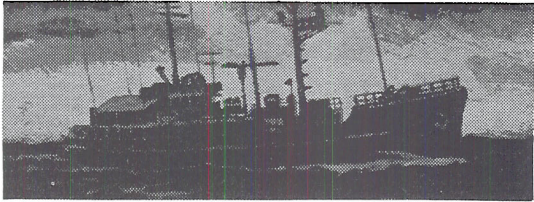


11. BOARDED: they were in Max's country now



The boarders stepped across a little bit of sea between one of the P 4s and the Pueblo. There were about a dozen of them, dressed in dark green winter uniforms of the North Korean People's Army. The enlisted men had automatic rifles, the officers pistols.

As they walked across the deck, Bucher presented himself as the commanding officer. One of the North Koreans put a pistol to his head and ordered him to the pilot house. He went. Berens was there, holding the mahogany wheel so tightly his knuckles were white. The North Koreans ordered him and the others there to the fantail, then called Berens back. He stayed at the helm, a

marched him to the fantail.

The senior communications chief from the Sod Hut, Ralph Bouden, made one last attempt to throw a box of papers over the side. A North Korean officer stopped him. He marched Bouden back to the Sod Hut. Bouden put down the box. If only he had a match, he thought.

Back on the fantail, the North Koreans were holding the crew at bayonet point and poking them with rifle butts. They were tearing sheets into strips for blindfolds.

Some of the Americans cursed. One or two tried to jerk away. But they were bound and blindfolded.

Sit down! the North Koreans ordered.

tarp was frozen. The Korean chipped at the ice.

It took him half an hour to get the canvas off.

Koreans Take Over

By now, 30 to 40 minutes had passed since the North Koreans had come aboard.

They marched Bucher back to the pilot house. Berens was still at the helm, still at gunpoint.

They ordered Bucher to direct his crew forward from the fantail to the well deck. The captain glanced at the bayonets and rifles trained at his men, then ordered them forward.

Blindfolds were removed so the men could walk. Hayes noticed papers still burning in passageways, and he stepped over a

Then the Koreans ordered all-stop.

Below decks, the guards saw to it that enginemen Goldman and Blansett answered the bells. The Pueblo came to a halt.

Another torpedo boat backed down, and a second boarding party stepped onto the deck. It included a North Korean colonel with a scar from the top of his head to the nape of his neck—Col. Scar, the men later dubbed him.

With him was an interpreter who looked like Maximilian Schell. He became Max.

"Now they're in our country," said the interpreter. "They'll be tried by our laws.

"Turn over your knives and your guns!" he yelled.

Along with Col. Scar and Max came a civilian pilot to steer the ship into port.

Reluctantly, Berens lifted his hands from the wheel. They tied his wrists.

As they marched him out of the pilot house and down a passageway, he noticed that the sun was going down. Then they blindfolded him.

Back on the well deck, Law whispered to the men.

"Remember," he said. "You're only supposed to give your name, rate, service number and date of birth."

First Aid Refused

Stuart Russell, a psychology graduate from the University of Southern California, who was now a ship's cook, heard somebody else say the North Koreans had the crew's service records.

Col. Scar indicated he wanted to tour the ship. At bayonet point again, Bucher led him into the passageway where Hodges lay dying. He needs medical help, said the captain. No reply.

Col. Scar pointed to the blood, flesh and ashes. Had Bucher been trying to destroy his orders?

"This is where we make ice cream," Bucher said.

For that, the guards grabbed him, and several of them kicked him in the back.

Then they toured the rest of the ship. The Sod Hut door was open. Bucher walked in—and saw the bags.

The bags he had told Lt. Harris to get rid of were still lying on the

deck, still full.

The Koreans were surprised too, and even more surprised at the elaborate accommodations for electronic equipment. Battered as it was, with dents from blows from fire axes and sledge hammers, most of it nearly pulverized, there was enough left to show what the space had contained.

A radio transmitter was still on. Card readers were open, but destroyed. The teletype was still humming.

Turn it off, Col. Scar demanded.

Bucher refused.

They hit him.

Bucher Schemes

The colonel ordered him to gather papers jammed in the doorway and bring them into the hut. Here was a chance. Bucher still had his cigarette lighter. He'd set the papers on fire.

But the colonel got suspicious. The guards held Bucher against a bulkhead and picked up the papers themselves.

As they marched him out, they closed the door. Silently, three locks clicked into place. Now it would take a blowtorch to open it.

Next stop was crew's berthing, then the laundry room. As he passed, Bucher noticed three holes from 57 millimeter shells near a passageway outside his stateroom.

The captain was ordered to sit outside his room between two guards, who hit him with rifle butts until Col. Scar came by and made them stop.

Woelk was on the deck with one foot on a chair. Hodges had already died.

The North Koreans moved all the men below decks into forward berthing where it was warmer and searched them. They took their wallets and watches, occasionally their rings.

They let the captain keep his wrist watch and the black star-sapphire ring on his left hand. Later on, they took his wallet, and he never saw it again.

At 8:30 p.m. her captors tied up the Pueblo in Wonsan harbor. A North Korean hauled her colors down.

"Remember, you're supposed to give only name, rank and serial number"

guard on either side.

The North Koreans rang up two-thirds speed. Bucher changed it back to one-third. He considered it was still his ship. He had not struck his flag. It was still flying. He was not sure whether the North Koreans would only search the Pueblo and leave. He had not resisted the boarding party—despite Navy Regulation 0730 forbidding search. If planes were actually winging his way, however, he had wanted his crew intact to overwhelm the boarders when the planes arrived. And he did not want continuing gunfire to leave his ship helpless should he be able to flee the scene. And there were his orders: no war.

Slowly the Pueblo headed into Wonsan.

By sign language the North Koreans asked Bucher how many men were aboard. Eighty-three. The number surprised them.

The First Brutality

Below, executive officer Murphy walked out of his head between his cabin and the captain's stateroom. A North Korean guard came up, kicked him and shoved him up a ladder. He jabbed Murphy two times in the back and

The men did.

A cold, gusty wind blew over the fantail. One guard stood on top of the Sod Hut, his machine gun trained down on the crew. There was a burst of bullets. The men squatted low. Nobody was hit.

Another guard glowered at the crew from a few feet away. A torpedo boat escorted a few yards abeam.

A guard shoved Bucher, then pressed a bayonet to his back. The captain marched ahead of him into the radio shack. The transmitter was still on.

Disconnect it, demanded a North Korean officer.

The captain refused.

The North Korean yanked out the antenna jacks and a guard shoved the skipper out the door. At gunpoint, the guard marched him to the after .50-caliber machine gun.

Take off the tarp, he ordered.

Lee Roy Hayes peeked under his blindfold and saw the captain wrestling with the canvas.

Bucher said he couldn't.

A guard slammed his pistol into the captain's neck.

The officer ordered one of the guards to try. He yanked, but the

bag full of publications outside the Sod Hut.

In the engine room, Hagenson remembered the Santa Claus suit from the Christmas party for the orphans in Yokosuka. The last time he had seen it earlier in the day the suit was awash on the deck. Now, he thought, it would probably end up in a North Korean museum.

Baldrige, the corpsman, had torn off his insignia before the North Koreans boarded. Now he was trying to show that he was a medic by pointing to Red Cross signs on his gear.

The North Koreans let him join the wounded. He tried to help Woelk, but couldn't. Then he tried to explain to the Koreans that Woelk needed surgery. They ignored him.

Bucher Resists

The soldiers ordered more speed. Bucher said the Pueblo was going as fast as she could. One-third speed was hardly top, and Bucher knew it. But he was still hoping the Air Force would arrive.

If so he would grab the mike and tell the men to attempt to regain control of the ship.

12. BACK HOME: for LBJ it marked a first



Back in Okinawa several hours earlier Lt. Gen. McKee had made a decision. His planes could not reach Wonsan until after nightfall from Osan. So he ordered them to stay there.

Those were the only planes launched that day to aid the Pueblo—and the ones most distant. The 16 fighters in Japan were in various stages of training configuration and would have taken four hours and 45 minutes to be equipped, armed, fueled and arrive over Wonsan. It would have been too dark for them, too. There is a status of forces agreement between Japan and the United States by which the U.S. must ask Japan permission to use aircraft based there for combat. The request never came—even if it had been decided that the planes were on a combat rather than a rescue mission—although Ambassador Alexis Johnson thought the Japanese would have said yes.

There were eight other U.S. jets available that day, the eight A4s and F4s of the Marine base at Iwakuni which were under Seventh Fleet command. Had they been notified, they would have had the fastest reaction time of all available aircraft that day—an estimated two hours and 40 to 50 minutes to Wonsan.

But they were never called. Word of the Pueblo did not reach the Marine base until early the next day, more than 12 hours after the ship had been taken.

There was a final footnote to a day of fumbling communications. The last high official in Washington to be notified the Pueblo was lost reportedly was Paul Ignatius, the Secretary of the Navy.

McKee was asked afterwards whether he thought his aircraft could have saved the Pueblo.

"This is pure speculation," he said. "I think one of three things would have happened: we would have changed (the situation), I would have gotten my aircraft shot down or we would have started another war. I don't know which."

At 10:25 a.m. local time the morning after, the White House put a hold order, directing all

American planes and ships to keep at least 80 miles off the North Korean coast. That same morning Johnson met with Rusk, McNamara, Rostow, Richard Helms of the CIA, Undersecretary of State Nicholas deB. Katzenbach and several others.

"On this one there were no hawks, no doves," said a man who was there. "It was unanimous. Apart from the danger of starting another war with North Korea, it was obvious the rescue attempt would almost certainly result in the immediate death of the Pueblo's crew."

Jim Leonard, the Korean country officer at the State Department, did not think retaliation would have started a war. "I don't think North Korea would go to war without the assurance of Chinese and Russian support." And Kim Il Sung's relations with Peking and Moscow had not been cordial of late.

LBJ Takes Action

Nonetheless Johnson did something he'd never done in South Vietnam: he called up the reserves, 14,787 Air Force and Navy men and 327 inactive planes. He also ordered aircraft escorts for all ELINT planes flying near North Korea and halted seaborne ELINT missions along its coasts.

Codes were changed immediately. But the intelligence community worriedly asked itself how much equipment the Communists had taken. There was no sure way to know. One authority said loss of the ship was a "major catastrophe." Not all agreed.

"Even assuming we lost every bloody thing on board intact to the North Koreans, there is a great difference of opinion as to the damage from the loss of the ship," said Otis Pike. "I found this intriguing."

Evaluation of Lloyd Bucher was no easier. Many facts were unknown, but at least one was: he had given up the ship.

Back in the United States on the west coast it was still January 23 and the working day had just begun. Stella Hodges was listening to the radio when she heard. Her husband was at work

in the lumber yard in Eugene when he heard. Far to the south, in San Diego, Rose Bucher was looking at the "Today" show on television in her suite at the big, lush Bahia Motor Hotel when she heard.

Hodges dropped his tools and raced home as fast as he could drive. Mrs. Hodges called their daughter, Sheila, in nearby Goshen and she came right over. When they heard a crewman had been fatally injured, they prayed it wasn't Duane. They figured the odds were 83 to one that it wasn't. But Jesse Hodges had a premonition that the odds were much, much shorter than that, in fact, even.

Rose Bucher had just sent her two teen-aged sons off to school. She had been living in the hotel for two months since her husband drove them down from Bremerton.

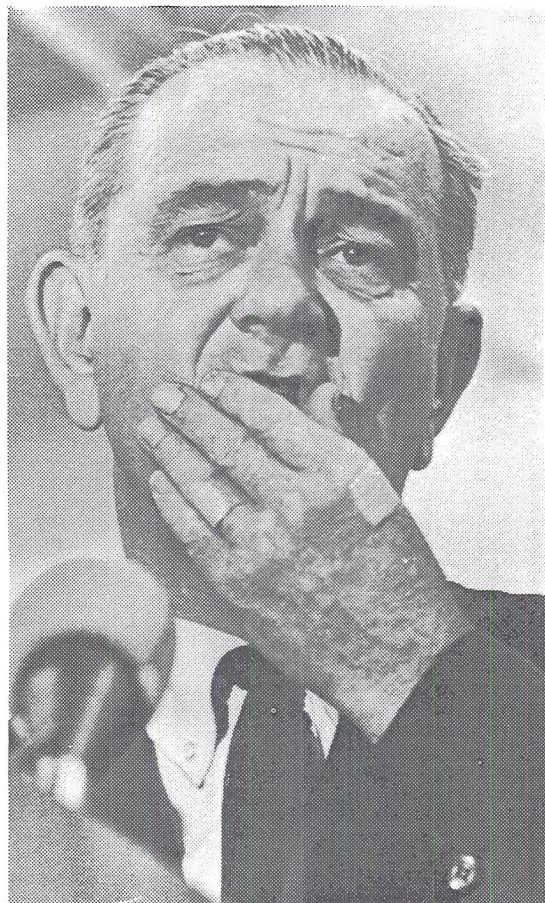
"Oh my God," she thought when she heard the news. She called her mother in Missouri and asked her to pray. Lt. Cmdr. Alan Hemphill, the friend and former shipmate of her husband's, hurried over to help. Several hours later she picked up her boys from school and told them.

Rose Bucher knew something about war prisoners. Her brother had been captured by the Japanese in World War II. She grew increasingly apprehensive that her husband and his men would be shot. Or tortured.

Half way around the world, Lyndon Johnson didn't either. But he already had one war on his hands and that was enough.

Belatedly, plans were underway to take action. The Enterprise was steaming north. There also had been three destroyers in port in Japan and another 120 miles south of Yokosuka when the Pueblo was taken, the nearest 20 hours from Wonsan. Three of them were now ordered to join the Enterprise. The Higbee, a Seventh Fleet destroyer in Sasebo for boiler repairs, was told to prepare to enter Wonsan under an air cover and tow the Pueblo out.

But time had passed and it was on the side of the North Koreans. Under the doctrine of hot pursuit,



WHAT TO DO? President Johnson pondered, then decided to keep his guns holstered.

U.S. vessels could have legally pursued the Korean ships up to the three-mile limit.

North Korea Mobilizes

"I would say the rules were such that they would go right ahead and attack and they would worry about how somebody interpreted them later," said Sharp. But going into Wonsan when hot pursuit was not involved was a different matter.

Temperatures were already rising. The North Koreans massed 400 jets along the DMZ. MIG pilots were overheard talking to their bases: "Where's the Enterprise? Where's the Enterprise?"

"My strong advice to North Korea is to cool it," said Secretary of State Dean Rusk. That was also the President's advice to his commanders. "We are not going to shoot from the hip," he told the American people.

13. PRISONERS: "you will be shot at sundown"



Her ensign now a North Korean trophy, her engines now silent, the USS Pueblo lay tugging inertly at her mooring lines now fast to a pier in an alien and hostile land.

Aboard, 75 officers and men of the U.S. Navy tried in the forward berthing compartment to peek beneath their blindfolds, to listen for a telling sound, to shift position and ease the throbbing in their bound wrists. Below, three enginemen exchanged mute glances while their guard stood over them with machinegun cocked and ready.

The guard barked something at Engineman Blansett. Blansett looked at him querulously. The guard smashed his fist in the sailor's jaw and sent him reeling. He turned to Engineman Gerald Hagenson, shouted, kicked him, struck him in the face and knocked his glasses crashing to the deck.

Above, the soldiers prodded their captives out of the berthing space and shoved and kicked them in a long stumbling line down the gangway. A guard discovered a knife in Roy Maggard's pocket and beat him viciously. Wendell Leach moved too slowly and a rifle butt jarred loose his teeth.

The guard in the engine room motioned the three men up the ladder with his machinegun. Blansett went last. As he left, he kicked a switch which turned out every light on the ship. The guard slugged Blansett and made him turn them back on.

The last American to leave the ship, bound and blindfolded, was the captain.

Jeered on Shore

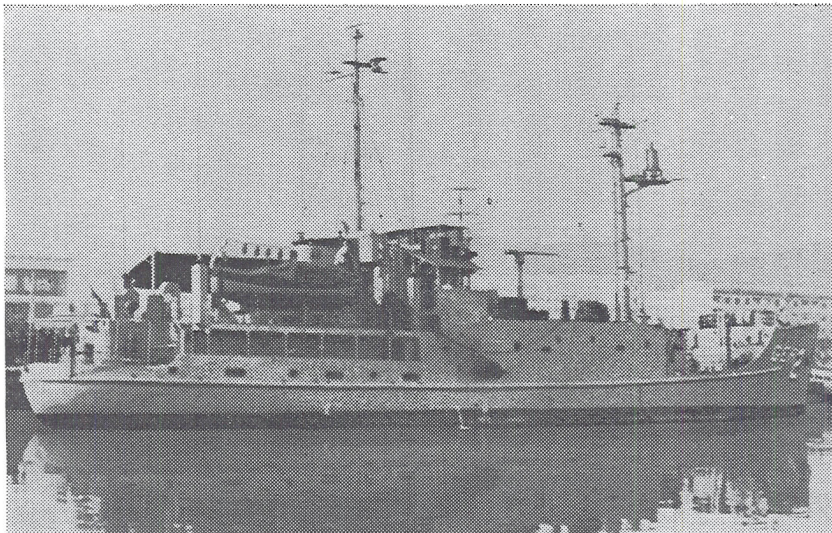
The guards herded the crew down a street toward four waiting busses. Word of the capture must have preceded the ship's arrival, for a thousand or more North Koreans had gathered to view the captives. Lloyd Bucher got a look at them when his blindfold slipped and was appalled if not terrified. Men shouted and shook their fists. Women shrieked and spat at the sailors. Children mocked. A squad of soldiers tried to restrain the mob, knocked some roughly to the ground when their thrusts came to close.

Down the hysterical corridor of hate two North Korean soldiers bore Steven Woelk on his bloodied litter, jostling and bumping through the night. Several times they dropped him. When he groaned, they struck him. At length they shoved him and the rest aboard the busses where they were finally safe from the mob but not from their own fears—and not from the rage of the guards, who continued to slap and kick them as they sat in the darkness of their blindfolds and the helplessness of their bonds.

One crewman, Ramon Rosales, already was cut and swollen from blows which began aboard ship and continued without surcease. They yanked him off the bus and dragged him by his hands into a building nearby. They pushed him down stairs and sat him on a hard bench and shouted the same question they had been shouting since they singled him out among the crew huddled on the Pueblo's fantail.

"What is your nationality?"

Rosales repeated the same reply.



HER ENSIGN LOWERED the Pueblo, now a captive, lies moored in Wonsan harbor. The ship has been spotted since but the Navy won't say where.

"I am an American."

The North Korean soldiers did not believe him. Or, if they did, they wanted him to say nonetheless that he was a South Korean spy.

Rosales had a dark complexion, stood five feet seven inches tall, with dark hair, high cheekbones and an Oriental cast to gentle dark eyes. He was the son of American citizens, Mr. and Mrs. Concepcion Rosales, was born in the same state as the President of the United States. His responses had a ring of defiance.

"Who are you?"

"I am Ramon Rosales."

"What are you?"

"I am an American."

They kicked him in the face and slapped him and told him he was going to be shot. They tightened his blindfold so that he could scarcely breathe, tightened his wrist things so that his hands lost their feeling. When his head drooped in semiconsciousness, they yanked him upright by the hair and smashed him again in the face. Eventually he could utter no further response, so they dragged him outside and threw him back on the bus.

In another part of the building Lloyd Bucher could hear Rosales being beaten and demanded they stop it. They ignored him. Instead they led him to a more distant room where he could no longer hear the thuds and moans and outcries. He demanded that his wounded crewmen be given medical attention. They ignored him.

Bucher had been removed from the bus, returned to the Pueblo and threatened with his life unless he opened the locked door of the research department. He refused; the fact was he didn't know the combination. They also brought Steve Harris back to the ship, and Ralph Bouden who had been the last one out of the Sod Hut. None of them opened the door.

Bucher's Ordeal

Now they had Bucher in a room six feet square, and Max, the interpreter, was asking him why the United States was trying to start another war with North Korea, why Bucher was trying to land South Korean spies. The officer replied:

"I am Lloyd Mark Bucher, commander, United States Navy, serial number 582154. My ship is an oceanographic and electromagnetic research ship. We were conducting oceanographic and sunspot research."

Bucher reminded Max of the Geneva Convention. Max scoffed. The two countries were not at war, he said, and Bucher and his crew were thus considered espionage agents with no rights of military prisoners. Max gave Bucher every assurance they all would be shot.

The interrogators gave Bucher a few kicks and sent him back to his crew, and the caravan of busses rumbled down the road to a waiting train. Its coach windows were covered so that none could see out or in during the long ride through the night across the Korean peninsula to Pyongyang, though the soldiers did not tell the prisoners that was where they were going.

More Beatings

The guards continued to manhandle the men. One hit seaman Richard Rogala in the back of the head with a rifle butt and kicked him in the groin when he fell to the ground. His shipmates lifted Rogala aboard the train. Another guard clouted Bucher from time to time in the back and soon the captain felt a steady pain. One who spoke English hit the big, muscular quartermaster in the head several times and questioned him about spying. The quartermaster gave the answer all the men were giving:

"I am Chares Law, petty officer first class, serial number 3899-110."

At times the captors showed unexpected compassion. One asked Rosales if his blindfold was too tight. Scarcely able to breathe, for the cloth covered his swollen mouth as well, Rosales nodded. The man loosened the blindfold, loosened the wrist bonds. Someone noticed Bucher's hands turning black and loosened his bonds. Another pressed a cup of water to Bucher's lips and shoved a large ball of butter covered with sugar in his mouth. He swallowed it.

During the trip, selected crewmen were taken forward to a separate car and interrogated.

And beaten. They pounded the back of Lt. Murphy's neck until his head was so low he could scarcely talk. He told them nothing. Bucher was led forward half a dozen times, shoved into a seat and questioned 20 minutes at a stretch. The interpreter was Max. Bucher denied again and again that he was a CIA agent, denied he had intruded into Korean waters, repeated his cover story. And that was all Max got out of him when the train pulled into Pyongyang just before dawn and the North Koreans yanked off the blindfolds and untied the crewmen's hands.

Humiliated Prisoners

The men stepped off the train into the white glare of floodlights. They stood with their hands above their heads, the classic pose of prisoners, while cameras clicked and whirred. These photographs the North Koreans would boldly show the world. Then they herded the men onto more busses, with windows similarly shrouded, and made them sit with their hands in their pockets and their heads bowed.

At dawn the busses stopped. It is doubtful any of the crew slept all that night; the captain did not.

As Bucher left the bus a guard kicked him in the small of his back, kicked him again in his wounded leg. That hurt. His hands free, Bucher cocked his fist and lunged toward the guard, but before he could reach him, three other guards grabbed him.

In the cold morning light, before the men were once again blindfolded, they could see that the building where they were taken was four stories tall, about 130 feet long and 60 feet wide. All its windows were covered. It was built solidly of brick and stone and its walls were six or eight inches thick. It would come to be known among the men of the Pueblo, and etched in horror on their memories, as "The Barn."

Rosales and Murphy lifted Woelk's stretcher as gently as they could and trudged blindly up three flights along with the rest of the crew, prodded along with rifle barrels.

The guards assigned the men four to a room, except for two large rooms where they put as many as 12 men. After each room was filled the guards removed the

blindfolds and shut the door; no one knew who was in the room next door. Each room thus became its own isolated cell of anxiety.

Murphy and Rosales, as directed, placed Woelk in a room with the other seriously wounded men, Chicca and Crandell, then were sent to another room across the hall. Dale Rigby, the ship's baker, was put in the room with the wounded. Murphy and Tim Harris were nothing to identify them as officers and shared rooms with enlisted men. Steve Harris, Gene Lacy and Skip Schumacher, who like Bucher were wearing their officers' hats, were assigned separate rooms.

The Captain Isolated

Bucher was put in a room containing a small table, a chair, a cot with one blanket, a pillow stuffed with straw. The captain knew by the shuffle of feet, and by an occasional outcry, that many of his men were in the same building, on the same floor. All of them? Where were the wounded? Were they being treated? What was in those canvas bags he knew were now in the hands of his captors? His brain pounded with a torrent of questions and his body ached. He did not attempt to sleep.

When at last all was quiet in The Barn, a guard opened Bucher's door and led him down the hall to an interrogation room where an interpreter waited with several North Korean officers. The interpreter would earn the nickname Wheezy; he continually tried to cover up his inability to translate rapidly by coughing.

Again Bucher demanded care for his wounded, demanded to see them, demanded that the crew be kept together. Again they acted as though they did not hear. For 45 minutes, between coughing fits, Wheezy shouted the familiar accusations: the Pueblo had intruded, it was a spy ship, Bucher a CIA agent. Bucher repeated his denials.

By the frantic tone of their questioning Bucher detected that they were genuinely concerned about the possibility of sudden U.S. retaliation—a possibility he himself felt was not unlikely. He decided to play on their concern. He told them he had radioed his position when he was captured and the United States surely would soon be demanding quick return of the ship and its crew.

They sent him back to his room and gave him a plate of boiled turnips and some bread and butter. He did not touch the food. A short while later they brought him back to the interrogation room and Lloyd Bucher received the first shock of his captivity. There on the table lay the cardboard jacket containing his service record.

Was he married? What were his children's names? What were his former duty stations and assignments? They had the information in front of them. Bucher gave the answers.

Spying for CIA

One entry said Bucher had attended CIC school. True. He had attended the Navy's Combat Information School at Glenview, Ill., in 1954. Wasn't CIC the same as CIA? They kicked him in the back, struck him, insisted he now

confess he was a CIA agent as they suspected all along. He refused. They kicked him some more and sent him in pain to his room.

At midmorning a guard once again thrust open Bucher's door. In the hallway stood the other five Pueblo officers and the guard marched them, with the captain in the lead, to the end of the hall where a long, narrow room ran the width of the building. At one end tables were arranged in a horseshoe and at the center sat a

North Korean general. About 40 other officers stood around, behind the tables. The captives took seats, according to rank, in six chairs placed within the horseshoe facing the general. The room was unlit except for a single bulb directly above their heads.

The general asked each man his name and his job aboard the Pueblo. They responded with names, ranks, serial numbers. They also gave their jobs, to protect their cover story of being an oceanographic ship.

The general, with Max interpreting, launched into a 20-minute harangue against the United States. Why did America want to provoke a new war with North Korea? Did Bucher realize there were 500,000 American troops poised in South Korea?

Bucher argued there weren't that many. The general scaled down the claim to 50,000 and asked why they were there.

"Because the South Korean government requested them," Bucher replied, "in order to pro-

vide assistance in defense of their country."

Shot at Sundown

An officer drew back his hand to strike Bucher but the general stayed him.

"You are not prisoners of war," the general shouted. "You have no rights under the Geneva Convention. You are espionage agents caught redhanded. You will be shot. How do you want it, one at a time or all together?"

Bucher leaped to his feet. "Just shoot me," he said, "and release

the crew and the ship."

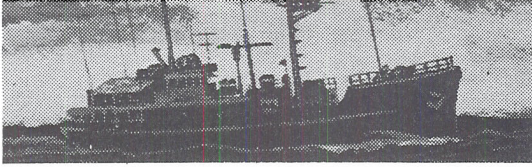
"The ship now belongs to us!"

"You captured my ship in international waters where we had every right to be. Your act was an act of war against the United States."

A guard shoved Bucher back into his chair. The general demanded that each officer admit to espionage. Each, in turn, repeated the research cover story.

"You will be shot at sundown," the general said, and dismissed them.

14. PANMUNJOM: mad dogs bark at the moon



That same day, scarcely 100 miles away, an American stood at the very edge of North Korea. The line, in fact, ran right down the middle of the green felt-covered table before him.

When Vice Adm. John Victor Smith sat down at the table at 11 a.m. sharp, January 24, all he knew was that the Pueblo and her men were somewhere behind that line, somewhere behind the man who sat stonily across from him, somewhere alive or dead. And he knew that the man with the perpetually outraged mien, the man those on the United Nations Armistice Commission called "Frog Face", wouldn't tell him where. Or why.

For this was war right there at the table in the tin-roofed shack at Panmunjom. War fought with words, but war nonetheless. It had been going on since the Korean shooting stopped in 1953.

The compound at Panmunjom was like an inkblot, each half duplicating the other. By agreement each building was to have been the same size as its counterpart, but the North Korean struc-

tures seemed a little higher, a little taller, a little wider. Theirs were painted green, the UN command's blue to match its flag. The negotiation hut itself, a single story building covered with corrugated metal and measuring about 20 by 60 feet, was equally divided between the two sides. Dead in the middle was the wooden negotiating table. Cables leading to the microphones marked the actual boundary. The two head representatives sat facing each other some three feet apart. Their aides sat behind them.

Adm. Smith was not above firing a puff of cigar smoke across the DMZ at his counterpart, who was not above contemplating out loud what he would like to do with the admiral.

The strain of working in the hut was so maddening that the UN changed its negotiator every six months. "It's unpleasant when one is used to dealing in facts, truth, honesty," said the admiral. "These people are mad dogs. What do you say to a Mongolian savage

who holds your countrymen hostage?"

Gen. Pak Accuses

His side had called the meeting, however, and would have its say. Everyone seated, the 261st meeting of the Armistice Commission began. The first item of business was the assassination attempt. Smith, son of H. M. "Howlin' Mad" Smith, famed World War II Marine general, glowered back at the man a few feet across from him, Maj. Gen. Pak Chung Kuk. Eventually they came to the matter of the Pueblo.

Smith demanded: "One, return the vessel and crew intact, immediately. Two, apologize to the government of the United States for this illegal action."

The U.S. Demands

"A mad dog barks at the moon," said Pak when his turn came. "I cannot but pity you who are compelled to behave like a hooligan disregarding even your age and honor to accomplish the crazy intention of the war maniac

you probably served Kennedy, who was already sent to hell. If you want to escape from the same fate of Kennedy who is now a putrid corpse and of Johnson, who is a living corpse, don't indulge yourself desperately in invective at this table.

In the tin-roofed shack, war began..a war of words

Johnson at this table for the sake of bread and dollars to keep your life. In order to sustain your life,

"Around 1215 hours on January 23, your side committed the crude, aggressive act of illegally infiltrating the armed spy ship of the U.S. imperialist aggressor Navy equipped with various weapons and all kinds of equipment for espionage into our coastal waters. Our naval vessels returned the fire of the piratical group."

On he went, reminding that he had warned only four days before against intruding any ships into North Korean waters. Then he got to the heart of the matter: the demand that the United States admit intruding in North Korean waters, apologize and assure that

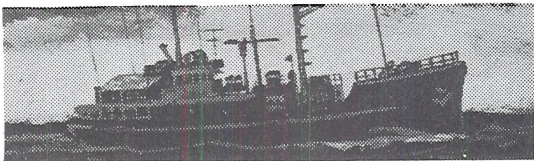
it would not happen again. That was it—admit, apologize, assure: the three As—a policy the North Koreans were not to change for 11 months until the United States did exactly what they asked.

"I will investigate any reasonable allegations," said Smith, "But I will not be diverted by your tactics. I propose a recess."

"I accept your proposal for a recess," Pak replied.

It was the only thing they agreed on all day.

15. THE BARN: this is what happens to spies



With the decision made to swallow humble pie and holster its guns, the administration pondered for a moment why it had all happened anyway.

Was it simply a mistake by an impetuous local commander? Some thought so. Was Kim Il Sung trying to goad the United States into a war? Some thought so. Said Adm. Smith: "Kim Il Sung would have welcomed, perhaps even wanted, a war. I think he was trying to avoid his mistakes of 1950. He would have welcomed retaliation by the United States or the UN command."

McNamara thought it was done to take some American pressure off North Vietnam as well as to impress the North Korean people with their country's strength compared with South Korea which was prospering more than Kim's regime.

"She was a pretty nice prize," said a State Department official. "I think they knew she was an intelligence ship. Probably there was a rewarding analysis of the equipment by Russian technicians. I think the value was more in machines and manuals than men."

James Leonard, who was to live night and day with the problem, as State department country official for Korea, also pondered. "It was probably spontaneous because interpreters were present on the dock when the Pueblo landed," he said when more facts were known. "My own feeling is that the two fishing vessels scouted them out, reported to Wonsan, thence to Pyongyang, and some authority was given to capture the ship. I don't think it was the sub-chaser commander's own idea. In the Orient, especially in North Korea, it's unlikely a junior officer

would take such responsibility.

"At the other extreme, is the possibility that North Korea planned the seizure long in advance as a high level decision to capture a ship. But I discount this theory because they couldn't have known when the Pueblo was coming. We hadn't sent these ships regularly. We, ourselves, didn't know she was going until a month before she went. No, they probably did it on simple grounds: 'Here's a funny looking ship offshore. We don't know why and there's a tense situation because of the assassination attempt two days before and we're a little goosey so we better take a look at it.'"

None Knew Why

The truth was, however, no one knew for sure although every one had an opinion, including a man in North Korea closer to the situ-

ation than any American.

"I doubted if the people who came out and captured the Pueblo had actually been authorized," said Lloyd Bucher. "We had the feeling they had blown it. The sole purpose was to embarrass the United States government more than anything else."

If so, the North Koreans had succeeded admirably.

It moved in with him the very first day in The Barn as he sat alone in his room. Skip Schumacher sensed a growing fear, almost terror.

He had seen the other officers, but where was the rest of the crew? Occasionally he heard a muffled noise. A board accidentally dropped? A shipmate being hit? Or dashed against a wall? Schumacher's imagination made the most of his fears. The general had said they would be shot at

sundown and at last sundown came. And went.

When Bucher returned to his room after the harangue from the general a guard followed with a pitcher of warm milk and a plate of cookies. He refused them. But what sort of see-saw game was this they were playing, alternating terror and kindness? It was another unanswered question to spin dizzily in his mind along with his worry about the crew and his nagging concern over the ship's cargo of secret material.

He sat in his chair and became aware of pain. His wounded right leg, bandaged most unhygienically with black-dyed Navy socks, bothered him most. He considered telling his captors about the shrapnel; it ought to be removed. But then they might take him away to a hospital, take him away from his crew. He decided not to tell them.

To take his mind off his pain and anguish he studied the room. He paced it off several times, decided it measured 22 feet by 12 feet. It was cold; it had no heat and the North Korean winter was at its most severe. The door, he noticed, was green and had a transome above. It had nine panels. A bucket of water for washing stood in the corner of the room. The window was covered on the outside and had a blackout curtain on the inside as well. Thus Lloyd Bucher busied himself until noon when a guard flung open the green door and beckoned him outside.

In the interrogation room sat a fastidiously groomed North Korean colonel in his early 40s, about five feet one, wearing green-tinted glasses, a heavy gray overcoat with bright red lapels and large shoulder boards, a Russian-type astrakhan cap, and a thin-lipped smile revealing large white teeth. He chain smoked and constantly fidgeted with a cigarette lighter. Bucher would come to know the man well during his confinement. He was the colonel in charge of the prison—"Super Colonel" to the men, or, for short, "Super-C."

Super-C told Bucher he had all the proof he needed that the Pueblo was spying. He had prepared a typewritten confession for Bucher to sign. Bucher refused. Super-C did not argue. He ordered Bucher returned to his room and beaten. The guards punched him, flung him against the walls, kicked him around the floor.

The Captured Papers

A half hour later, groggy and in pain, Bucher was taken again to the long, dark room where, spread upon a table for his inspection, were stacks of documents captured from the Pueblo. Bucher recognized, to his dismay, a copy of the reports of the USS Banner. He pretended disinterest. He also saw a copy of his own patrol narrative—the shipping he had encountered, photography reports and the like—and as he sat there he realized this would prove the ship had not intruded. He wondered whether Super-C thought the document was false, planted aboard the ship in case of capture.

"Do these not prove you were spying?" Super-C said.

Bucher could no longer deny the Pueblo had not been gathering intelligence; the ship's name was stamped on every document.

Super-C shoved another confession in front of Bucher. Again he refused to sign, and a guard returned him to his room.

Bucher expected another beating but it never came—and he learned the terror of anticipating a beating, wondering when the next one would come, remembering the one before. At 8 p.m. he was taken to yet another interrogation room, this one at the very end of the hall and with especially thick walls, thick enough to muffle sound.

Two Minutes to Live

Super-C was there. So were several guards with bayonets fixed to their rifles, and one flourishing a pistol in his hand. Super-C motioned Bucher to a chair.

"If you sign this confession," he said, "you will be returned home quickly."

"No."

"You have two minutes to sign the confession," said Super-C with a grim, deliberate tone, "or you will be shot." Bucher had no doubt he meant it.

"No."

A guard pushed Bucher to the floor, on his knees, facing the wall. The man with the pistol



ONE NIGHT, ALONE in his room, the captain tried to drown himself in a pail of water.

stepped behind him. Bucher's whole body ached from the beating and his brain throbbed, but, strangely, kneeling there, he felt a sense of relief. He knew it was possible through torture to force mortal men to admit to any lie. He was grateful his life would end without torture. He heard the slide drawn back on the pistol.

"Two minutes."

Waiting for the last seconds of his life to pass, waiting for the gunshot he knew he would never hear, Lloyd Bucher knelt on the cold wood floor of the thick-walled room and repeated over and over in his mind: "I love you, Rose . . . I love you, Rose . . . I love you, Rose . . . I love you, Rose . . ."

Two minutes passed.

"Are you ready to sign?"

"No."

"Kill the sonofabitch!"

Bucher heard the click of the gun's hammer.

"You were lucky," said Super-C. "It was a misfire. You have another two minutes."

Misfire? Bucher had heard the click, heard the slide drawn again. But he had not heard the misfired cartridge hit the floor. "They're not going to kill me," he thought. "They're playing with me."

Two more minutes passed. Bucher again refused to sign.

"He's not worth a bullet," Super-C shouted. "Beat him to death!"

Two guards kicked Bucher sprawling. They smashed their rifle butts into the back of his neck, kicked him in the jaw, kicked, kicked. Then they dragged him unconscious out of the door and down the hall and threw him on his cot.

When he revived he asked if he could go to the head. They marched him down the hall. He stood at the toilet but all he could urinate was blood.

The guard told him to wait at the door for permission to return to his room. Bucher looked at the guard through dazed eyes. He elbowed him out of the way and lurched down the hallway to his room.

Two hours later Super-C appeared at his door with a guard the Pueblo crew would come to know as "Chipmunk." Pistols drawn, they led Bucher out of the building to a waiting car, its windows covered, and told him he would now learn what happened to spies.

After a 10-minute drive they arrived at a building and led Bucher to a semibasement and into a darkened room with three spotlights playing on one wall.

Bucher looked—and turned away. There in the hot light, strapped to the wall, hung a man. Super-C said he was a South Korean spy. He was naked to the waist and a bone protruded from his upper right arm. His face was a swollen mass. His lower lip hung limply where he had bitten through it. His right eye was out and black matter ran from the socket down his right cheek. He was alive.

Lloyd Bucher never remembered leaving the building and wondered whether it had all been a nightmare but was certain it had not because the next thing he knew he was back in the interrogation room sitting in a chair with people shouting at him that since he now knew what happened to spies was he not ready to sign a confession?

He answered no.

"Don't you know you're responsible for the lives of your crew?" shouted Super-C.

"Yes," Bucher replied, "and you're responsible for the death of Duane Hodges."

The Captain Whispered

A guard swung his fist and knocked Bucher out of the chair and across the room.

"We will now begin to shoot your crew one at a time in your presence, beginning with the youngest, until you sign the confession," said Super-C. "And if you do not sign then, you now know that we have the means to persuade you to sign." He sent a

guard to fetch the youngest Pueblo crewman. Bucher, father to his crew as he had no father, was stunned.

"No," he whispered. "I'll sign."

Super-C thrust the paper in front of him. It said the Pueblo was a spy ship and had intruded into North Korean territorial waters at a point 7.6 miles off Yo Do Island. Bucher signed it.

They returned the captain, shaken, to his room. They brought him a huge tray of food, but Bucher did not eat. He had not eaten all day and would not eat for several more days because he was simply incapable of eating. He did, for the first time since the night before his capture, sleep, but it was a fitful sleep because his tormented mind would not allow him rest, and at one point during the long night he rose from his cot and went to the bucket of water in the corner and tried to drown himself.

Thus in less than 36 hours after the North Koreans accosted the Pueblo on the high seas did Super-C get what he wanted: a formal statement signed by the ship's captain admitting to espionage and intrusion.

At least that's what he needed. What he wanted was considerably more, and he set out deliberately, methodically to get that too: an elaboration of the lie, more lies to compound and strengthen it, the same lie carefully rephrased to sound less like a lie, lies set down

in longhand to satisfy his curious addiction to the written word.

In the blur of hours and days that followed, Lloyd Bucher would be forced to copy the typed confession in his own handwriting again and again, to be photographed while copying it, to record it on tape in his own accents.

In the meantime, Super-C could turn his attention to the other Pueblo officers.

To a man, they had declined all the first day to reveal any more than their names, ranks, serial numbers, dates of birth, and their jobs aboard the Pueblo.

Some Did Talk

Some, like the mischievous Tim Harris, did converse with their captors. Harris's answers were typical and seemed at first to satisfy.

"Where is Washington, D.C.?" the interrogator asked.

"One hundred miles north of Rhode Island," Harris replied.

"Where is the Air Force Academy?"

"In Texas."

"On Lyndon Johnson's ranch?"

"Of course."

Later, having broken the commanding officer, Super-C became less tolerant. On the morning of Jan. 25 Skip Schumacher underwent a two-hour grilling. "No! No! You lie! You lie!" the interrogator screamed repeatedly. Schumacher stuck to the cover story.



GRIM-FACED, Bucher writes a phony letter for a North Korean propaganda picture.