

TITLE: A Priceless Record

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Plants lay crushed like broken egg crates

A PRICELESS RECORD

Dino A. Brugioni

Without warning at 3:45 a.m. local China time on 28 July 1976, the earth shook throughout the heavily populated and industrialized areas of Hebei province, registering 8.2 on the Richter scale. The epicenter was plotted 8 nm SSE of Tangshan, an industrial city of over one million. It was one of the major natural disasters of all time.

The predominantly single story workers dwellings in the center of Tangshan and the newer multi-storied apartments of the suburbs collapsed with the initial shock, their stone and masonry walls killing an estimated 750,000 people and injuring another 800,000. Industrial plants lay crushed like broken egg crates. Seen through stereo photography, the devastation reminded photo interpreters of the World War II bomb destruction of German cities.

The Chinese government, typically, provided little information, although Hsinhua, the official press agency, admitted that "there had been great losses to people's lives and property." The Chinese buried their dead, hospitalized their injured, started a relief and reconstruction effort and spurned offers of foreign assistance—including that from the U.S.

If the destruction had been impressive, then the reconstruction effort was more so. In four years, Tangshan and its industries have been essentially restored.

The epic is graphically recorded on three rolls of U.S. satellite photography that comprise an extraordinary account of one of the tragedies of our time and a testimony to man's indomitable spirit.

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T'ang-shan Area - Earthquake July 28, 1976



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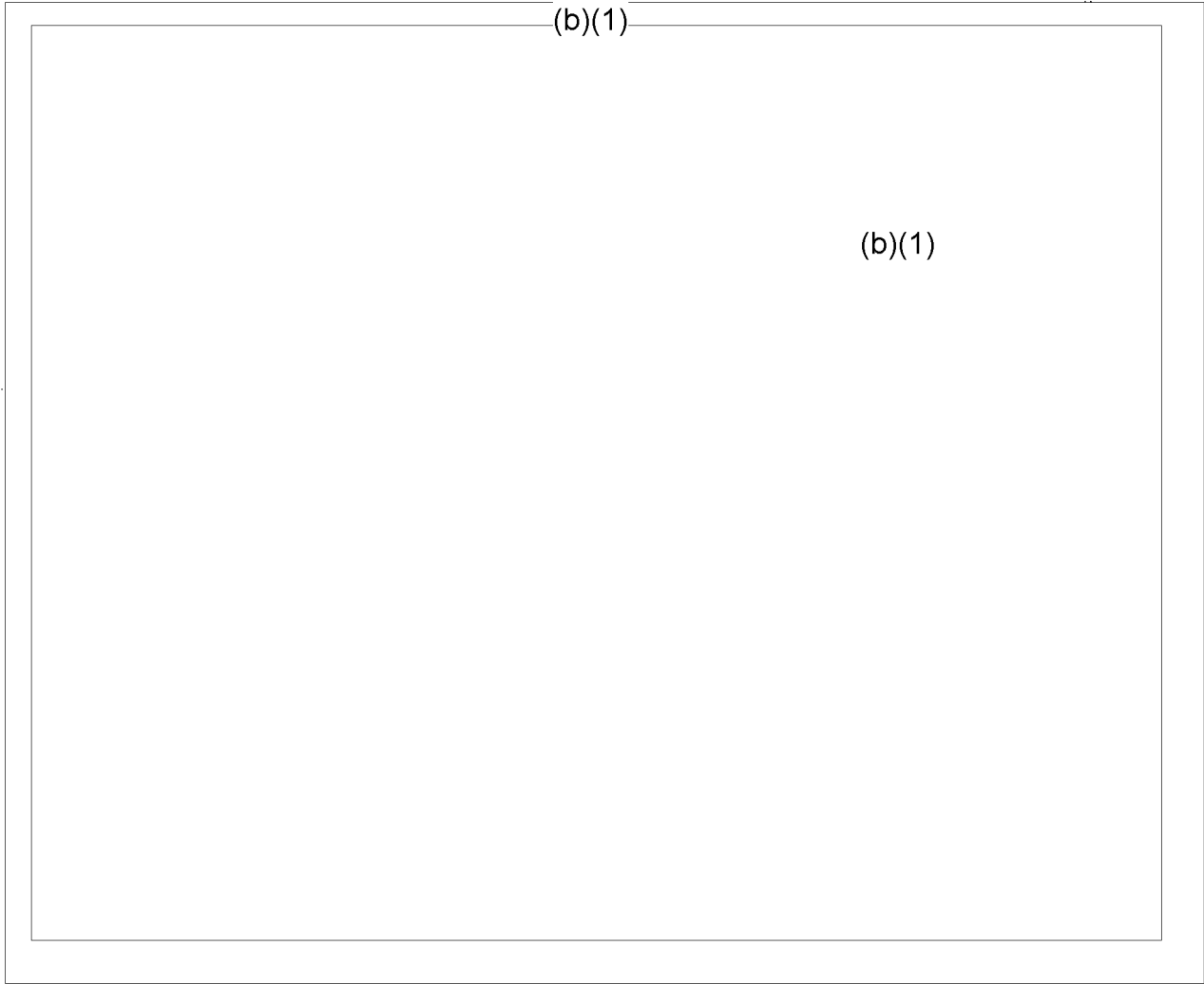
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