

Several hours later the officer summoned Kisler back to the room and asked him if he had reconsidered. Kisler was certain they would beat him to death. He wrote the letter as ordered—but refused to sign it.

The press conference was held Sept. 12, and while all the crewmen watching it on closed-circuit TV were able to keep a straight face many of the foreign correspondents were not, it was so obvious a fraud. Typical was the rehearsed reply of Ralph McClintock when asked: "What is your most ardent desire?" Reading from a script, the sailor said in mocking tones and saccharine phrases that he wanted to go home, and if allowed to do so, "I will never again commit such a naughty crime as espionage against such a peace loving people as these." Some of the foreign reporters laughed out loud.

GG had told Bucher there would be an American correspondent present, a man named Lionel Martin of The Guardian. Bucher had never heard of either the man or the newspaper, but prepared a note to slip to him denying there had been any intrusions by the Pueblo. He tucked the note in his pocket and waited for an opportunity.

Martin was an American citizen. He had been the Havana correspondent of The Guardian, a New York based journal that described itself as "an independent radical newsweekly." After the conference he went to Bucher's room, along with Silver Lips and about 30 other North Korean officers, and GG, who stood just outside the door. Bucher and Martin conversed. But Bucher could not bring himself to trust Martin and never gave him the note.

GG was ecstatic about the conference. He told everyone that surely the United States would now apologize. Bucher passed the word to his men that the United States surely would not, that they would get out someday, but not through an apology.

#### A Fat Month

Food for the crew increased tenfold. GG told Bucher he was sure they would be going home by the end of October, and Bucher reckoned it might be so because they seemed to be trying to fatten everybody up. Never was the prison so relaxed. In fact the men were going so far with their insolence Bucher had to caution them to take it easy unless somebody queer the release.

GG took the men on three cultural trips, as he called them, to Pyongyang. They went to a circus, an opera, an ensemble of chorus and orchestra. They also went on an overnight train trip to Sinchon to visit a war museum—and also, Bucher opined, to re-

hearse their imminent trip to Panmunjom and freedom.

To the Americans, the "museum" was a farce. It contained photos of destruction allegedly wrought by America during the Korean war, and "evidence" of American atrocities, most of them perpetrated by a certain Lt. J. G. Harrison. A glass box held a tenpenny nail, for example, which had been "driven into the head of a pregnant woman by Lt. J. G. Harrison." Or a length of rope, "used by Lt. J. G. Harrison to drag 30 people through the

street." Or a pile of shoes which had belonged to people Lt. Harrison buried alive. Fortunately, Skip Schumacher mused, that nobody aboard the Pueblo was named Harrison.

Back at the compound, the men were summoned one at a time to a building across the athletic field which they came to call the Gypsy Tea Room. There, several men whom the crew recognized as army officers in civilian clothes clapped each sailor on the back, gave him a glass of beer

and a shot of ginseng wine and asked him if he would be willing to receive a visitor known only as "Kim" when he returned home. Most of the men said oh, sure, and put their thumbprints in red ink on an oath not to reveal what had been discussed. Then they hurried back to the dormitory to tell their shipmates all about it.

#### One Last Favor

GG said he needed one final document from the crew. Well, two. He needed another joint

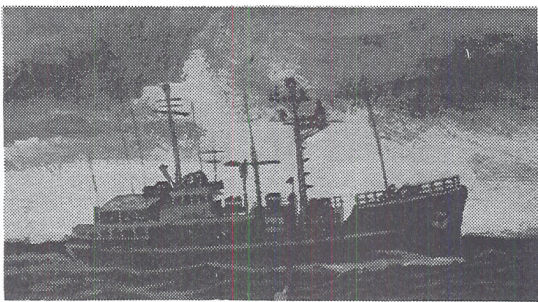
confession of the Pueblo's crimes and another joint apology to the Korean government—not to be made public. GG explained, only to be used in case the men lied when they went home. Bucher wrote both documents. He read them to the crew.

"The rosy finger of dawn," said Bucher's apology, "is now replacing the fickle finger of fate upon which we have been rotating for such a long time . . ."

The men could scarcely hold back their laughter. Bucher kept

a straight face and read on. He had trusted that the interpreter would run to his English dictionary and look up a certain obscure noun which Bucher would use as a verb, discover that it meant a song of praise, and leave the word in the document. Which the interpreter did. Bucher continued:

"We not only want to paean the North Korean government," he said, "but paean all the North Korean people as well."



## 19. WASHINGTON: the under-secretary really earned his pay

August 29 was a pleasant day in Washington, sunny, a little cool.

For Nicholas de Belleville Katzenbach, Undersecretary of State, it was another day to grapple with the problem he had faced for months, how to free the men of the Pueblo. But this day was different. A thought flashed in his mind: what if Maj. Gen. Gilbert H. Woodward, now the U.S. negotiator, were to ask Pak: "If I acknowledge receipt of the crew on a document acceptable to you, will you then be prepared to release the crew?"

The genius of the sentence was that it did not commit the United States to sign the North Korean document of May 8 containing the Three A's—apology, admission and assurance. But it put the ball squarely in Pak's court. He would have to answer what the U.S. had been seeking to learn for months: what would he do if the Americans signed a document?

"Katzenbach's breakthrough put movement in the negotiations," said James Leonard, the Korean specialist. "It was the highest degree of a lawyer's skill. He really earned his pay that day."

Since May the U.S. had been trying to put over the so-called "overwrite ploy" by which Gen. Woodward would simply sign a document "I acknowledge receipt of the 82 men and the body of seaman Hodges" or, merely, "Receipt acknowledged—Gen. Woodward."

"We were trying to make it

ambiguous," said Leonard. "They could say we signed, we could say we only signed a receipt."

#### Pak Says Maybe

The dubious battle over who was to sign what and then do what volleyed to and fro.

Woodward: If we acknowledge receipt of the crew, will you turn them loose?

Pak: Will you sign our document?

Woodward: We didn't say that. We asked if you'd release the men if we signed your document?

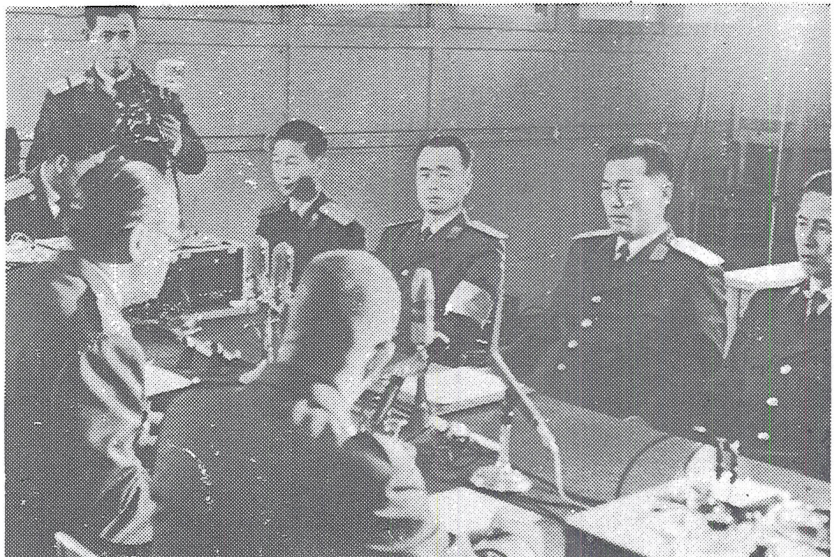
Then Pak got Katzenbach's question. On Sept. 17 he gave Woodward his answer: "If you sign our document, we'll give back the crew."

That seemed to have been that. But there was still the barrier of the overwrite.

"We could not explain our reasons for the ploy because it would only have made negotiations harder," said Leonard. Just when Washington thought final agreement was at hand in October, negotiations bogged down.

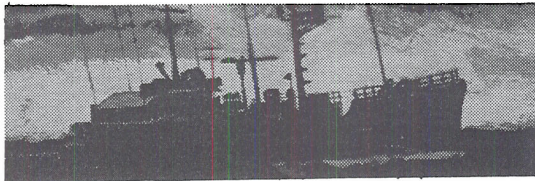
"I think the delay was due to their realization of what we were driving at—the overwrite—and they had found it totally unacceptable," said Leonard. "Or maybe they just had second thoughts. At the end of October there was a stalemate. North Korea hadn't quite rejected the overwrite, but they had not accepted it, either. They denounced us as petty tricksters."

In November, there were no negotiations.



EAST MEETS WEST across the line at Panmunjom as Maj. Gen. Woodward (with glasses) signs release as Maj. Gen. Pak (facing) sits stonily.

## 20. HELL WEEK: of them all, only one broke



That same month, in Pyongyang, the food suddenly reverted to turnips. The weekly political lectures stopped. GG quit calling on Bucher for friendly conversation. Silence chilled the camp. Bucher suspected the reason, that the North Koreans had somehow discovered the invalidating statements the men had slipped out in their confessions and letters. He passed the word that he was proud of each of them.

One evening late in the month GG called all the Pueblo officers to his office.

"I wonder why the United States suddenly reversed its position at Panmunjom?" he said icily. He said the United States had been ready to apologize but now was again contending the Pueblo was only an oceanographic research vessel.

As GG spoke, he shuffled a stack of photographs and papers on his desk. Bucher noticed an American publication with the photograph of Room 13, Goldman right up front clearly flaunting the Hawaiian good luck sign, others doing the same in the back rows. The caption read: "Once again the Navy has made fools of the Pyongyang flacks."

Bucher met Law in the head and told him of the discovery. "Tell the crew," he said, "that we might be in for a tough time." He told him to warn the men that the Hawaiian good luck sign was no longer a believable explanation for the finger gesture, and to remind them that if forced to admit anything, to admit only what they had done themselves and not what their shipmates had done. Law spread the word.

A few days later GG called Bucher to his office. The guard, Psycho, was there, along with Odd Job, a junior colonel of immense proportions. "It's going to be a long, cold winter," Bucher mused. GG told Bucher he and all his men would have to write sincere statements confessing all the "crimes" they had committed while in detention and all those that they knew others had committed and to turn in the statements the following morning.

### Bucher Confesses

The men were reassigned 12 to a room instead of eight. The lights were kept on, the doors opened and a guard stationed in the doorway of each room. Officers passed out paper and pencils.

They admitted nothing. Bucher filled 40 pages, confessing to such violations of the "Rules of Life" as lying on his bed when he wasn't supposed to. Schumacher wrote 70 pages, all of it extracts from his senior year religion seminar at Trinity College. Others in



ADM. SMITH CALLED them barbarians. Others said no one could resist oriental brutality indefinitely, but to themselves the crew was loyal...

the crew wrote about elaborate escape plans that never existed.

Next morning Silver Lips, the interpreter, came to Bucher's room with Odd Job and Psycho. Without a word, Odd Job flattened Bucher with a blow to his jaw. Then they kicked him and beat him until he was barely conscious, insensitive to the blows. At one point, while on his knees with his bloodied nose pressed against the floor, they dragged Law to the room and forced him to look at his captain.

It was a week before they translated all the confessions. Meanwhile the lights stayed on continuously, a guard glowering from the open door of every room. The men were made to sit at attention in their chairs, head down with chin pressed against

chest, hands folded in lap. They were told their confessions were not sincere, that they would have to write others. And others.

They had Schumacher pegged as an instigator and every six hours, by the clock, a guard came to his room, said nothing, beat him mercilessly. Schumacher was bemused by the hate and stupidity of it. "When you're hit the first time," he would recall later, "there's shock. But the 248th time—it just makes the bump that much higher." From his room, between beatings, Schumacher could hear the dull thuds and groans of other beatings in other rooms. So could other crewmen. "It was," said Bucher, "the most concentrated form of terror I've ever seen or dreamed possible."

When they finished with the

officers and started on the crew, they began with Room 13. A guard known as The Bear, the cruelest of the lot, worked over Monroe Goldman until, bloody and dazed, he finally admitted what they already knew from the photo caption, that the Hawaiian good luck sign actually was a gesture of derision. They tortured Harry Iredale for 36 hours. One session lasted 16 hours; another, with the chair above the head, rod behind the knees, lasted five. Iredale finally admitted he had served as an oceanographer aboard the Banner.

The Bear knew no restraint; one of his punches broke Hayes's jaw. Psycho, too, was vicious in his rage. When O'Bannon's lowered head lifted momentarily, Psycho karate-chopped him to

the floor and kicked him wildly in the groin.

For the leaders of the crew, Law and Hammond, they reserved special torture. Law remained in the interrogation room, the guards' euphemism for torture chamber, from 10 a.m. Dec. 12 until 1 a.m. Dec. 14—39 hours. During one eight-hour session they beat him with a pole two inches thick. When that broke, they beat him with both halves. When those broke, they got another pole twice as thick and beat him some more. They demanded that he admit he was a CIA agent. He refused. "Hell," he said, "I'm no CIA agent, why should I say I am?"

They tortured Hammond to a point where he considered taking his own life. He contemplated a suicide attack on the guards, to "try to take a couple of them with me." He gave up that notion and decided to fake a suicide attempt in hopes they would leave him alone. He broke a mirror, took the pieces to bed with him and tried to cut his wrists. The glass was not sharp enough. He tried lying on a shard and made a deep and painful incision in his abdomen. It frightened him; he thought he had done too good a job, that he might actually die. At length, the bleeding stopped. In the morning the guard discovered him lying in the bloody bed and was shocked. Hammond shouted at the guard, called him chicken because he wouldn't go ahead and kill him.

### One Man Talked

The brutality was unspeakable, the terror constant. Throughout, the men refused to admit to anything other than the "crimes" they had done themselves, refused to squeal on their shipmates. All except one. One man succumbed to fear and implicated two others, who were beaten. The rest of the men in the room told him that if he did it again they would kill him. That was that.

As suddenly as it had begun, the 10 days of terror which the men of the Pueblo would forever refer to as "Hell Week" just as suddenly ended.

At supper Dec. 19 instead of the usual thin stew there was fish, bread, cabbage salad, chopped pork. What was up? The men weren't permitted to talk but they could think and they all thought the same: home. They decided to toe the line. They weren't going to blow their chances.

The next day was "The Day They Forgave Us." It struck Schumacher as weird.

"They had beat the hell out of us all this time, and then they turned around and told us we were forgiven."

## 21. MRS. LEONARD: at least it was worth a try

Back in Washington, just before Hell Week, Katzenbach's team was going through some frustration of its own. The planners had pretty much decided the North Koreans were not going to accept any proposal. They would wait out the change of administration, or at least wait until the last day's of Johnson's presidency to see if he'd soften at the eleventh hour.

"We were confident they'd release the men some time because of their response to Katzenbach's proposal," said Leonard. "But we had pretty much given up on the overwrite ploy. The essence of the problem was in signing a document we flatly rejected as being untrue. Some people at State thought it was no problem. Some thought it was an insurmountable one. What would it mean to the sanctity of our commitments around the world?"

"We were conscious of our aim to maintain the purity of the record—that we had said throughout the Pueblo did not intrude."

One night in November, Jim Leonard took the problem home with him. He talked it over with his wife. What, she said, if you just formally state that what you are about to sign is false, then you don't jeopardize the record?

Leonard didn't think it would be any more effective than his wife did. It was just something you try.

But prereduplication overcame the objections of many who were against signing the document and then denouncing it. There would be no element of broken faith by prereduplication because the United States would tell the North Koreans about it in advance.

In early December, State decided to present Pak two pro-

posals, one the overwrite and the second a prereduplication statement. Woodward was to tell Pak: "It's okay with us whichever you accept provided you get the boys home by Christmas." Woodward was to stress what great importance Christmas had in American life and the great political effect a release then would have.

Back in Panmunjom on Dec. 17 Pak listened hardfaced to the interpretation of Woodward's proposal. Then Woodward listened to the translation of Pak's reply. That was it. The North Koreans would take proposal no. 2, the prereduplication statement.

### Nixon an Unknown

Why? Why would they accept a signature on something the signer said in advance was a lie?

"I think the North Koreans knew what they had to deal with

in President Johnson," said Leonard. "They knew he hadn't taken any military action against the seizure. Nixon was an unknown quantity. He had been hawkish for instance, over using U.S. might to break the siege of Dien Bien Phu.

"It's philosophical speculation, but the written word has an importance in the Oriental mind. And the Communist mind. In the Russian purge trials the Soviets regularly sought a signed protocol and then shot the man who gave it. That's an example of the Communist attachment to formal proceedings even when formal proceedings are detached from reality.

"What you have is total inconsistency—a characteristic of life.

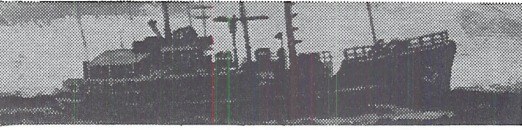
"Also they had gone about as far as they could in extracting propaganda value from the men

and in disrupting U.S.-R.O.K. relations."

On Dec. 19 Woodward and Pak spent four hours and 50 minutes working out details of the release including the number of newsmen to be present. Three days later they met again, settling what would be said in public by both countries. They agreed if either country said anything in advance, the other country could say whatever it wanted in response. But both agreed neither country would say anything beforehand.

"But," said Leonard, "we felt once we had agreement on the time of release, we couldn't hold back the news. The press, for instance, had to be moved up from Seoul." So, in Washington, the State Department announced the men of the Pueblo would at long last be coming out. That put one last delay in their hard trip home.

## 22. PANMUNJOM: Gen. Pak had one last trump



On Dec. 19, "The Day They Forgive Us," GG had two shocks for the Pueblo's men.

The first was to tell the men to remember the humane treatment they had received in captivity—this right on top of Hell Week. Then he said there was a good chance the men would be going home, that the United States was ready to apologize. That startled Bucher. He did not think his country would ever say it was sorry for something he had never done.

The North Korean said there would be a final press conference Dec. 22. The night before, Barrett's Room Daddy took him aside and "gave me the usual stuff about how well they had treated us and wouldn't it be nice going home?"

Barrett said he thought they would be freed before Christmas. "You may be right," said the Room Daddy.

At the news conference there were only eight or 10 North Koreans. The only questions were whether the men were happy to be going home. The men gave all the right answers. "We just didn't want to mess it up," said Schumacher.

Later that night the guards came and took the men individually from their rooms, one every 15 minutes. That didn't surprise Schumacher. They were always taking someone out of a room day or night. When no one came back, he began to be suspicious. Then his turn came.

He was taken to a room, stripped and given new clothing: a heavy jacket, pants and an under jacket, all gray. Then the men were gathered and put aboard four buses. This time there were no blindfolds. Instead, each prisoner was given a pack of filter-tip cigarettes and a sack of hard candy. Then the buses left for a railroad station 20 minutes away.

### Breaking Camp

Left behind were all the letters and pictures from home and a few meager souvenirs—buttons and the like that they had picked up around the play yard. Schumacher recalls Bucher had also written "Communism sucks" on the underside of his table.

Aboard the train each man had a wooden bunk and a blanket. "I asked God to make everything go right and thanked Him for making this day possible," said Schumacher.

After six hours the train reached Kaesong, and the men were put on buses for the two-hour ride to Panmunjom. The North Koreans took back the candy and cigarettes. The men were told they would be released in inverse order of rank except for the commander who would go first to verify Hodges's body. But at Panmunjom, an officer told them something had gone wrong with the negotiations. And there, in sight of freedom, they waited and wondered.

Gen. Pak, as usual, was mad. He had one more trick to play before this 29th and final meeting in the little hut over the Pueblo was to finish.

At 9 a.m. Gen. Woodward began to read the statement born of a Washington housewife.

"The position of the United States Government with regard to the Pueblo, as consistently expressed in the negotiations at Panmunjom and in public, has been that the ship was not engaged in illegal activity, that 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."

### America's Apology

Then he signed.

"To the Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea," the document began, "The Government of the United States of America, acknowledging the validity of the confessions of the crew of the USS Pueblo and of the documents of evidence produced by the representatives of the Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to the effect that the ship, which was seized by the self-defence

### PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF KOREA

The Government of the United States of America,

Acknowledging the validity of the confessions of the crew of the USS "Pueblo" and of the documents of evidence produced by the representative of the Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to the effect that the ship, which was seized by the self-defence measures of the naval vessels of the Korean People's Army in the territorial waters of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea on January 23, 1968, had illegally intruded into the territorial waters of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea on many occasions and conducted espionage activities of spying out important military and state secrets of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea,

Shoulders full responsibility and solemnly apologizes for the grave acts of espionage committed by the U.S. ship against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea after having intruded into the territorial waters of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea,

And gives firm assurance that no U.S. ships will intrude again in future into the territorial waters of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Meanwhile, the Government of the United States of America earnestly requests the Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to deal leniently with the former crew members of the USS "Pueblo" confiscated by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea side, taking into consideration the fact that these crew members have confessed honestly to their crimes and petitioned the Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea for leniency.

On behalf of the Government of the United States of America

  
Gilbert H. Woodward,

Major General, United States Army

23 Dec. 1968

(sic) measures of the naval vessels of the Korean People's Army in the territorial waters of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea on January 23, 1968, had illegally intruded into the territorial waters of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea on many occasions and conducted espionage activities of spying out important military and state secrets of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, shoulders full responsibility and solemnly apologizes for the grave acts of espionage committed by the U.S. ship against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea after having intruded into the territorial waters of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, and gives firm assurance that no U.S. ships will intrude again in future into the territorial waters of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

"Meanwhile the Government of the United States of America earnestly requests the Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to deal leniently with the former crew members of the USS Pueblo confiscated by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, taking into consideration the fact that these crew members have confessed honestly to their crimes and petitioned the Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea for leniency.

"Simultaneously with the signing of this document, the undersigned acknowledges receipt of 82 former crew members of the Pueblo and one corpse.

"On behalf of the Government of the United States of America, Gilbert H. Woodward Major General, United States Army."

That seemed to have been that. But at the moment of release, Pak said America's preannouncement had violated the agreement terms.

"I am withdrawing my agreement," he said.

There was no violation, Woodward said. It was his understanding that if one country said some-

thing beforehand, the other could make any answering statement it wanted.

"It was a violation," said Pak, "and I'm going to release the men at 11:30 instead of 11 a.m."

It was, Woodward thought, Pak's last kick in the butt.

For two-and-a-half hours the men of the Pueblo waited in their buses. The North Koreans played them a tape of one of Bucher's statements. An officer said North and South Korea should be reunited just as they were going to be reunited with their families. They were told how to cross over the line: no talking, no running, no looking back, no gestures. If any one violated the rules, they would be taken back to North Korea.

At the Bridge of No Return, they took Bucher off the bus. He went to an ambulance where Hodges's body lay in a plain wooden box. The North Koreans removed the lid and the windings from the body and asked Bucher to identify it.

"That's Hodges," he said.

Photographers took pictures. Then they put the coffin back in the ambulance and drove it across the bridge. Hodges was the first one home.

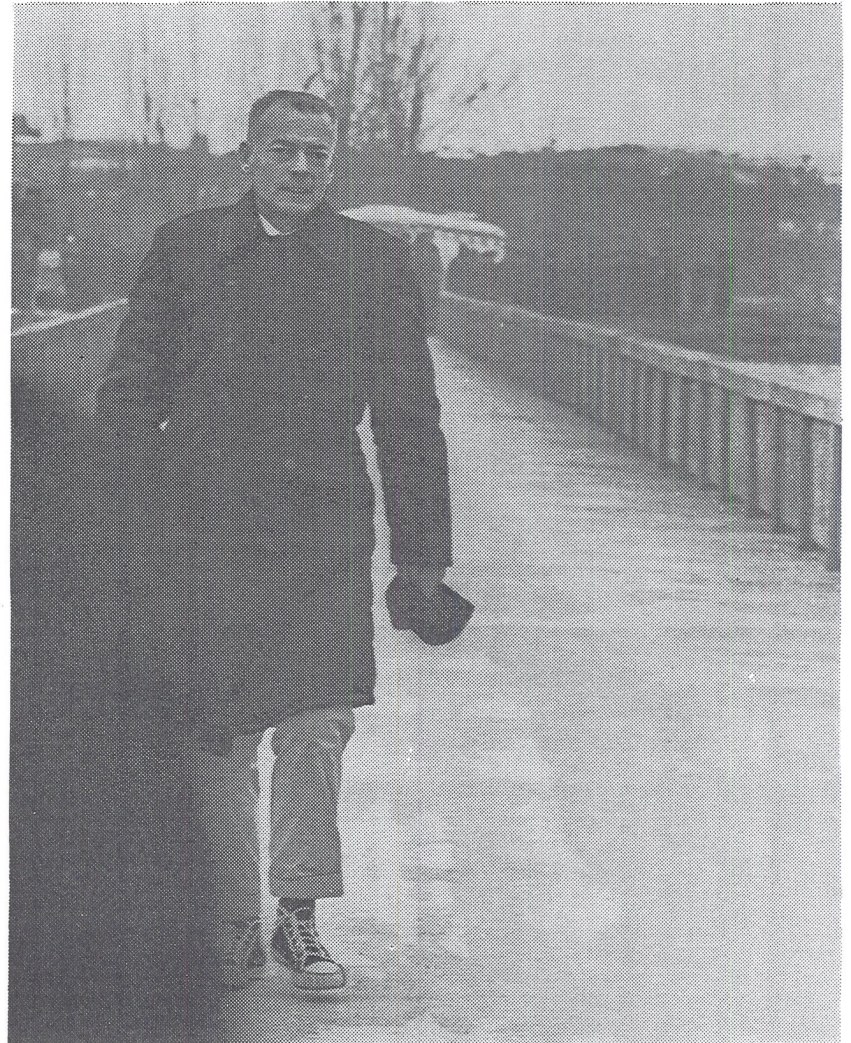
Bucher was ordered to stand at attention at a podium surrounded by doves at the end of the bridge. Out strode Gen. Pak who harangued the American for 30 minutes while he shivered in the cold. Then an interpreter gave him a 30-second translation.

#### Across the Bridge

Finally, shortly before noon on Dec. 23, 11 months to the day and almost the hour after it had all begun, the men began to walk across, Bucher going first.

At 30 second intervals the men left the buses. North Koreans lined both sides of the walkway and some stood at the far end of the bridge. McLintock thought of giving a finger salute but didn't.

Schumacher thought only of the rules he was to follow. As he passed the last guard he broke



THE FIRST OVER the bridge was the captain, to identify Hodges's body.

into a run, ran up to an American MP and kissed him.

"At last," he said to himself.

A few days before, Ginther's watch had stopped at 12:05 and

he decided not to rewind it because he thought that was when they would be released. He crossed the Bridge of No Return at noon.

Murphy was the last to come over, and then it was ended.

Whatever else he had done, Lloyd Bucher had brought his men back.



ACROSS THE BRIDGE of no return, none of the crew looked back.