

PUEBLO CREWMEN REPORTED IN PLEA

North Koreans Say Letters
Urge U.S. to Apologize

TOKYO, March 22 (UPI)—North Korea broadcast tonight what it said were five letters to President Johnson, Congressmen and families written by Pueblo crewmen admitting espionage.

The broadcast said some asserted that a refusal by the United States to apologize could cost the lives of the 82-man crew of the Navy intelligence ship, which was captured Jan. 23 off North Korea.

Also during the broadcast, the Communist regime made a new promise of leniency "if the United States imperialists make proper apology to us and give assurances that it will not repeat similar hostile acts."

The Pyongyang radio said one of the five crewmen had written:

"I sincerely believe that it

would be such a waste to sacrifice the American lives of this ship to deny what black-and-white documents prove otherwise."

North Korea has said that the Pueblo was in its territorial waters when seized and that it had repeatedly violated those waters.

The United States has insisted that the intelligence ship was in international waters when the North Koreans boarded it but has left open the possibility it might have strayed off course.

The North Koreans have demanded a formal apology, which the United States has declined thus far to give.

The letter including the word "sacrifice" was attributed to a crewman identified as Petty Officer 3d Cl. Darrel D. Wright. The broadcast said it was addressed to Senator Eugene McCarthy, Democrat of Minnesota.

Seaman Stephen P. Ellis was said to have written to Senator George Murphy, Republican of California.

"The 82 men of the Pueblo are hoping that their lives are worth an apology from our Government. I believe it is only

when my Government apologizes will the crew of the Pueblo be allowed to return to their country and their loved ones."

Petty Officer Wayne D. Anderson was quoted as having told Senator Richard Russell, Democrat of Georgia:

"There can be little doubt that our punishment will be severe."

According to the broadcast, Petty Officer 3d Cl. Angelo S. Strano wrote to President Johnson to express surprise "at the humanitarian way" the North Koreans had been treating the Pueblo crewmen.

"However," he was said to have added, "unless the United States takes quick measures to solve this case, I don't know how long this treatment will last."

The broadcast also said Petty Officer 3d Cl. Charles W. Ayling had written to his family in Staunton, Va.:

"I have apologized to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea for my part in the Pueblo's activities. The Korean People's Army now has in its hands incriminating evidence against the Pueblo."