

1990

The Pueblo Surrender

Guy Thomas

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review>

Recommended Citation

Thomas, Guy (1990) "The Pueblo Surrender," *Naval War College Review*: Vol. 43 : No. 3 , Article 25.
Available at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol43/iss3/25>

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at U.S. Naval War College Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Naval War College Review by an authorized editor of U.S. Naval War College Digital Commons. For more information, please contact repository.inquiries@usnwc.edu.

and his men as they plodded southward toward the sea.

But one battalion had remained south of the blown bridge: The 1st Battalion, 1st Marines, who guarded the division ammunition dump at Chinhung-ni. This battalion's march north, and its valiant attack, led by Captain Robert Barrow and "A" Company, is the climax of the book.

We can be grateful to the author for reminding us of this tense sequence of events, drama rarely matched in American military history, and of the sacrifices in wounded and dead in North Korea. We are reminded of the steady competence of the Marine leaders under stress and of the failed strategy which made the desperate operation necessary in the first place.

During the Korean War, the author was there. His credentials for describing the Marines in action in Korea are excellent. But his qualifications for analysis and criticism of American strategy are no greater than those of the average participant in the war.

Although he lists an impressive bibliography, Hopkins' failure to use notes forces the reader to rely on him for accuracy of statements and quotations from higher authorities. He does not miss an opportunity to criticize the area commander and his staff: An understandable attitude for a Marine company commander who served at that time and at that place.

To my knowledge, no one from the 1st Marine Division has had a good word for General MacArthur. They believe that he caused them

unnecessary casualties and suffering and, even more important, that he deprived them of the victory that was their due.

Perhaps a more balanced view would conclude that MacArthur recognized the capability of the Marines and insisted that a full-strength Marine division be sent to him. Otherwise, the Marine participation in the Korean War might have been small. In 1950 they had few friends in Washington. MacArthur understood and exploited our amphibious skills at Inchon, where America won a startling victory that led to the breakup of the North Korean Army. In the heat of debate over the flawed policy of advancing to the Yalu River, these earlier accomplishments are often overlooked. Too bad the American Caesar could not have quit when he was ahead.

ANTHONY WALKER
Colonel, U.S. Marine Corps (Retired)
Middletown, Rhode Island

Liston, Robert A. *The Pueblo Surrender*. New York: M. Evans & Co., 1988. 294pp. \$18.95

Would you believe that the USS *Pueblo* (AGER 2) was seized by the Chinese, fired on by the Soviets and then turned over to the North Koreans, all within 12 miles of Wonsan? Well, neither do I. This is the silliest book on naval affairs I have ever read. About 75 pages into it, I turned to see who the publisher was. I had never heard of them and

I suspect that if this is a representative sample of what they publish, I never will again.

Mr. Liston would have us believe that the National Security Agency—which he maintains really controls this country through the manipulation of information—put a trick code machine on board the *Pueblo* and then arranged for the machine's capture. Their purpose, he says, was to defeat the North Vietnamese by breaking their codes when they started using the doctored machine. He would also have us believe that the *Pueblo's* crew was held incommunicado by the National Security Agency until they all agreed to tell the world that the Koreans had seized the ship and not to mention the Sino-Soviet confrontation or their participation in the seizure. His story begins with the crew members' accounts of the *Pueblo's* capture, and then tries to illustrate how they contradict each other. In fact, many of the "contradictions" can easily be explained by the various positions of the viewers and time of the report. A classic example of that is Liston's concern with the "conflicting" stories of the boarding. One man related that the captors approached from the port quarter, another reported that they came from astern and a third that they tied up to the starboard quarter. He offers this as evidence of doctored accounts of the seizure. However, anyone who has been to sea can easily imagine that all three accounts could be accurate. Ships do maneuver and relative position can change very quickly. Liston also reports that

there is a *Soviet* submarine base in Yonghung Bay, just north of Wonsan: something I am sure U.S. intelligence will be surprised to know. The author also states that the Japanese have no destroyer-sized warships. The editor of *Jane's Fighting Ships* will be distressed to learn this, because for many years he has been reporting that the Japanese do have such ships.

Liston may well be the victim of tall tales. There is internal evidence in the book that someone who was tangentially aware of the cryptologic technician's work in the USS *Jamestown* off Vietnam in the mid-1960s has filled Mr. Liston full of the kind of stories that CTs like to tell ship's clerks and boatswain mates.

Unless you are looking for a laugh, do not waste your time reading this book.

GUY THOMAS
Commander, U.S. Navy (Retired)
Greenville, Texas

Francillon, Rene J. *Tonkin Gulf Yacht Club: U.S. Carrier Operations off Vietnam*. Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1988. 214pp. \$24.59

Everyone who was on a carrier operating off Yankee Point and vicinity during the Vietnam War should have a copy of this book. It names every participating carrier, lists every deployment and, above all, specifies the squadrons, their aircraft type and their flyers. To his surprise, the reviewer discovered the