

THE EVACUATION OF HUNGNAM

The perimeter around Hungnam, evacuation port for the Tenth Corps, contracts towards its last line as last convoys hurry along the roads to the port. For days a vast fleet of ships has rushed its loading as Chinese troops closed in, held back only by a curtain of fire, a day and night methodical shelling to keep the enemy out of gun-range of the docks.

When Chinese troops trapped the 10th Corps in North-East Korea, Hungnam, within the trap, was organized as an escape port. Now 105 thousand troops, including two divisions of South Koreans and our Marine Commandos board the escape ships. Besides the men, more than 400-thousand tons of equipment and supplies are saved to fight on another front.

Factories and plant useful to the enemy and oil supplies which can't be off-loaded are to be destroyed. More than 400 trucks and 30 locomotives will go up in flames.

When evacuation is over there'll be nothing to help the vast Chinese forces which lack modern transport.

Many of Hungnam's factories were destroyed from the air in the early days of the war; now the rest go the same way by demolition squads. The houses of the people alone are left untouched; but North Korean documents are burned to make re-organization long and difficult. By night the town is a blaze of flames. And in this strange war the very flames help the defenders, because Chinese troops attack mainly under cover of darkness. As the last line is reached a 300-foot chimney is demolished to deny the Chinese gunners an aiming point. Into its base goes 15-hundred pounds of T.N.T.

That was a North Korean oil and alcohol store. Now the end is near. The big ships are gone and the landing-craft come in for the rest, as the guns speed up their fire. This is the danger moment as the long lines wind down to the waiting craft. Food stores which can't be saved are distributed to those who choose to remain in Hungnam, and with grim prospects of hard times ahead the cold, hungry people fight for flour and oatmeal. In their eagerness many grabbed bags of fertiliser. But more than 80-thousand civilians have already left, carried to safety by the big ships.

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