

EVACUATION OF TACHENS ISLANDS.

The Tachen Islands, 200 miles North West of Formosa, have been evacuated and left for occupation by China's Red Army. These pictures of the operation have just reached this country. G.I's and Nationalist Chinese troops worked together to clear the islands - the garrison of 14,000 and every item of their equipment had to be moved; nothing of value was to be left. Then, in silence, the people of the islands moved to the waiting boats. There were 18,000 of them. Bewildered, unable to grasp the reasons why they should leave their homes, they filed down to the beaches. It was a scene all too familiar in this half-century - we saw it recently in Korea; before that in almost every country in Europe; earlier still in Spain and Abyssinia - men, women and children on the run, their only crime, that they had made their homes in the path of the machine of war.

"Operation Pull-Out", a code-name that covered one of the most tense military moves of recent times. With orders to shoot only if shot at, the Americans carried out the operation never knowing if, or when, the Reds might attack. Quickly the islands were cleared, and the people huddled near the beach waiting to board the boats. Their homes had been destroyed by now - there was no turning back. Just off the Tachens, guard was kept by ships of the United States Seventh Fleet.

Landing craft left their parent ships and hurried towards the beaches to pick up the evacuees and take them to Formosa. Soon they must set about building new homes and making a new life for themselves on Formosa. But there too they will find no peace, for the islands is under constant threat of invasion by the Chinese Communists and it is from Formosa that Chiang Kai-Shek hopes to launch an attack on the mainland of China. History may recall the Formosa crisis by debating the rights and wrongs of Chiang Kai-Shek, and Mao Tse Tung but perhaps it is in within these scenes that the truth is to be found - perhaps, indeed, the truth of all war, lives twisted by its course - or ended by its outcome.

As the landing craft moved away to join the protective convoy, demolition continued. Homes, shops, fortifications were systematically obliterated. Nothing was to be left for the Reds when they moved in - and move in they did. Within hours of the evacuation.

Despite protests from Red China about the encroachment of American planes over their territory, "Operation Pull-Out" was completed with few incidents. Now it is thought, the Communists will soon invade the island of Nanchi, about 80 miles South of the Tachens. Consequently, scenes similar to these are being enacted there. The strident march of Communism across the far East leaves a trail of fearful destruction and pitiful distress. The people who are its victims can do no more. They are but pawns in the grim game of war.

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