

Bucher Calls Captors 'Cruel and Brutal Savages'

By BERNARD WEINRAUB
Special to The New York Times

CORONADO, Calif., March 10 —Comdr. Lloyd M. Bucher said in a voice quavering with emotion today that the North Koreans were "cruel and brutal savages" who pulled the legs off baby birds.

"We could expect to receive the same treatment they gave to the small crawling creatures they tortured with lighted sticks," Commander Bucher told the court of inquiry here today. "I never once saw them pass a dog without kicking him," he added.

"It's just their mentality, the way they were brought up," he said slowly. "These people are basically cruel and brutal savages."

Commander Bucher appeared in his own behalf at the afternoon session of the inquiry into the seizure of the Pueblo in January, 1968. With his voice cracking at times, and trailing off, he recalled the crew's treatment and told in detail of the propaganda that taught North Koreans "from the age of two" to hate Americans.

"We would see a movie every week and they would always have someone asking a little kid, 'Well, Johnny or Susie, what do you want to do when you grow up?'"

Goal Is to Kill

"The kid would always reply, 'I want to kill an American,'" said Commander Bucher, facing the court of five admirals. "Their movies are full of this crap. They kept this hatred at a high pitch."

E. Miles Harvey, Commander Bucher's attorney, asked: "Why do you think the Koreans use brutality?"

"I saw the Koreans on numerous occasions from the window of my room," said the Pueblo's 41-year-old-skipper. "I watched them—both the men and women in uniform, the maids on the compound who prepared and served food."

"I saw them do such things as pull the legs off baby birds who had fallen from their nests," said Commander Bucher. "I saw them take a toad and pull it apart. It's a common practice."

Earlier, a Navy vice admiral termed the North Koreans "mad dogs" and said they would have "welcomed" a war with the United States over the seizure of the Pueblo.

In 40 minutes of testimony before the court of inquiry here, Vice Adm. John V. Smith, the senior member of the United Nations negotiating team in Panmunjom when the Pueblo was captured, called the North Koreans "Mongolian savages . . . disciplined rabble . . . and one step above animals."

Admiral Smith, a veteran of 35 years in the Navy, was the

32% More Needed

Increased assistance to the members of our armed forces and their families, and to victims of fires, floods, tornadoes and other disasters, along with the situation in Biafra, Vietnam and the Middle East have put a severe strain on the Red Cross this year. (In Biafra alone, the Red Cross is currently airlifting up to 100 tons of food a day over Nigerian lines.) Since money for all Red Cross programs, local, national and international, must be collected by local chapters, Red Cross in New York is now faced with a monumental task.

It needs 32 per cent more than last year. This is Red Cross month. Contributions may be sent to the Red Cross, New York, N. Y. 10023.

highest ranking officer called so far before the court, which is starting its eighth and possibly final week of inquiry into the seizure of the intelligence ship. The admiral was the first witness to be summoned by Mr. Harvey.

At this morning's hearing, Mr. Harvey also placed into evidence a personal note sent by President Johnson to Commander Bucher's wife, Rose, on Feb. 23, 1968, one month after the Pueblo was seized by North Korean submarine chasers and torpedo boats.

Found 'Details Obscured'
A portion of the letter was read in open court by Mr. Harvey. Standing before the inquiry's five admirals, the 38-year-old business attorney from San Diego read:

"Frankly, precise details of the seizure remain obscured. It will take time to reconstruct the incident, even after your husband and his crew are home with a first-hand account."

"We do know that Commander Bucher faced a heavy responsibility. On present information we have every reason to believe that he handled himself to the best of his ability."

"Let me offer one further assurance," President Johnson wrote. "Your husband's reputation among those comrades who know him best is high and strong."

The peak of this morning's hearing, however, was the testimony by Admiral Smith, a tall, bespectacled Annapolis graduate who spoke with such vehemence about the North Koreans that some of the admirals seated in the inquiry flinched.

Speaking in the packed Naval amphitheater, Admiral Smith termed his six months of nego-

tiating with the North Koreans "a most unpleasant experience."

"It eventually turns one's stomach," he said with a trace of a snarl.

"I had to ask myself a question in the six months I was there," Admiral Smith observed at one point: "What do you say to a Mongolian savage who holds 82 of your countrymen as hostages?"

Mr. Harvey asked Admiral Smith for his "personal opinion" of the Koreans.

The admiral paused a moment. "The North Koreans as well as South Koreans are of Mongolian descent," he said.

"They have many years of trying to survive in a cruel climate."

"Eking out a bare existence has made these people a hearty and cruel race," he went on. "Further north . . . they're more cruel."

Admiral Smith said that since 1945 the "influence of democracy" has had an ameliorating effect on the South Koreans.

"In the north it's just the opposite," he went on. "I would call it a malignant exacerbation."

"I would call [premier] Kim Il Sung an imposter," Admiral Smith said in a rising voice.

"He was actually a major in the Russian Army until he was put in charge by Stalin. He is the state. As one of the Louis' may have said 'L'estate 'est moi.' [I am the state.]"

Possibly 'Wanted A War'

"I have stated many times since my return from Korea that Kim Il Sung at least would have welcomed, perhaps even would have wanted a war at that time," he observed, moments later. "It's a result of hindsight. The seizure of a public vessel of a sovereign nation on the high seas has been a cause for war in the past."

Admirals Smith, who is now commander of the Pacific Fleet's amphibious force, with headquarters in Coronado, said that North Korea had been "trying to avoid the mistake of 1950" when the United States and other nations moved in defense of South Korea after the attack from the north.

He indicated that after capturing the Pueblo North Korea was seeking "retaliation" as a pretext for war since the United States would be unable to claim that South Korea was being defeated.

He said that "that fact that the North Koreans seized the ship was indeed a surprise because our ships had operated off the Chinese and Russians coasts with complete protection because they were in international waters."

"These people are mad dogs," the vice admiral said slowly, leaning towards the microphone before him. "They are Communists. They take their cues from the U.S.S.R. and Communist China. Neither of these countries violated international waters."

'Step Above Animals'

A member of the court, Rear Adm. Edward E. Grimm, asked: "Do you think they have any respect for the Geneva Convention?"

"These people just don't have any regard for the things we think are important," replied Admiral Smith. "They are one step above animals—that is the low level people. The top level are intelligent, but completely without scruples or conscience."

He said Premier Kim Il Sung "willfully and cynically violates" the armistice agreement that ended the Korean war. "He sends disciplined rabble south of the D.M.Z.," said Admiral Smith angrily. "He stirs up trouble. He creates a pretty bad situation."

