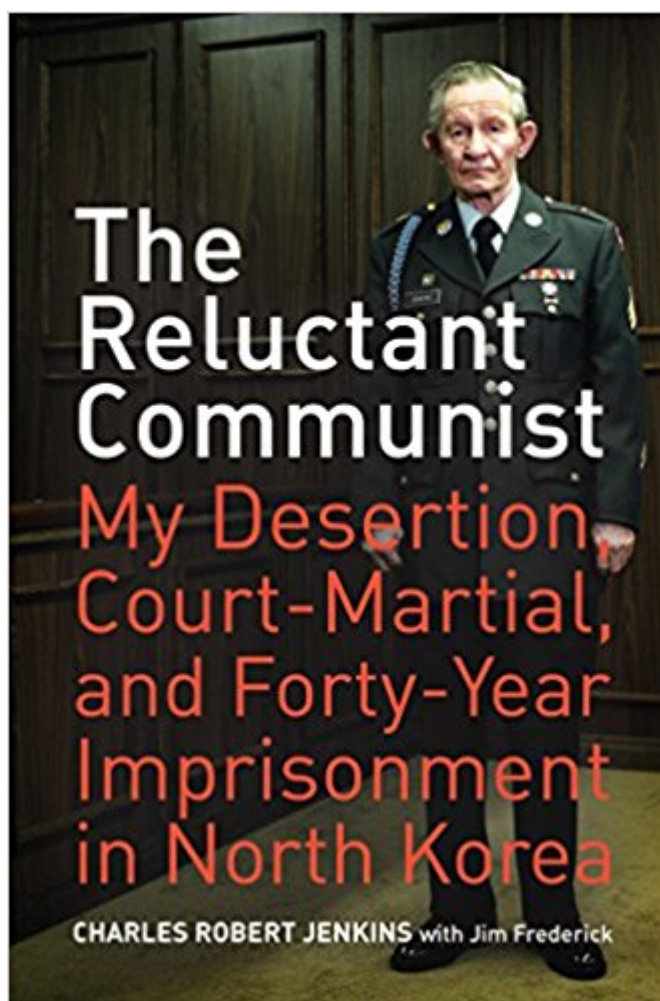


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The Reluctant Communist: My Desertion, Court-Martial, And Forty-Year Imprisonment In North Korea



Synopsis

In January of 1965, twenty-four-year-old U.S. Army sergeant Charles Robert Jenkins abandoned his post in South Korea, walked across the DMZ, and surrendered to communist North Korean soldiers standing sentry along the world's most heavily militarized border. He believed his action would get him back to the States and a short jail sentence. Instead he found himself in another sort of prison, where for forty years he suffered under one of the most brutal and repressive regimes the world has known. This fast-paced, harrowing tale, told plainly and simply by Jenkins (with journalist Jim Frederick), takes the reader behind the North Korean curtain and reveals the inner workings of its isolated society while offering a powerful testament to the human spirit.

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Customer Reviews

In the hierarchy of mistakes, there are the small ones, the big ones and the ones so monumental that it is difficult to make sense of them. Charles Robert Jenkins made the last type while stationed in South Korea on the Demilitarized Zone in the early 1960s. Looking at a potential court martial (amazingly, for acts he had not yet even committed!), he walked across the border into the hands of North Korea. He joined three other American servicemen who had crossed the line, of which only James Joseph Dresnok remains (and who is the subject of the excellent documentary Crossing the

Line), the other two having died in North Korea. Jenkins never intended to stay in North Korea. Other soldiers facing a court martial had crossed the line between West and East Germany, to be then transferred to Moscow and later transferred back to the United States. Yes, they were still court martialled, but the distance away from the scene of their dereliction took some of the sting out. But North Korea is different. It did not let Jenkins, or the other three deserters, go. Trying its best to use him for purposes such as starring in propaganda movies or teaching English at a spy college, Jenkins found himself a 40 year 'guest' of the largest political prison on the planet. Jenkins' descriptions of daily life in North Korea are exceptionally illuminating, casting a light into a place notorious for keeping the outside world in the dark. The most striking aspect is not the physical deprivations, fighting the bitter cold and hunger with meager resources.

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