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P.O.W. EXCHANGE

WEIST -- Aarseth

The hopes and prayers of long, agonizing months come true in Freedom Village as the first United Nations prisoners of war -- bodies scarred by their grim ordeal -- reach the sanctuary of friendly soil.

Weary -- dazed -- thankful, many laughed, some cried on their return to freedom.

For all, peace in Korea had become a dramatic reality.

Freedom Village is electric with tension, tragedy and joy as the ~~exchange operation~~ "Operation Big Switch" proceeds smoothly.

The spirit of the gallant ROK soldiers is unbroken, a tough little ROK returns with a sign -- written in his own blood -- "The Communists Didn't Win."

Many of the men -- their minds broken by the brutal treatment -- are unable to realize how sick they are. Dozens have to be helped from the trucks. Faces are drawn, eyes weary and action listless and automatic.

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At Munsan, surly Communist P.O.W.s are shuffled into U. N. vehicles -- many of them defiant -- on the last leg of their journey to the exchange site at Panmunjom.

In a last sullen taunt at their captors, the Reds scream, sing and shout curses at their guards.

A fanatic Communist litter case tears off his shirt in a final show of hate before vanishing behind the Iron Curtain. The highway roads and ditches are littered with discarded clothes, shoes and crutches.

At the U. N. receiving station, the freed Allied P.O.Ws tell a grim stories of beatings and torture and starvation.

But now in devout silence, they can join with chaplains in offering thanks for their deliverance. Later, there will time for good food again -- xxx time will heal the nightmare of their captivity.