

October 19, 2020

The Korean War, 70 Years Later, The News-Herald, Franklin and Oil City, PA

Korean War Weekly Front Pages

15 October – 21 October 1950

The News-Herald, Franklin and Oil City, PA

Pyongyang falls.



Against light opposition, four Allied columns advanced through rain on Monday in a converging sweep toward Pyongyang, the North Korean capital city. Vanguards of some 70,000 American, South Korean, British and Australian troops were 38 miles from the city. The hour of decision for the shattered Communist army was at hand. The next day American mobile forces blasted open the gateway to Pyongyang with a lightning strike into Hwangju, the last big guardian outpost 21 miles south of the capital. Communist defenses were crumbling, were smashed to bits or simply vanished. Headquarters officers were unable to keep up with the whirlwind advances.

Intelligence reports indicated big scale enemy movements along all roads northward from Pyongyang. Unknown at this time was whether the stricken Communist army would stoutly defend Pyongyang.

By Wednesday, the vanguard of onrushing Allied armies was reported to have smashed through a flurry of Communist resistance and entered the North Korean capital city. American and South Korean columns had raced into the suburbs from three directions, and had brought the richest prize of the lightning sweep through North Korea within their grasp. By the next day, half of Pyongyang had been captured, and the Yanks had crossed the Taedong River into the heart of the city, seizing a firm beachhead on the west bank. Pyongyang fell on 20 October.

US paratroopers showered down across Communist escape routes north of Pyongyang in a bid to cut off and destroy the 27,000 North Korean troops in panicky flight from their lost capital city. Viewing them, MacArthur stated "The war is very definitely coming to an end shortly." By Saturday, almost all of the North Korean troops had been killed, captured or trapped. A South Korean spearhead was now only 85 miles from Manchuria, and Communist radio reported that the North Korean government had established a new capital at Simuiju, in extreme northeastern Korea.

Spurred by the discovery of 500 South Korean soldiers who had been shot, bayoneted or burned near the city of Younghung, an American-led task force was racing along the railway connecting that city with Pyongyang. Their goal was the rescue of some 1,000 American prisoners from possible slaughter by their Red captors. The prisoners had been spotted by locals in a railway tunnel 17 miles west of Younghung, three days earlier. It was felt they might now be found a little further along the railway.

The US was expected to file a complaint in the UN over the use of free-floating Russian-made mines by the Communists in North Korean waters. Since the Korean War began, three minesweepers had been sunk and two destroyers damaged in collisions with mines. The casualty count stood at 12 dead, 36 missing and 115 injured.

The president of South Korea, Syngman Rhee, said that the Korean people had a right to set up their own government, in disagreement with the UN interim commission which had called for new elections throughout Korea. He held that independence had been established in 1948, and cannot be re-established.

On Tuesday, President Truman gave an address to the nation on his Wake Island conference with General MacArthur. He left no doubt that the US would back the free nations of the world in resisting "Communist imperialism," but the US sought no military conquest or glory. He said the country was taking on a huge defense program with reluctance. He then spelled out four ways the Russians could prove their peaceful intentions, including calling on the North Koreans to lay down their arms at once.

(Photo courtesy newspapers.com, Franklin and Oil City News-Herald)