

2-808501

49/35

YANGTSE HEROES AND NAVY WOUNDED

Shanghai - fourth largest city in the world - lies at the mercy of the Communist army. With the invaders nearing the gates, refugees crowd all routes of escape. Some of the city's 4,000 Britons plan to stick it out, but the Navy has its evacuation plans ready. The cruiser London, which limped back to Shanghai (after its gallant effort to relieve the battered Amethyst had failed) undergoes emergency repairs. Holed by Communist guns the London suffered 27 casualties, twelve of them fatal. The skipper - Captain Peter Casalet - was among the wounded. He tells of the heroism of his crew - so cowardly attacked on its mission of mercy.

Also undergoing repairs are the destroyer Consort and the sloop Black Swan. Both were raked by the Reds fire, while trying to run the Yangtze gauntlet. Both suffered casualties. Patched up, the Consort now sails to Hong Kong, Britain's last remaining base in the East, and Asia's biggest business centre. The Union Jack - signal of law and order - still flies over this bustling oasis of security. Britons always have been welcome here, for their presence spelled prosperity. But for how long can Hong Kong avoid the fate of Shanghai? For there, as every ship takes away more of its European community, business life is at a standstill. They all head for Hong Kong, eight hundred miles to the South.

Meanwhile, a train brings the Amethyst's wounded into Shanghai. They have survived a perilous overland journey. Some are fit to go on. For others, Hospital ships are waiting to take them on to Hong Kong. No praise is too high for the heroism of these men. Struck down in the midst of their peaceful mission, they were outnumbered and outgunned, but still wrote a glorious page of naval history.