

THE SHIPYARD at Bremerton, Washington where the Pueblo was reconditioned.

valves. In his charge were the Pueblo's two gray, General Motors 480-horsepower engines. Like Lacy, he had served during the Korean war. But nobody told Goldman much about his new mission, not even its general purpose. He figured the Pueblo was an oceanographic ship and never seriously considered the possibility of having to scuttle her.

Another engineman, Ruchel Blansett Jr., 33, from Orange, Calif., shared Goldman's curiosity about the mission. He would screw up a frown on his big, round face and puzzle about it. Nobody briefed Blansett or any of the crew. But Blansett had a hunch because of all the locked doors there was sensitive material on board.

Whatever their hunches, most of the crew didn't talk much about them.

"We were told not to," Blansett said.

It sure doesn't seem like a cargo ship, thought Armando Canales when he arrived to become the Pueblo's yeoman. Entrusted to him were some of the ship's administrative records and the service records of the crew. He had left his family's restaurant, the Casa Canales in Fresno, Calif., to join the Navy 14 years before. Now he was preparing reports and smoothing out the rough drafts of official correspondence the skipper banged out on his portable typewriter.

Not even the Pueblo's senior quartermaster, a husky sailor named Charles Law, 25, from Chehalis, Wash., had any idea what the ship's mission was—or where she was going. Law, a gregarious sailor who liked liberty and to buy drinks for the house, but also was a studious and dedicated seaman, quickly earned the admiration of his shipmates at Puget Sound and won their confidence. They told Law when he reported that the only information they had been vouchsafed about the Pueblo's mission was that it was legal and they were carrying out orders. Nothing more.

Routine Duty

No one had occasion, Law said, to wonder very seriously about whether they were on hazardous duty, and so no one put in for premium pay. It never entered his mind that someday he might have to defend his ship. Law was the only enlisted man aboard the Pueblo to qualify as an officer of the deck.

The mission wasn't even discussed in the wardroom, said oceanographer Dunny Tuck, 31, of Richmond, Va. He and Harry Iredale, 24, were civil service employees of the Defense Department put on board to test sea

water. They ate and slept with the officers.

Other men were even deeper in the dark. Even after they arrived at their destination, said signalman Wendell Leach, 24, "some of them didn't know what land they were looking at."

In charge of the 26 communications technicians was a shy lieutenant named Stephen Harris. He was 32, born and bred in New England and of a family of sailing captains whose motto was *Amor Patriae Exitat* — "Love of Country Motivates Me." He was educated at Harvard and was fluent in four foreign languages, including Russian. He liked Rachmaninoff and the esoteric history of street cars. His voice was soft, and he wore black horn-rimmed glasses.

Command Divided

Harris was in charge of the Sod Hut, its mysteries and who could come and go through its triple-locked doors. In fact, there seemed to be a strange autonomy about the way he operated.

Bucher outranked him, and Bucher was the captain of the Pueblo. But on this strange ship it became apparent that the captain didn't have total authority over everything on board.

It was Harris who had operational and administrative control over the Sod Hut and what went on inside.

Adm. John J. Hyland, commander in chief of the Pacific Fleet, (CINCPACFLT) made it clear the communications technicians weren't working for Bucher. They were working for Harris.

Bucher wasn't "intimately aware" of two or three of the things Harris and his men were doing, and he was "given to understand" that it wouldn't be necessary for him to find out.

All this was alien to the experience of nearly every captain of a ship in the entire Navy.

To aid in the Pueblo's mission, Lawrence Mack, 33, now of San Diego, was assigned as the ship's photographer. He wasn't entirely clear at first just what the mission was. But he did find out the Pueblo needed a darkroom. So he put one together in the crew's head.

The ship's only gunner's mate was Kenneth Wadley, 28, a Navy veteran of 13 years from Carthage, Miss. The only other crewman with any practical experience as a gunner was engineman Roy Jay Maggard, 20, and he had gotten his experience in the Army.

A Crew Conflict

A dark-haired lieutenant from Principia College, Edward R. Murphy, arrived in May 1967 to become Bucher's executive offi-

cer. He began handling personnel assignments, manpower authorizations, calibrating navigational equipment and training the crew—particularly in navigation. As executive officer, Murphy would be the Pueblo's navigator.

He came to the Pueblo from the USS Robinson, a destroyer. His entire experience had been with surface ships. And this produced an occasional conflict with his submarine-oriented commanding officer.

Bucher was accustomed to the cooperation available to the close-knit submarine service from other submariners, in port and at sea. Some of the crew thought their skipper felt Murphy wasn't getting enough done, perhaps because the skipper had difficulty understanding the way surface ships must fend for themselves.

"Mr. Murphy had a limited amount of sea experience, especially from an administrative point of view," Bucher said. "Because of this limited experience, I was required to give Mr. Murphy much more detailed instructions . . . I expected perhaps too much from Mr. Murphy in preparing the ship's organization."

Murphy was straighter-laced than his captain, too, and perhaps more polished. But Bucher had cause, nonetheless, to respect him.

Rescue at Sea

Not many months before, Murphy had been awarded the Navy-Marine Corps medal for saving the lives of three fishermen. He swam through surf and undertow to their capsized boat, carried a line to two of them and helped the third, suffering from shock, back to shore.

The officers and men of the USS Pueblo weren't a handpicked crew, but somewhat select nonetheless. When the Pueblo had needed a quartermaster, for example, if there were six available, it got the best one.

The ship wasn't so large, either, that its men would spend their voyage as strangers. They generally got along well together. Several moved their families into the Bremerton area on the pine-covered Kitsap Peninsula. Some dropped in for an occasional beer at the Crow's Nest, or into Bernie's to tease a pert, dark-haired barmaid named Peni, who would remember them months later.

"Bucher, I even knew him to say hello," she would say.

But time dragged. One night a friend asked Bucher to play a little poker. He said okay, and sat down at a table in the old Gorman Hotel. Minutes later, 17 police officers raided the place. Police Chief John E. Plouf said Bucher was arrested and charged with frequenting a place where

gambling was occurring. Bail was set at \$50, but Bucher never appeared in court. He forfeited bond.

Weeks passed and the men watched the shipyard workers put the finishing touches on the Pueblo. The workmen wired up a glass-covered bulletin board for the Code of Conduct for prisoners of war and gave the ship its final coats of paint: first red primer, then haze gray on vertical portions and darker gray on the decks. They painted the fire mains red, gasoline containers yellow, deck fittings white and put a black watchcap on the smokestack.

Finally, commissioning day came. It was Saturday, May 13, 1967. The crew draped the Pueblo in bunting. A band played. Gulls flew. The sun beat straight down.

At precisely noon, Father Flannigan's successor at Boys Town, Monsignor Nicholas H. Wegner, blessed the Pueblo's blunt prow and invoked God's grace upon the crew.

Dr. James A. Crutchfield, professor of economics at the University of Washington, made a speech. He had been named by the President to the National Oceanographic Study Committee.

"Aye, aye, sir," Bucher replied as a representative of the Navy Department read his orders before an assemblage of brass, friends and kin gathered to wish the Pueblo godspeed.

Skipper Takes Over

Then Lt. Cmdr. Lloyd Mark Bucher accepted service into the United States Navy on behalf of his ship, the USS Pueblo. Its ensign was hoisted to the National Anthem, and Bucher set the first watch.

The commissioning gave the Pueblo a soul, a female soul because she was a ship, a lifetime soul. As long as there was a piece of her afloat, there would always be a Pueblo.

Below decks, Electricians Mate Gerald W. Hagenson started her vent motors and flicked on her outside lights to show that the ship had life. And the captain put the ship's plaque over his bunk.

It was time for sea trials. Bucher pulled the Pueblo away from the pier and steamed out through Puget Sound, all 906 tons of his ship responding well.

At full power she would hit 12 to 12½ knots, 13 knots at flank speed. With her big rudder and twin screws, Bucher could put her any place he wanted. He enjoyed handling her. But in a heavy sea, her small-ship characteristics began to show. Her bow swung widely, and she was hard to keep on course.

First Trouble

During one of these sea trials, a steering cable snapped. Under

30,000 pounds of stress, it ripped through 6-inch pieces of steel like a gun shell.

Steering with his engines, Bucher made his way back to the shipyard for repairs.

It dawned on him that steering from the engine room would be difficult—and if he ever wanted to do it, he'd have to leave at least one man on the bridge because there was no compass below.

On her final inspection trials, the Pueblo encountered an outboard runabout, the Kittyhawk, stranded without power in the narrow main channel of Rich Passage.

Its skipper, his family and two other passengers were paddling to avoid a ferryboat. The tide was flooding so Bucher brought the Pueblo close by. He took the party aboard and towed the outboard back to the shipyard.

Finally, on Sept. 11, Bucher pointed the Pueblo away from Puget Sound for the last time and headed south.

The voyage went well. As they sailed, the men trained at shipboard duties, worked on correspondence courses for promotion and spent idle time writing letters.

They arrived off San Diego a day early. So they drilled some more and anchored at sea to await clearance to enter port in the morning.

The San Diego stopover was for more crew training. Half the men had never been to sea before—particularly the communications technicians in the Sod Hut.

They took on board a tow-headed, young operations officer, Lt. (jg) Frederick C. Schumacher. Everybody called him Skip.

"It looks awfully small," Schumacher thought when he first saw the Pueblo. It obviously wasn't a fighting ship. "No watertight integrity. You couldn't button it up and feel safe inside."

More Secrecy

Not until he got security clearance did he discover what kind of a ship the Pueblo really was. And then they told him to keep it secret.

Schumacher, 24, was a graduate of Trinity College in Connecticut. He had been thinking of becoming a minister. But then he decided he should do something to broaden his knowledge of Americans. So he joined the Navy. He went to Officer Candidate School, and from there to the USS Vega.

Then he came to the Pueblo, where he hit it off with the captain right away. Together, they completed the ship's organization.

It was about this time that Duane Hodges started doubting what the Navy was saying about the Pueblo and how it was an oceanographic research ship. Hodges flew home to Oregon one weekend on leave.

"Dad," he said, "I don't know what's going on. But they've put on a bunch of electrical equipment. And they won't tell us what it's all about."

He got another weekend leave in October. His mother fixed him some cherry pie.

Meanwhile, the captain had driven his wife and two sons down from Bremerton and put them up at the Bahia Motor Hotel in San Diego to await his return from sea duty some time the next year.

In the tradition of the submarine corps, he had given the ship a theme song: "The Lonely Bull", a driving arrangement of Mexican Brass. Finally, at 5 a.m. on Monday, November 6, 1967, with "The Lonely Bull" ringing from her IMC loudspeaker system, the lonely ship with her cargo of mystery stood out of San Diego and headed west to begin her long journey.



3. SPYING: what do you pay for survival?

In a simpler time, a sea voyage in a Navy ship was clear cut. In peace: be vigilant. In war: meet the enemy and engage.

But 1967 was not a simple time. War had become cold but with an awesomely low boiling point. Armageddon seemingly could spark from the misreading of a crossed wire sending a false signal. And it could come, too, from the failure to intercept a true signal.

That was why Pueblo's Sod Hut was a myriad of electronics, the compact refinement of hundreds of millions of dollars of research. For she was a ship of spies. Some of her crew—a few—knew it. Some—most—could only swap scuttlebutt.

It is called ELINT—electronic intelligence. It is the price of admission and perhaps survival in a new world. It is a listening game, and only a major power can afford to play.

The Navy's choice of such dowdy carriers for the electronic spies of this struggle was not unintentional. Russia uses everyday trawlers, more than 40 of them. The U.S. has about a dozen ELINT ships, although other Navy vessels carry such equipment.

While the spikes and domes of their antennae belie their seeming innocence, Washington has reached a tacit gentleman's agreement with the Soviets. If they stay outside the American three-mile limit and don't unduly hinder U.S. warships on their appointed rounds by sailing too close aboard, they may stay in peace. Or, at least, non-war.

But the risk of provocative incident remains: a too-close warning shot across a bow, a too dangerous flirting with jealously defined coastal waters, an air spy moving close all the better to hear.

Spying at Sea

Gary Powers and his U-2 have become history. So has the RB-47 and its crew of three shot down over Russia. Russian planes, too, arc over the North Pole to excite American radar stations and learn their reactions. Russian trawlers bob innocently outside U.S. bases around the world logging the comings and goings of Polaris missile submarines. They snoop after American carriers in the Mediterranean and the Gulf of Tonkin. They cruise slowly past American coastal radars. Listening.

"Anything that approaches the coast of a hostile country, any one of those damn missions, could get us into hot water be-

cause the other side doesn't know what the mission is coming to do," said Rep. Otis Pike of New York, a man who would come to know much about ELINT.

From 1949-61 U.S. ships and planes were involved in 33 ELINT "incidents." From 1961 to this April there were eight such.

But if there are risks, there are rewards. When Russia put missiles in Cuba in 1962, it was an American spy ship that first detected them by picking up signals associated with their radar control. U-2s confirmed their existence photographically.

During the 1967 Israeli-Egyptian war, Nasser and Hussein claimed U.S. planes had attacked them. Russian ELINT ships in the Mediterranean enabled Moscow to know otherwise. "It was extremely important to us under those circumstances that the Soviets know that," said former Defense Secretary Robert S. McNamara.

So once a month at one of their tri-weekly afternoon meetings, the Joint Chiefs of Staff consider a docket of proposed ELINT missions.

The Chiefs Decide

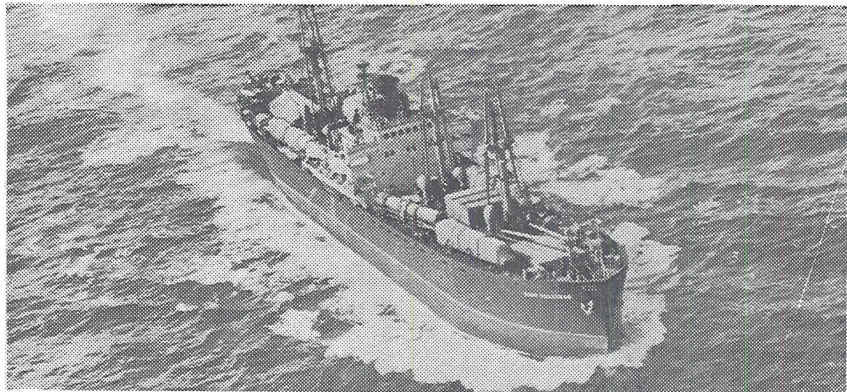
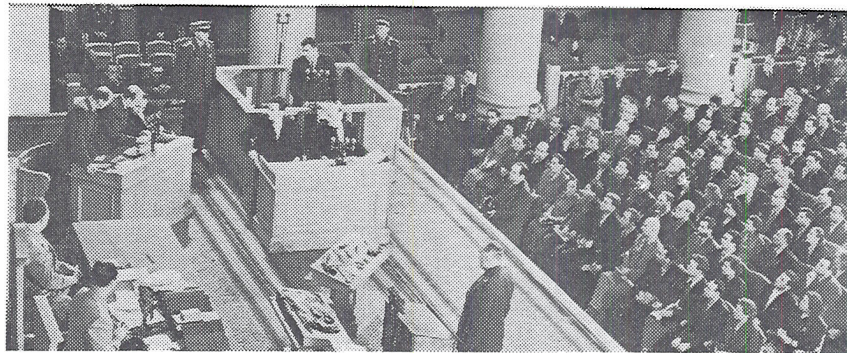
The docket is compiled from missions proposed by the intelligence staffs of the various services and other government agencies. In the morning before the JCS meeting, an intelligence and an operations aide briefs each chief of his service's proposals. If he finds the mission acceptable, he can approve it at that level. If he has a question or a reservation, the mission is presented to the JCS for their decision.

"About 80 per cent of the missions are approved at the JCS level because one or more members has a question," said Gen. Earle Wheeler, chairman of the joint chiefs.

"We try to balance risk with necessity. We recognize some sensitive spots, but the risk has to be taken. At the beginning of the Korean War, there was such an intelligence lack, it was 11 hours after the North Koreans attacked before people were sure this was a major attack. This is what we are trying to preclude."

As she made her passage west, the Pueblo still had not received her mission assignments. But an old shipmate of hers had been at work spying in the Orient for several years. She was FP343, the sistership from Kewaunee launched by Helen Brogan and now called the Banner.

Spying, electronically or through a keyhole, is not a highly publicized activity, but it is gen-



IT IS CALLED ELINT. Electronic intelligence gathering—spying—has led to embarrassment, such as the fate of U-2 pilot Gary Powers (above), and to valuable dividend, as spotting bases in Cuba for ocean-delivered Russian missiles (below).

erally recognized what ships such as the Banner are capable of doing.

Undersea Fingerprints

One phase is simple: spot Communist surface shipping and naval movements, identify and photograph the vessels. Spotting submarines is more complex. Sonars pick up from miles away the sounds of a submarine's wake turbulence, propeller vibrations and the like. Each submarine has its own characteristic sound, like a fingerprint. The sonar readings are tape recorded and compared with a library of previously taped readings of known submarines and their movements are thus monitored.

Radar spying involves determining such characteristics as wave length and pulse and frequency and recording them. Knowing these, the sets can be jammed by electronic static or fooled by sending false bounce-backs on their own frequencies, in time of attack, disguising the actual position of an airplane or ship. Such detection can also be done in tandem with a plane that

flies into range of the radar while the ELINT ship listens offshore.

The ships also lie to and simply listen to civilian and military radio bands picking up whatever comes over, be it a weather broadcast, news program or talk between MIG pilots and their bases. What may seem trivial on first hearing may be highly important when pieced in with other intelligence.

Ships are ideal for some ELINT work because they can stay on station for long periods. But they have one disadvantage: they have to live close inshore to be able to pick up radar waves which don't normally bend around the curvature of the earth except in the case of some anti-missile sets. Planes are useful because they can pick up radar from great distances. Submarines, too, have an advantage in being able to drop from sight—although not sound—but the Navy will not say if it uses subs for ELINT. Nor if Pete Bucher was chosen for his first command because of any ELINT experience during his submarine days. But he, himself, would speak after taking command of the Pueblo of "my long standing familiarity with the program."

Pike would only say: "There are more sophisticated missions by sea than the Pueblo was sent on." This could have been an allusion to an oceanwide network of robot hydrophones left on the bottom to listen.

How Valuable?

In any event, there are, as Pike has said, "thousands—I stress thousands—of reconnaissance missions conducted by our military each year which approach sensitive areas such as territorial waters and airspace of Communist bloc countries. If you compare our intelligence budget with any of our adversaries', ours is the largest. We, of course, are an open society and theirs is not. But unless we take some measure of the cost of our effort, we can't put any value judgment on the bits and pieces and how worth-

while all this is."

On the other hand, any scrap of information that can forewarn of a nuclear Pearl Harbor is beyond value. To be surprised in a cold war is to be dead. And to be uninformed is to invite surprise. For both sides.

"I think most people would say information is valuable and stabilizing," said a State Department official. "It serves the cause of peace to have reliable information."

So the Pentagon listens. The Central Intelligence Agency listens. The National Security Agency's very, very secret electronic gear listens. Russia listens. And, now, the Pueblo.

The bow of the little freighter cut through the sea westward, leaving a "V" that foamed and then died astern. But long before her crew would return to the dun hills of their homeland now dropping below the horizon, they would send back a question that would unsettle many of their countrymen.

Drafted Spies

What, it would ask, are the duties that can be asked and expected of a sailor in a cold war?

Espionage has traditionally been a business for volunteers. Should world conditions now justify that agents be drafted—unwittingly?

The late Allen Dulles suggested when he was head of the CIA that in a back alley fight for survival, The Marquis of Queensbury sometimes comes out second best.

And Otis Pike was to say, later: "The normal concept of a military operation has the assumption that if you are in the U.S. Navy, the Navy will take care of you. You have the whole might of the United States behind you. But on a mission like this, you don't have that assumption. I don't think you can possibly say that you have to tell a man everything he is going to do. But these were men going out into the cold, like a spy."

And most of them, alone now on the sea, did not know it.



U.S. COAST GUARD cutter shadows a Russian spy trawler.

4. AT SEA: occasionally the ship broke down



Once at sea, the men of the Pueblo had more mundane matters than espionage to contend with. A short way out, the helmsman cranked the wheel in the pilot house and the ship's steering motors broke contact, leaving her adrift. It took 20 minutes to fix. Only to have it go out once more—about 62 times in all during the voyage across the Pacific. Each time the crew would groan: "It's done it again."

Between steering repairs, the men drilled at their sea duties until the skipper felt by the time they were ordered on station, they would be ready.

But it wasn't all work. Porpoises ran ahead of the ship and followed it much of the way into the western Pacific. And the men spotted whales and flying fish.

They watched movies in the crew's mess. "Deadlier Than the Male" was a favorite.

Most of the films got two show-

ings, one at 4 p.m. and the other around 7:30 p.m. But "Deadlier Than the Male" was shown three or four times.

When the movies weren't on, the television was when in range of shore. It was a black and white portable, high on a bulkhead in a rack built by the shipyard, so everybody could see it.

Don Peppard, Michael Barrett and other communications technicians (C.T.s) started playing Monopoly. Soon it became the ship's game. But nobody won consistently enough to be the champion.

Chuck Sterling, a C.T., had established himself as the ship's comedian. And Harry Lewis, the Negro cook, took honors as the best rifle shot on board.

Target Practice

He used a carbine the captain kept in the pilot house for shooting floating mines. Some of the

men also used it to shoot at sea gulls, but they never hit one.

Responsible along with Lewis for preparing food were commissary Ralph E. Reed, a 200-pounder from Perdix, Pa., and boyish-faced Dale Rigby, the ship's 19-year-old baker.

The only complaints they got were when they served too much pot roast, usually disguised with different sauces, but still pot roast.

At night, when the men weren't watching movies, some listened to music on two tape recorders, one given to the ship by her namesake, the city of Pueblo, Colo., at her commissioning and the other purchased from recreation funds.

Or they asked the ship's medic, Hospital Corpsman Herman Baldrige, who doubled as the ship's librarian, to open the glass bookshelves that held autobiographies, histories, novels and some unclassified technical publications.

The Pueblo arrived in Hawaii on Nov. 14. As workmen tried to figure out how to fix the steering, Bucher reported to CINCPACFLT for more briefings on his mission.

No Help

He was told he would be operating off the coast of Korea. What could he expect if he got into trouble out there?

A captain on Adm. Hyland's operations staff told him the Navy "has plans to react, as well as the Air Force through the Joint Chiefs of Staff, but because of the commitments of aircraft on the line and ready to go which they must fulfill in the event of general war . . . it is not too likely that the Navy or the Air Force could come to . . . assistance (in time) to save the ship."

Bucher didn't tell his officers or men. He didn't want to worry

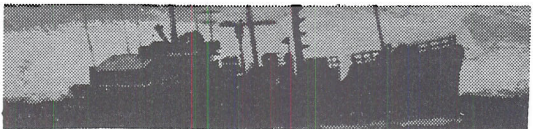
them. Besides, nobody at any of the briefings indicated there would be any trouble; and he didn't expect any.

He took time out to buy his wife a little bowl of stylized Talisman roses and sent them back to San Diego for her birthday. And Duane Hodges wrote home, still puzzled about his mission. He sent his mother a Bible.

The Pueblo finally departed Hawaii on November 18 for the longest leg of its voyage—a 13-day passage to Japan. The steering broke again. Bucher had to switch to manual steering the rest of the way. That took two men on the helm, including occasional C.T.s who were glad to be topside to relieve their seasickness.

The Pueblo labored westward and finally the men saw their first sign of the Orient. The TV set began picking up stations in Japan.

5. JAPAN: the admiral said don't start a war



After arriving December 1, she lay at dockside at Yokosuka, readying for duty after thousands of hours of planning, many millions of dollars of research. Yet she would go to sea alone, really, with but one safeguard: in 150 years no one had ever seized an American naval vessel on the high seas. The presumption at all levels behind her mission was: it isn't done.

International agreement said as much: "Warships on the high seas have complete immunity from the jurisdiction of any state . . ." read the Law of the Sea codified by convention at Geneva in 1958. To American sea lawyers, even an intrusion of territorial waters did not justify seizure.

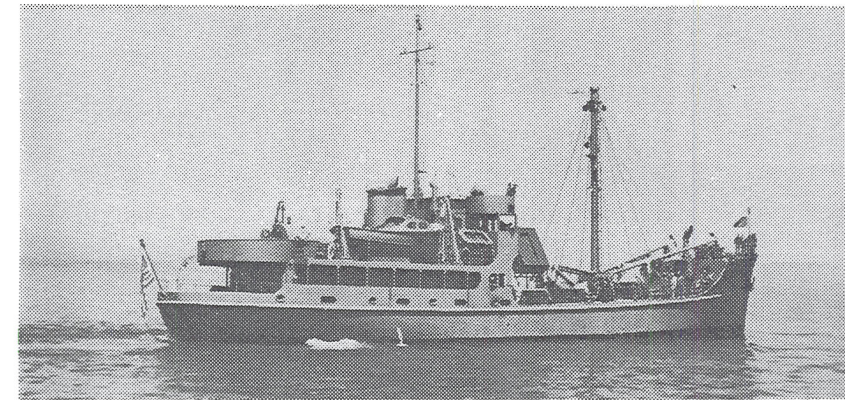
The lawyers probably also knew that though many of the world's powers signed the convention, some did not. North Korea, for one.

In Japan there was good news for the skipper: he had been promoted to full commander. His shipmates held the traditional wetting down ceremony: swabbing the new gold braid on his sleeve with sea water to make the newly-minted shine appear saltier.

Properly launched, the new commander began talking with his superiors about where his ship, his men and himself were going.

The Pueblo mission's review up through the chain of command had begun in October in meetings between the intelligence and operations divisions of COMNAVFORJAPAN—Commander Naval Forces for Japan, Rear Adm. Frank L. Johnson, a two-time winner of the Navy Cross for heroism in World War II, in command.

On November 28, while the Pueblo was still at sea, COMNAVFORJAPAN officers held a planning conference to propose a schedule for the Pueblo for 1968. CINCPACFLT reviewed it and passed it on to CINCPAC December 17 which approved it December 22. This was then sent



THE U.S.S. BANNER. For an old lady from Kewaunee she had her troubles.

on to Washington. At the Pentagon, on December 27, staff members of each service met with officials from the Defense Intelligence Agency and the National Security Agency to make sure everyone understood the schedule and was in accord.

NSA and the Navy are close shipmates. Sometimes NSA is only a passenger aboard, and sometimes the Navy acts principally as a sea-going chauffeur.

"In this instance," said a knowledgeable source, "the Navy said our ship is going off and sail around on these nine dates during the first six months of 1968. On four of them the Pueblo was available for primary targeting by NSA. For the other five, the Navy said where the Pueblo was going to be and if NSA wanted to go along, it could. Staging off Wonsan was a Navy mission."

The final decision to go was made December 29 when each of the service chiefs was briefed by intelligence and operations officers. Since none found any reason to reject the schedule, it did not go up to the JCS for their consideration, which would have been somewhat shorthanded anyway as Gen. Wheeler, the chairman, who had given prior consent, and Gen. Harold Johnson of the Army were out of town. Adm. Moorer, Navy chief, approved as

CINCPAC and Adm. Hyland's CINCPACFLT had earlier. The Departments of Defense and State also gave their O.K. as did the White House.

Weighing the Risks

Adm. Johnson had personally made the initial determination of risk of the mission. He considered the political climate, the geographical location, the nature of the task, type of hostile reaction that could be expected, a study of previous missions and the friendly forces available for support. These determinations, too, were reviewed up the chain of command.

The decision to send the Pueblo to North Korea was made against the background of a considerable and quickening volume of belligerency. North Korean intrusions across the Demilitarized Zone into South Korea had increased from 50 in 1966 to 566 in 1967 when 153 South Koreans had been killed. On January 19, 1967 North Korean shore batteries had sunk a 180-foot South Korean patrol boat.

In 1965 a U.S. ELINT plane had been shot at 80 miles off North Korea. North Korean radio broadcasts had long protested alleged intrusions of warcraft and spy ships into the country's territorial waters. At a meeting of

the Truce Commission December 22 at Panmunjom the North Koreans said "your side sent in succession to our coastal waters fishing boats and spy boats on 14 occasions during the 18 days' period from December 2 to 19."

The State Department had noted these broadcasts but saw nothing new or unusual about them. One official of the NSA did send a message about the radio warnings over to the JCS at the Pentagon, and it was routed as well to CINCPAC. None of the Chiefs recalls reading the message. Nor did it ever find its way to the Pueblo.

Adm. Johnson, himself, was "concerned about the political sensitivity of the area and the unknown reaction to the surveillance operation." He was aware of intensified activity by North Korean boats in the Sea of Japan. But he also knew that a month after the South Korean patrol boat had been sunk, the Banner had spent a day and a half off Wonsan and had not been molested.

Russia Threatens

For an old lady from Kewaunee the Banner had led a lively life in her 16 missions along the Russian, North Korean and Chinese coasts. Once a Russian destroyer had signaled her: "Heave to or I

will fire." The Banner sailed on. The Russians did not fire. Off China she had been harassed by scores of fishing junks and an armed trawler that came within five yards. Another time a Russian auxiliary ship charged full ahead at the Banner, swerved 20 yards off her bow at the last second and then collided with another Soviet vessel.

Because of such harassment, the Banner occasionally had support forces ready. On one mission fighters of the Fifth Air Force were ordered to stand by in South Korea to take off with five minutes notice and a 45-minute reaction time to arrive over the Banner's operating area. The Banner had also once asked for help from a destroyer which arrived 16 hours later and stood by just out of sight over the horizon. Two other times destroyers picked up harassment messages from the Banner and steamed to the scene on their own initiative.

Such activities were the rules of the road rather than the exception in those Asian waters, but sometimes discretion was exercised. When off Wonsan, the Banner was ordered to remain 20 to 25 miles offshore as a precaution.

However wise the order, CINCPACFLT thought being so far off land did make the mission less productive. To hear, get near.

The Banner's skipper, Cmd. Charles Clark, felt at ease snooping along the Russian coast. He was convinced the Soviets had too much to lose to sink or seize an American ship. China and North Korea were another matter. There, he thought, you couldn't tell what would happen.

Skip Schumacher was happy about being in Yokosuka.

"It was the first place we ran into people who could answer our questions."

Gene Lacy was happy, too. He could get the steering gear fixed.

The crew was happy. It was only a two-hour train ride to Tokyo.

The skipper, however, wasn't pleased. He still worried about how he was going to destroy all

the classified gear and paper on board in case of an emergency. And then there was the problem of the machine guns.

On July 24 and again on August 28 the Chief of Naval Operations had ordered 20-mm guns put on all ships not so armed including twin 20s for the AGERS. Bucher favored the idea but instead the Pueblo was ordered by the Pentagon December 14 to mount two .50-caliber machine guns. Both Bucher and Adm. Johnson thought the machine guns would be more a hazard than a help because they could excite provocation and would only be useful against personnel and not against an armed ship.

Besides, Johnson felt the Banner's 16 unarmed missions proved guns weren't needed. "You might have a game of chicken" because of the guns, the admiral said, calling them a "pitiful addition. She is not big enough to be armed well."

Gun Troubles

But an order was an order. Bucher spent two or three days talking it over with Clark who was in port with the Banner. Clark said he was going to keep his guns out of sight in the ship's laundry.

Someone suggested putting the Pueblo's on the flying bridge. Bucher rejected that because their noise would have interfered with the use of the voice tube. Atop the Sod Hut? That might have jarred the delicate calibration of the electronic gear. Bucher finally decided to mount one on the starboard bow and the other aft with a third mounting position forward. None could be reached without the gunner walking across the open deck.

Bucher also wanted gun tubs to protect the gunner. This wasn't done.

"I was under the definite impression that not everyone was in concurrence that guns should be put on the ship," Bucher said. One of them was Schumacher, who was appointed gunnery officer.

"I thought some one was changing the rules late in the game. It was the first hint that things weren't too well planned. And it was one more piddly thing to take care of."

Because of his Army training in '50s, Maggard was assigned the forward gun but thought they were useless because they vibrated so badly in their mounts. And the forward gun couldn't turn in a full arc because the ammunition locker was in the way. Bucher thought it would have taken 10 minutes to open the locker and load—provided you could get to the locker. Wadley, the gunner's mate assigned to the aft gun, had the key to the lockers which contained 5,000 rounds each.

Gunners Were Green

Maggard showed Earl Phares, a 20-year-old storekeeper, and a few others how the guns worked. "They didn't even know how to aim the things. And if your loader is inexperienced, nine times out of 10 he'll get you jammed."

Wadley, with no prior experience with .50s, went out to the

Marine gunnery range to practice. Phares took a familiarization course at the range, firing about 100 rounds. Schumacher also took about 25 men out for rifle practice.

The skipper ordered the guns to be cleaned and exercised every day once the Pueblo put to sea. But the rest of the time they were to be covered with tarpaulin securely lashed.

Bucher also talked over the destruct problem with the commander of the Naval Supply Depot. He suggested thermite bombs strapped atop each rack of equipment in the Sod Hut. But Bucher thought they were too hazardous. Someone could set them off by mistake. Or someone with mental problems might do so on purpose. So the captain tried to use his own funds to buy 50-pound cans of TNT he was familiar with on submarines. He didn't go through channels because an earlier request for cans had been denied. No matter. He couldn't find any. So he recommended reducing the amount of classified material on board.

"There were too many non-essential publications," he said, "items that don't get used by people in an independent operation." But he was told to carry a full load.

If worse came to worse he would have to destruct with what he had: the paper shredders, the incinerator, fire axes and sledge hammers.

For Christmas the skipper decided to give a party for 26 children from a nearby orphanage. The men borrowed a Santa Claus suit the Banner's crew had made themselves. Law played St. Nick, handing out toys the crew had chipped in to buy. Then they cast a metal "lonely bull" and showed the children Mickey Mouse and Donald Duck cartoons.

Other days were routine. The crew spent time looking at slides and films of ships they might encounter.

Bucher ordered some of the men to scrounge around and try to find a metalworker who could cast a metal "lonely" bull and mount it on deck, but that became another thing that never got done.

Yardworkers mounted a plexiglass canopy over the flying bridge, and Lacy had 600 pounds of salt unloaded in case of icing. Did that mean they were headed north?

"Why go there?" Schumacher asked. "It's cold. There won't be anything going on. I thought we could come up with something further south where it would be warmer and have more action."

The mission was to be labelled Ichthyic One, more in keeping with the Pueblo's cover as an oceanographic research ship than the original designation—Pinkroot One.

Bucher was ordered to leave Sasebo January 11 and sail north about 40 miles offshore of North Korea to avoid radar detection and then move in to listen and watch for shipping activity at Chongjin, Songjin, Mayang Do and Wonsan, the last an active Russian submarine base. Then he was to make for the Tsushima Strait to monitor Russian naval units which had been plotted daily

by aircraft. No one was certain why they were there.

Getting His Orders

He was to maintain at least a 500-yard range from them, closing to 200 yards only for photographs. And at no time was he to move in closer to land than 13 nautical miles. But to best intercept line-of sight military radio bands, he wouldn't be much farther offshore than that.

All the best evidence indicated the Pueblo was not a Korea-oriented spy ship. Steve Harris, for instance, was an expert in Russian, not Korean. Peter Langenberg, an erudite communications technician, was also fluent in Russian, having taken the Navy's cram course at Monterey, Calif.

The Pueblo was ordered to maintain radio silence until it was certain she had been detected, then she was to report in every 24 hours with situation reports (SITREPS) detailing pickups for the preceding period. Although classified, it has been said she also had the capability to check in directly with NSA receivers.

Admiral Johnson paid the Pueblo a visit January 4. He said no surface forces were available for support, and reaction time for aircraft would be two hours. Or more. As Bucher and Johnson both knew, naval vessels were heavily committed to the Southeast Asia area where the hot war was. Available American aircraft were minimal, as well. There were only seven Air Force attack planes in all of South Korea, 16 in Japan and 18 on Okinawa. The Marines also had eight strike planes in Japan. The nuclear carrier Enterprise was due soon for a brief stopover at Sasebo, but she and her 35 strike aircraft were headed for Yankee Station in the Gulf of Tonkin, not Korean waters.

A Fatal Presumption

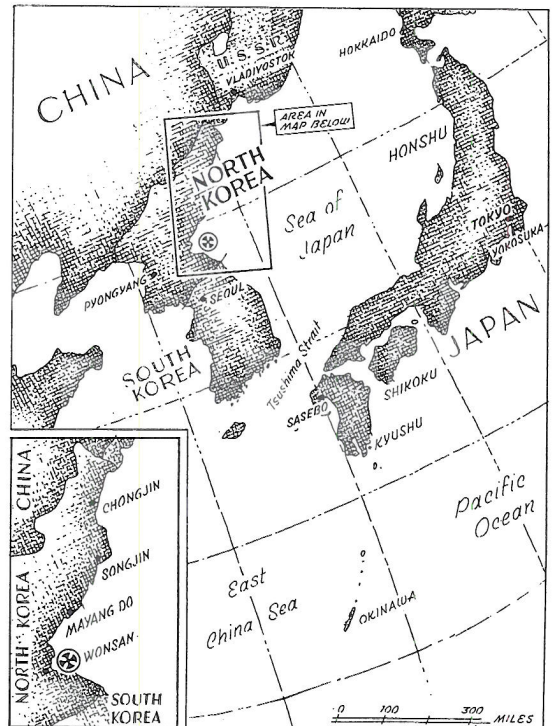
Again there was the initial assumption for the mission: "There were never any forces available that could reach the scene in time to prevent an unlawful seizure," said Adm. Johnson. "There was no contingency plan which we had which would have prevented the unlawful seizure of a ship on the high seas. It was not in my plans. If it had been, I would not have sent the ship out in the first place."

Said Bucher: "I never considered that I would ever be attacked on this mission. It never occurred to me. Nor had I as prospective commanding officer or after I was commanding officer received any briefings at any stations along the way that would indicate that there was any danger of my ever coming under attack."

That same January 4 Bucher received his highly classified basic operations order and the next day Pueblo's sailing orders. One point was uppermost: don't start a war.

There had been a general naval order since February 28, 1966 authorizing U.S. vessels to approach within three miles of the North Korean coast but Bucher's instructions superseded that.

Bucher was briefed that any withdrawal from the scene of harassment should be "slow and gradual." He was to accommodate the oceanographers as much



as possible, but their duties were not to interfere with the primary mission. It was also made clear the standing order for ELINT ships was to move to sea any time there was a failure of navigational equipment.

Fly No Flag

Pueblo was to carry the identification "GER 2" on her bows but her ensign would be stowed.

The orders seemed clear although, as Adm. Johnson, himself, noted: "Any officer in the Navy uses directives as a guide and they are not necessarily binding. In an overriding situation, he is at liberty to do anything he wants to maintain the security and safety of the ship."

This included the two machine guns. Bucher's sailing orders said he was to employ them "only in cases where threat to survival is obvious."

Again, Johnson felt use of the guns was "a matter of judgment of the commanding officer and no one could possibly prescribe ahead of time a set of orders."

Bucher asked the admiral if he should use the guns against a boarding attempt.

Johnson answered "yes."

On that same day Fireman Norman Spear had written a letter home that he was about to leave on a 30-day cruise and that "anything could happen." At least one of the crew, however, was looking forward to the trip. He was Storekeeper Third Class Ramon Rosales who had joined the ship in December. He had been to sea only once before for two weeks as a reservist.

He busied himself learning the ship and enjoying sightseeing and, something new for him, reading. He plugged through William Shirer's "Rise and Fall of the Third Reich" and then got interested in the spy adventures of James Bond.

On January 5 the Pueblo set out from Yokosuka bound for Sasebo. The guns were unlimbered the first day. They shook so much the gunners couldn't even hit bar-

rels thrown over the side at 50 yards. Rosales, meanwhile, had produced some laughs when, on watch, he reported to the bridge he had spotted an airplane. It turned out to have been a sea gull.

The sea turned rough rounding into the Sea of Japan and the Pueblo was a day late arriving at Sasebo. There she topped off her fuel tanks. A piece of equipment in the Sod Hut was replaced and some security material offloaded, about 600 pounds remaining on board. Not all the classified material ordered unloaded had been, but Adm. Johnson had felt it would take the Pueblo three hours to destroy all her secrets and that this would be enough in the event of a threatened seizure.

CINCPACFLT had told Bucher its worry had been the possibility of the ship colliding with harassing vessels and sinking. The men would perish in the freezing waters before search and rescue aircraft—at least 45 minutes away—could reach them. But Gene Lacy was confident he could make an emergency patch on any hole up to two feet across.

The day after Pueblo's arrival at Sasebo—January 10—two Marine sergeants reported aboard as communications technicians. They shared two common initials: Robert J. Chicca and Robert J. Hammond. They shared something else: both spoke Korean.

That same day Bucher was given a final briefing, told the mission was entirely up to his own judgment and then at six o'clock the next morning, after months of preparation, the frowzy little spy ship sailed out to listen. She was on her own, beyond the reach of help, afloat or sinking. Her armaments were a modest gun locker, two unprotected machine guns and 150 years of precedent.

It was a gray, windy day. "I had the impression I never was going to see Sasebo again, that we were going off into the unknown," Schumacher thought. "But that's a feeling you have leaving any port."

6. OFF KOREA: nothing much had happened



The first trouble was weather. The Pueblo sailed through the Korea Strait into the Sea of Japan and into a severe gale. The storm forced the ship 150 miles off the Korean coast. Heavy seas swept her decks. It was all Bucher could do to keep the top-heavy vessel afloat. The aftermath of the storm was to affect the direction and velocity of the ocean currents for a week, complicating navigation. But as the wind abated, the Pueblo resumed her course northwards.

When she reached the 42nd parallel, she stopped. After a year-and-a-half, she was finally on station.

At one point on January 15 Bucher steered seaward to exercise the machine guns. Icing made the tarps difficult to remove and there was the same old trouble in hitting anything with the guns, something that Bucher had not reported to his superiors. After firing, the guns were recovered for, as it turned out, the last time.

The next day the Pueblo moved up almost to the Soviet-North Korean border where icing was so bad Bucher ordered 20 men out with salt and leather mallets in a "full-scale attack."

On the 16th the Pueblo moved down the coast to the Chongjin area where she laid to while Bucher determined the direction of the current. It was running southwest, parallel to the coast.

First Sightings

Off Chongjin the Pueblo observed several vessels, including Japanese fisherman, and listened. Hostile radar did not pick her up. On January 18 the Pueblo moved south to Songjin, about 130 miles north of Wonsan. There the invisible fingers of North Korean radar found the Pueblo. It was search rather than fire-control radar, however, so Bucher was not concerned.

Along the way Bucher would stop the Pueblo, so the two civilian oceanographers, Iredale and Tuck, could make Nansen casts, a process of dropping a long line overboard with sample bottles attached to measure water temperature and salinity.

Iredale had only reported aboard January 5, having come in from his office in Washington. Both he and Tuck had served on the Banner and knew all about the kind of harassment the Pueblo could expect.

As a deep Nansen cast could take six hours, the Pueblo was lying to much of the time, drifting with the current. During such periods careful watch was kept of the ship's position because she could not start up without risk of tangling the cable in her screws.

In Yokosuka Murphy had noted his gyro compass had a one-and-a-half degree easterly error. The Ioran-C fixes at night averaged a five-mile northwesterly error due to distortion from the so-called "night effect" on radio beacons, so Murphy also relied on celestial navigation and occasional radar checks of the distance offshore. To be on the safe side, the Pueblo usually went out to 25 miles at night. Any time the ship came within two miles of North Korea's claimed 12-mile limit, Bucher had a standing order that he be awakened if he was not on deck. But in the Sea of

Japan there was a good north-south Ioran beacon, so the skipper got his sleep.

Close to Korea

"I never felt any doubt as to where we were," Murphy recalled. On the five or 10 times the Pueblo moved to within 13 miles or so of the coast, she used radar to confirm her position. Once she came within 12.8 miles of land when men were working aloft on an antenna, and Bucher steered into an offshore sea to reduce roll. That was as close as he came to North Korea.

Weather prevented general quarters drills on the way north, and because they interfered with the ELINT work, they weren't held while on station. The same was true of repel boarders drills. None, in fact, had been held since Yokosuka.

On the night of the 19th, the Pueblo lay off Mayang Do, some 50 miles north of Wonsan. Navigational fixes were made every 20 minutes, but the radar was lit off sparingly to avoid detection from shore interceptors.

Around dusk on the 21st a sub chaser passed 500 to 1,000 yards from the Pueblo, apparently bound for Wonsan at 25 to 30 knots. She paid no attention to the Pueblo, and the bridge noticed no unusual activity on her decks. Bucher considered his order to break radio silence with Japan only after he felt he had been detected. He talked things over with Lts. Harris and Schumacher and decided the Pueblo had not been spotted.

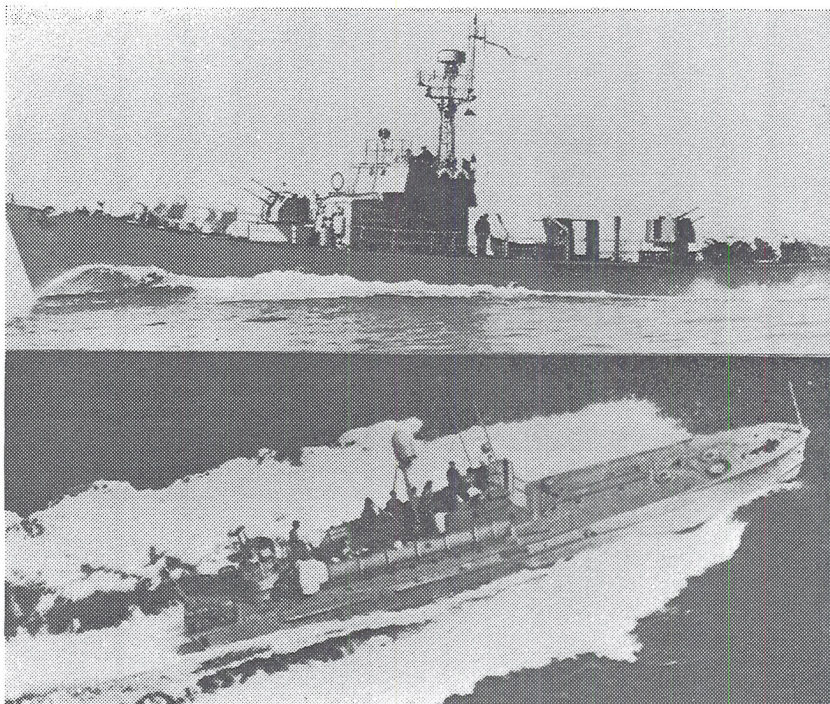
On the night of the 21st, Bucher headed for the Wonsan area, his last stretch of shore surveillance. Another group of men stealthily crept through the night towards the Demilitarized Zone dividing North and South Korea. There were 31 of them, all officers in the North Korean Army. Each carried a submachine gun, pistol, nine grenades and five days' rations.

As the Pueblo cruised slowly along the coast, listening, On the night of January 17 about 10:30 the group, commanded by Senior Lieutenant Kim Chong Hun, cut through the barbed wire defenses and entered South Korea. Their destination was the Blue House, official residence in Seoul of South Korean President Pak Chung Hee.

"Our main target was...to chop off President Pak's head and to shoot to death his key subordinates," said one of the men, Junior Lieutenant Kim Sin Cho of the 124th North Korean Army Unit.

On January 19 they happened upon four South Korean woodcutters. The assassin team threatened them with death and the destruction of their village if they told anyone what they had seen. But when the team moved on, the woodcutters called police. The North Koreans were spotted again late January 21 and police dispersed them, killing and capturing a number of them.

The United Nations command immediately asked for a meeting with North Korea at Panmunjom. It was scheduled for January 24. No one at Yokosuka thought it necessary to advise the Pueblo of the incident. What bearing would



THE FIRST OUT of Wonsan was an SO1 (above) followed by four P4 torpedo boats.

an assassination attempt have on her mission?

January 22 began routinely enough.

The Pueblo lay dead in the water about 18 to 20 miles off the nearest land, the island of Ung Do at the mouth of Yungging Bay on which Wonsan was located. Tuck and Iredale made Nansen casts and Harris's men dialed and listened in the Sod Hut. Rosales, meanwhile, was developing his skills as a sketcher, an interest he had recently picked up.

The Pueblo scarcely had the look of a Navy ship. In keeping with their cover as a research vessel, Bucher and his men wore civilian dress. The captain usually put on everyday slacks and a leather flight jacket and wore a tasseled wool ski hat to keep his ears warm. The ensign was kept stowed.

It was a bright day, but hazy. The sea was calm. Weather forecasts out of Yokosuka, in fact, had been pretty good: about 75 per cent accurate. Schumacher gazed shoreward at the rocky coastline with the gray-brown mountains rising above it. "Lord," he said, "can you imagine fighting on that?"

Shortly after noon two gray government fishing trawlers with the North Korean flag painted on their stacks approached and circled the Pueblo at about 100 yards. Their crewmen, dressed in standard oriental fishing garb—bearskin coats over a bare chest—stood among the fishing gear on deck looking at the Pueblo.

The Pueblo Spotted

Bucher ordered his men to stay below so the trawlers, Rice Paddy and Rice Paddy I, wouldn't think it unusual to see so many men aboard a 176-foot ship. The trawlers moved a mile-and-a-half north, apparently talking things over. Then they cruised back and circled the Pueblo at 30 yards while the Americans photographed them from the bridge. They

were the first ships to show any interest in the Pueblo.

"I considered ourselves detected and was certain they would report us to authorities at Wonsan," so Bucher decided to break radio silence. At 1500 hours, the ship's radioman, Lee Roy Hayes, sat down at his transmitter to try and raise Japan. He was to remain on watch for the next 24 hours.

The Banner had often had trouble reaching Japan and had told Bucher to expect the same. The receiving station in Japan changed frequencies often to avoid eavesdropping. It was a problem coordinating transmission with this and calibrating very delicate equipment. Hayes took almost 14 hours to make the connection.

The SITREP, addressed to Commander Task Force 96—Johnson wearing another hat—told Japan the Pueblo had been dead in the water, had been sighted by unarmed trawlers which came close aboard and that possibly they had been sent out by a subchaser which passed nearby the evening before. Hayes asked for a communication schedule for the next day, January 23. Pueblo moved 25 miles offshore. Down in the wardroom, the officers tried to identify the trawlers and decided they were of the Lentra class, a Russian type.

It was a fairly busy night—visual or electronic contacts with 18 vessels one of which passed within 3,000 yards. At 0145 someone spotted a large orange flare that burned for about 30 seconds in the distance. Bucher, when notified, did not attach any importance to it and did not consider the Pueblo had been under surveillance.

Morning Was Quiet

The 23rd was hazier than the day before, almost foggy. "We felt if anything was going to happen, it would have happened during the night," Schumacher recalled. Nothing had.

In fact, both Bucher and Steve Harris felt the mission had been unproductive. Harris had told him the day before of low proficiency levels among some of the research personnel which lessened their intelligence-gathering ability.

It had been too overcast to shoot the stars at daybreak and the Pueblo was a little east and south of where she wanted to be. So at 0730 she set out full ahead towards her position of the day before. At 1000 Lacy, the officer of the deck, stopped the Pueblo in what was considered the best position to intercept commercial and naval shipping transmitting along the coast.

Steve Harris, meanwhile, had been working on an emergency destruction procedure for the Sod Hut. That morning Peppard typed it up and posted it after all the technicians had initialed it to show they had read it.

Harris had felt all along there was too much classified information aboard and that the weighted bags—Peppard had eight of them under his desk—weren't enough to jettison all of it.

About 1000 the Pueblo sent off another SITREP to Japan—this time it took only 50 minutes to get through—reporting the events of the past night, that the Pueblo had 68 per cent fuel remaining and that she intended to remain in the area. Then she gave her position: 39°25'N, 127°35'E, 15.8 miles off Ung Do. The current was drifting south, parallel to the coast. Just before 1200 Murphy gave the ship's position to Bucher, then joined the officers in the wardroom for lunch. Schumacher was in his cabin working up reports.

Lunch Was Turkey

At 11:45 Law replaced Lacy as officer of the deck. Lacy made a quick tour of the ship and then headed for lunch: turkey, peas and mashed potatoes. Supper was going to be chop suey.

Law saw it first.

About seven miles away a ship