

Text of Letter on the Pueblo Incident

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, March 4—*Following, as broadcast in English by the North Korean radio, is the text of an open letter said to have been signed by the crewmen of the captured American intelligence ship Pueblo and to have been addressed to President Johnson last Thursday:*

Dear Mr. President:

We, the officers, crew and civilian oceanographers of the U.S.S. Pueblo, are writing you jointly to explain the facts and those points we consider pertinent to our capture, and our detention in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and to request your assistance in our repatriation. We consider this letter to be vital to our future. We do not mean to imply that your concern for us is or has been negligent; on the contrary, our earnest desire is that you, our Commander in Chief, have the complete facts as we and the Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea know them.

We are all members of the armed forces of the United States or the Department of Defense.

'Electronic Espionage'

The U.S.S. Pueblo was designed and commissioned to conduct electronic espionage and had a detachment of men assigned who are highly trained in this field. A secondary capability was to take oceanographic measurements useful for naval operations for which two civilian oceanographers were assigned.

We were operating under official U. S. Navy orders issued to us by Commander, Naval Forces, Japan, our operational commander. Our orders were approved and sanctioned by the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Chief of Naval Operations.

Our ship, in order to obtain electronic and visual intelligence, intruded into the territorial waters of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea at the following points:

- 1—9.8 miles from Kal-dan, north of Chongjin;
- 2—11.2 miles from Orang-dan;
- 3—10.75 miles and 11.3 miles from Pan-do, east of Songjin;
- 4—8.2 miles from Ansong-gap in the Mayang-do area;
- 5—7.6 miles from Yo-do in the Wonsan area.

As we were ordered, we concentrated our intelligence collection efforts during the 10 days in the coastal waters of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, in the vicinity of four ports: Chong-

jin, Songjin, Mayang-do, and Wonsan. We sampled the electronic environment with emphasis on collecting various information on the naval forces of the Korean People's Army and intercepting and locating radars along the coast. We also intercepted communications and detected observation posts and military objects located on the coast. We were captured while committing hostile acts 7.6 miles from Yo-do in the vicinity of Wonsan in the territorial waters of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea on 23 January 1968.

Immediately following the capture we attempted to deny the real purpose of our operation and our intrusions into the territorial waters, hoping to safeguard national security and our national honor. However, we could not long deny the facts since the Korean People's Army had in their possession our documents, which revealed the real purpose of our operation and the ship's position logs and charts, which proved our intrusions into the territorial waters of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

In light of this damning evidence and our later honest convictions that we had gravely wronged the Korean people, we sincerely and openly confessed everything. We then wrote a joint letter of apology to the Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and asked for leniency.

Since our detention we have been treated humanely. We are provided with all the necessities for daily living. In fact, the treatment we are receiving is clearly beyond expectation. Our wounded have been treated and are now in the final stages of recovery.

Apology Sought

It is legitimate for the Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to insist that before our repatriation can be realized, the necessary amenities be made by our Government, under whose orders we operated. Specifically, we believe that since the real facts of the Pueblo case have been fully revealed to the world, our repatriation can be realized only when our Government frankly admits the fact that we intruded into the territorial waters of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and committed hostile acts, and sincerely apologizes for these acts and gives assurance that they will not be repeated.

We have had many hours of solitude since our deten-

tion to reflect and consider the nature of our offense, and rather than harboring resentment toward the Korean people for our capture, we have a strong feeling of guilt for the act we committed.

We have formed the opinion that espionage such as we conducted is an unjust infringement upon the sovereignty of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and undermines completely any chance for honesty in international understanding. This is our belief and does not concern the question of the necessity for vigilance to insure the security of the United States.

Mr. President, the immense weight of evidence that confirms the Pueblo's intrusions into the territorial waters of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and its espionage acts is overwhelming and cannot be refuted.

A vast majority of us are in our 20's and have most of our lives yet to live. We could discuss at length our hopes for their futures but we think that you understand our desire for prompt repatriation.

'No Word of Families'

We know that you do not consider us as mere pawns, but as U.S. naval officers and men who attempted to do only as they were ordered. More importantly, we know that you value us as citizens of our country of which you are President.

We firmly believe now that you have the facts, that you will take all the necessary steps for our expeditious return.

We have had no word of our families and loved ones at home since our capture. We are torn by sorrow, suspense and longing for news of their well-being and are certain that they are even more worried about us. We depend on you to reunite us with them as soon as possible. We all truly love our country and are torn by grief and longing for our families. In summation, Mr. President, our future happiness and the well-being of the many hundreds of Americans in our families is in your hands. We do not doubt that you will see us swiftly returned.

Very respectfully, the commanding officer, officers, civilian oceanographers and crew of the U.S.S. Pueblo (AGER-2).