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CIA doc

29 January 1968

A Psychological and Political Analysis of
Commander Bucher's Statements

Psychological Analysis

1. All of Commander Bucher's Naval service records have been reviewed. These include his fitness reports, background investigative reports and medical records. We have also had the opportunity of interviewing a Naval officer in the Washington area who was Subject's commanding officer immediately prior to Subject's assignment to the Pueblo. We have also listened to the tapes of his purported confession.

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2. We believe we have acquired a reasonable understanding of Subject as a person. Some judgements about his reactions can be stated with conviction. Others which are based on inferences must be considered more speculative.

3. Nothing in the data reviewed raises any questions about the Subject's loyalty. The statement alleged to have been written by Subject in North Korea after his capture is inconsistent with anything he might have composed voluntarily. Nothing suggests that he would sign a prepared statement

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INTERAGENCY SECURITY CLASSIFICATION
APPEALS PANEL, E.O. 12958, SECTION 5.4(b)(3)

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NSF, NSC HISTORIES,
PUEBLO CRISIS 1968
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PART 5, BX 28.

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voluntarily or under slight duress. Nothing indicates that Subject could have been brought to the point of utter capitulation in a brief period of time even under intense psychological coercion by his captors.

4. The question then is whether in a relatively short period of time he could have been brought to the point of signing a "confession" written in something like the terms published by the North Korean Government. We understand that technical analysis of the taped "confession" indicates that it probably is Subject's voice but that the tape has been spliced repeatedly. Although we have no information about his treatment after capture, in order to answer this question, and understanding of his personality make-up is needed. On the basis of the following analysis of his background and personality, we believe it is possible that he could have been brought to the point of signing some kind of document, which later could be exploited, without his realizing its significance.

5. Subject is 40 years old, married, and the father of two boys. When he was three his mother died in

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an accident. Although his father and grandmother were both alive, for reasons unclear he entered Boy's Town when he was 14 (1941), where he was twice elected president of his class and was captain of the football team. However, his scholastic record was not outstanding. Upon graduation from high school he enlisted in the Navy and served three years. In order to qualify for OCS he enrolled in the University of Nebraska and earned a degree in education. Although he reported to one officer that he had a master's degree in paleontology, his Navy officer's records do not support this.

RAW AWAY ONE YEAR OF RESERVANT AND COURSES

NEVER SERVED OCS PRIOR TO 1941

WAS IN OCS FOLLOWED THAT COURSE

6. His early performance in the Navy was only average. He was about two or three years older than most of his rank. During his early years in the Navy he was consistently described as an active, highly motivated young man who was eager to perform well but who needed somewhat more supervision than officers of his rank. It is also evident that he had a strong inclination to become too involved with his men. He was given his weakest ratings on factors relating to military bearing,

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cooperativeness and personal conduct of his affairs.

In general his overall ratings placed him in the lower half of officers of his age and rank.

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7. His primary duty was with the submarine service and he obviously desired to become a submarine skipper.

There are indications that he felt he would not be selected for such a post. He was quite disappointed when he was not given a submarine command and was detailed to the Pueblo instead.

8. It was when he was given his first command that some signs of strain became evident. He worked very hard in getting the Pueblo ready for sea. Indeed he pushed so hard that he was criticized for being too demanding with the civilians outfitting the ship. During this period he became involved in a security investigation after being arrested for gambling. One informant indicated his belief that Subject had been drinking on duty. No administrative action resulted from this investigation.

9. From this material we are able to draw certain inferences, but we wish to underscore that they are only inferences.

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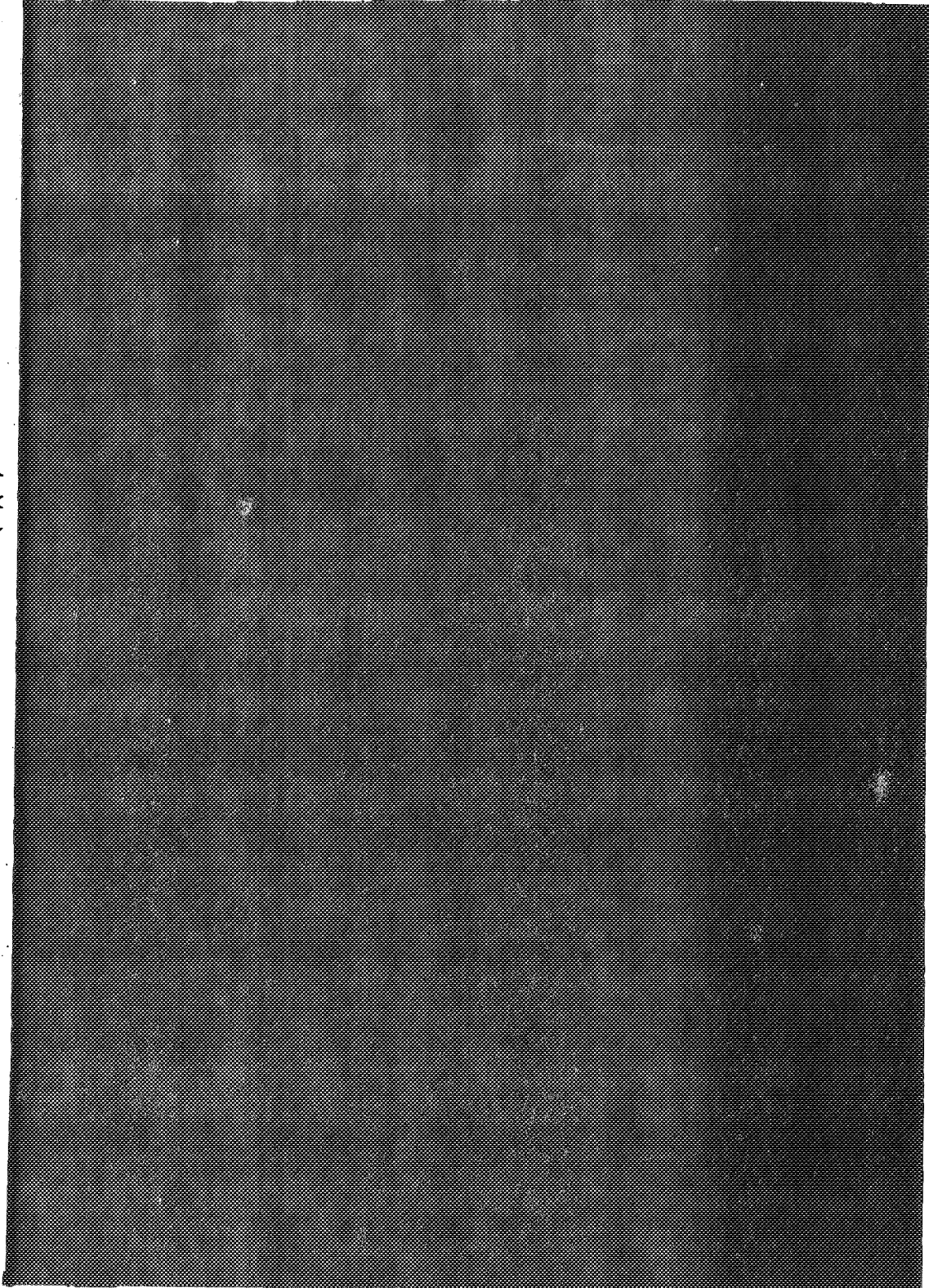
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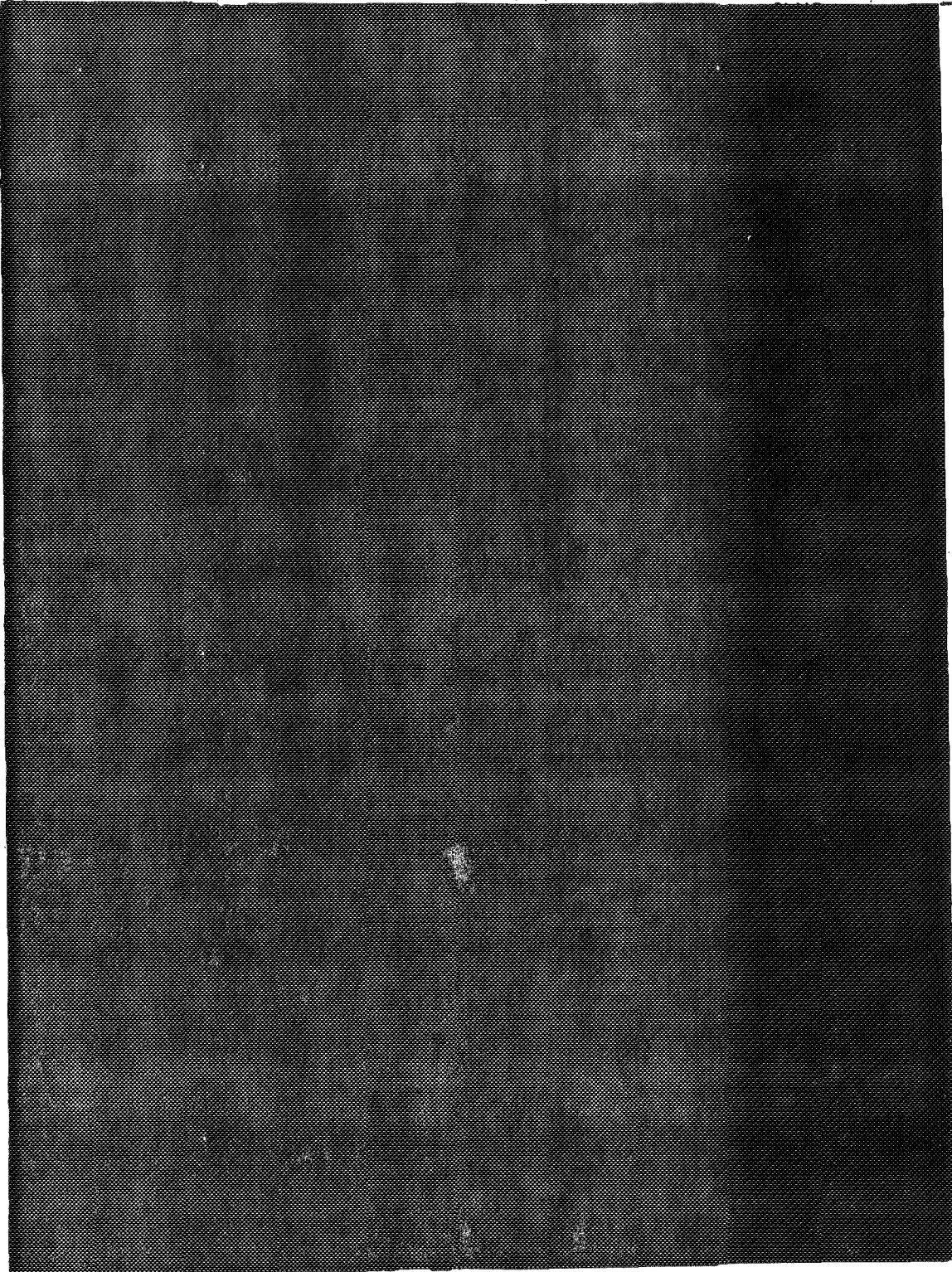
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Political Analysis

11. Pyongyang's propaganda exploitation of the seizure of the Pueblo has consisted primarily of two alleged statements made by Commander Bucher. Bucher's first statement was a "confession" broadcast on 24 January. His second statement, broadcast two days later, was described as an interview by the North Korean press. This "interview," except for a few additions, closely follows the first statement. The statements attributed to Commander Bucher are for the most part straight recitals of Communist propaganda and were obviously dictated by Pyongyang. As such, however, they do indicate some aspects of the position Pyongyang now appears to be taking in regard to the Pueblo's capture.

12. The most obvious intent of the statements has been to establish the credibility of the North Korean version of the Pueblo's capture. Bucher's statement that the Pueblo had deliberately "deeply intruded into the coastal waters" of North Korea at the time of its capture is highlighted.

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THREAT

13. After making this point, Bucher's statements give detailed and somewhat lurid accounts of

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the Pueblo's recent "provocative" activities. Bucher was alleged to have confessed that the Pueblo had also violated the waters of "Peoples China and other socialist countries," and in fact had entered North Korean waters after performing "espionage assignments along the Soviet Union's maritime province." (The North Koreans perhaps hoped that such a charge would make it difficult for China and the Soviet Union to withhold full public support for their position. The Pueblo had in fact gone directly from Japan to its station along the North Korean coast.)

14. In his statements, Bucher labeled the Pueblo's mission as a "plain act of aggression" and stated that the ship operated under the guise of an oceanographic research vessel. He allegedly stated that the Pueblo's mission was laid on by the CIA and that he and his men were tempted to undertake their mission by CIA "dollars and honor." The two civilians on board the ship were described as "special espionage agents who are conducting military espionage missions" as well as "other important, special assignments."

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15. Such statements can be viewed largely as a predictable propaganda attempt to publicize and discredit US intelligence-gathering operations. They also plainly indicate Pyongyang's concern to publicize the case it rightly or wrongly feels it has for the retention of the Pueblo and its crew. Bucher's statements clearly indicate that Pyongyang feels itself in a position to bargain with the US concerning the Pueblo. In line with this, a 28 January editorial in the authoritative North Korean newspaper Nodong Sinmun depicts the Pueblo incident as "a new flagrant trampling on the Korean armistice agreement." This strongly implies that Pyongyang sees the final disposition of the Pueblo and its crew as a subject of negotiation--no doubt lengthy--at Panmunjom.

16. The second Bucher statement, unlike the first one, draws a connection between the capture of the Pueblo and the war in Vietnam. Commander Bucher allegedly stated that the Pueblo's mission against North Korea was in preparation for "a new war of aggression in Asia" and added that the US "regards Korea and Vietnam as two fronts" of the war.

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17. It is interesting to note that Bucher's second statement, issued after Pyongyang had had additional time to reflect upon the public position it wished to adopt, stressed a connection with Vietnam. Whatever the degree of premeditation involved in the capture of the Pueblo, Pyongyang now apparently sees its seizure of our ship as a way to support Hanoi by placing diversionary pressure on the US. North Korean propaganda in recent months has been increasingly concerned with linking "US imperialism" in Vietnam and South Korea. Pyongyang, it would appear, now sees its possession of the Pueblo and its crew as a golden opportunity to intensify this propaganda line--a factor militating against an early release of the crew.

18. Another indication that Pyongyang probably desires to retain the Pueblo and its crew for as long as feasible is Commander Bucher's statement that he and his crew "should be punished in accordance with the criminal law" of North Korea. A day earlier, Nodong Sinmun likewise stated that members of the crew were "criminals" who must "be dealt with by law" and receive "due punishment." It seems quite possible, however, that the crew will

not be brought to trial. The first Bucher statement concludes with a plea for leniency. In the second statement he is allowed to make a plea for the crew's release. Pyongyang has left open the option of releasing the crew at any time.

19. In the last incident involving the North Korean capture of US military personnel, two helicopter pilots downed in North Korea in May 1963 were not released until after a year of negotiation at Panmunjom. During this time Pyongyang ignored a variety of nonmilitary pressures and attempted to pin charges of espionage and "criminal intent" on the fliers. They were, in fact, successful in extracting an apology from the US.

20. Commander Bucher's statements indicate that the North Koreans would prefer to handle the Pueblo case in a similar manner. It seems clear that they presently have no intention of simply releasing the Pueblo and its crew upon demand. Probably motivated by a desire to drag out the incident and inflict the maximum amount of pressure and embarrassment upon the US, they seem intent on building a strong propaganda case against the crew, as criminals punishable by North Korean law. Although

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Pyongyang has carefully and obviously provided for an eventual release of the crew, its propaganda statements indicate that North Korea will press for at least an implicit US admission of guilt before taking such action.