

Will the Reds Attack Formosa?

The author, an expert on Far Eastern affairs, reviews the background for attack and suggests provocative possibilities—important reading for a troubled time.

By DR. PERCY W. BUCHANAN

IN ORDER to understand the Formosan picture in its entirety, it is not fair to attempt to answer the question, "Will the Chinese Reds attack Formosa?" purely from our biased American point of view. Necessarily there must be other viewpoints—else there could be no question at all.

Formosa, from the Chinese Point of View

I would like to examine the question first of all in the light of Chinese thinking.

The Chinese Communist Regime is trying desperately to make the Chinese people think in terms of Formosa as an integral part of China. Indications from Chinese Communist sources and from Western observers in China seem to indicate that the Red government's propaganda, blasting the Chinese mind into these channels, is proving very effective. In all likelihood, the Chinese people today *do* tend to think of Formosa as being a part of their national geographic entity.

Yet, this has not always been the case. Until the 16th century, there is only slight mention of Taiwan (Formosa) in Chinese records—and then it is only as a part of China in the sense that the whole world was a part of China under the Confucian concept. In the 17th century, Peking thought so little of Formosa that the Flowery Kingdom was willing to allow the Portuguese to use it as a commercial base. The Portuguese named it Formosa—and sailed away. In the 18th century, the Chinese government gave it to the Dutch for settlement in exchange for the Pescadores, which the Chinese considered more important. The Dutch were subsequently driven off by a Chinese pirate named Koxinga. In the 19th century, a few American expansionists, Perry among them, considered taking over Formosa along with the Bonins for American bases—suggestions that were turned down by the U. S. Congress.

After the Sino-Japanese War, the Chinese were happy to cede Formosa to the Island Empire in the peace settlement of 1896. Japan retained the island until 1945.

Let me repeat: neither the Chinese government nor the Chinese people have, until the 20th century, thought of Formosa as a

part of their geographical body. On the other hand, we can say just as emphatically that the Western World has thought of Formosa only as being a part of China. Thus, the Communists' will to regain Formosa is something that we can understand more readily than can the average Chinese not subjected to propaganda.

Now, the second important point as viewed through Chinese eyes: it is only because of the Americans that Red China does not immediately occupy Formosa. The Chinese rationalization follows this pattern: Chiang was defeated by Mao; Chiang fled to and occupied Formosa; the American Seventh Fleet and governmental statements have since protected Chiang from the victorious Reds; U. S. planes are based on Formosa and her bays harbor elements of the U. S. battle fleet. Therefore, the U. S. is an aggressor.

The Chinese have been led to believe that the Red China government is the only Chinese government, and that Chiang is little more than a 19th century pirate—a disruptive element to a united nation. They are

told, and with truth, that most of the major powers—Russia, India, Great Britain, etc.—recognize the Peoples Republic of China. Of the major powers, only the United States rejects this recognition. And the rejection, still through the eyes of the Chinese, is because Imperialistic America wishes to retain Formosa as part of its chain of aggression extending along the east coast of Asia, from northern Japan to the southern Philippines.

In all of the above we can see the Communist pattern of truth planted with half-truths and falsehoods. And, of course, the Chinese people are never allowed to hear the counter arguments.

The Inhabitants of Formosa

In order to understand the end of our story we must first understand the people involved. The inhabitants of Formosa number from 9 to 10 million. This number can be divided into three groups:

1. Mountain people. There are approximately 100,000 mountain people that the Western World calls head hunters. Of this group perhaps 65,000 are called "civilized mountain people," while the rest are the "uncivilized people." That means simply that 35,000 of them still hunt heads. It should be pointed out, however, that the 65,000 have been "civilized" not by the Chinese but by the Japanese.

2. Native Formosan Chinese. They number approximately seven million. These people are not refugees. Their ancestors came over from Fukien and North Kwangtung Provinces, and from the Hakka district of China. They have a dialect that amounts virtually to a different language, so different is it from the Mandarin *lingua franca*.

3. Chinese refugees. Their number is unknown, perhaps two and one-half or three million. These refugees are not necessarily from the provinces named above. Their

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ured off the last few steps to the top, I knew why the others had hurried down, spending only a very few moments on the summit. At the very top there was the strongest wind I had ever met in the mountains.

Darkness overtook us about halfway down but fortunately a full moon lighted our way. When we reached our camp at 8:30 p.m., we knew that we had put in a day's work. George had hot tea waiting for us. Because of the failure of the batteries for his electric socks, he had had to turn back at about 20,000 feet. There was no justice, since it was largely due to George's skillful icework that we were able to reach the saddle.

The North Peak is a much more straightforward climb than the south peak. We reached the summit in only four hours, but we were greatly disappointed by the clouds which enveloped us at the summit.

This ended the climbing of the American Andean Expedition 1954. The descent to Yungay was completed in two days. After packing up our gear for shipment back to the United States we all went our separate ways, for the summer had come to an end.

All in all the expedition was a success. It lacked the elements of excitement such as serious illness, a great fall, or even frozen feet or fingers. The first ascent of the highest unclimbed peak in Peru (the West Peak of Huandoy at 20,853 feet) had been accomplished. We had not climbed the South Peak of Huandoy or Chacaraju. The former can certainly be climbed from the main Huandoy saddle. But Chacaraju is another story. It will require an all-out assault by a strong party who are willing to accept a certain amount of risk. To climb either of its two summits would be a major accomplishment. The Cordillera Blanca will remain as one of the finest climbing areas in the world regardless of the fate of this particular summit, only one spectacular peak among many.

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language is so foreign to the natives as to be virtually unintelligible, but they are in control of Formosa.

Potential Points of Friction on Formosa

Perhaps the greatest point of friction is the language difficulty.

A second great point of friction might swell from the fact that innumerable native Formosan Chinese have been ejected from their homes to make room for the new administrators.

A third area of difficulty may easily stem from the imposition of new technicalities upon an old pattern.

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There is absolutely no question about Chiang's excellent intentions. He is doing much for Formosa in reconstruction, in rural planning, in electrification, etc. Yet, it is fact that a community well accustomed to its own pattern of life, however primitive, resents innovations, particularly when applied by "foreigners."

Possibilities of Attack

In the present contingency there are perhaps four possibilities for the future in the case of Formosa versus the Reds.

1. Immediate Attack. There are two methods that the Red Chinese might employ in an immediate attack:

The first is the "logical" attack by sea—a mass of troops transported across the 90-mile strait in steamboats and junks. This is the "Channel-crossing" attack of World War II. It is what we are led to expect will be done.

Obviously, this attack must contend with the U. S. Seventh Fleet. The Chinese counter this statement with the suggestion that even the "powerful" Seventh Fleet could not stand up under a sustained attack by thousands of planes. A true up-to-date test of air versus sea power has not been made. Obviously World War II criteria will not be valid in a jet age.

On the other hand, the very reason that

this is the obvious and perhaps expected plan of attack would work against it. Since it is the "normal" action the Reds might well shy away from it. The question arises then, "What is the alternative to a sea-borne attack?" The answer for this modern age is "air."

The more we examine the possibilities of this alternative, the more logical it appears. The more we read between the lines of propaganda flowing from Red China, the greater appears this danger. And the more we study the situation on Formosa itself, the more probable this appears.

Even an attack by air, however, must come at the strategic time. The time must be a blending of possible, if not probable, events. The protective Seventh Fleet, with its five carriers, must at some time return to its various bases in the Philippines, in Okinawa, in Keelung. There must be internal difficulty in the administration of Formosa itself. The "native Chinese" must be at that point where they are ready for a change.

The first condition noted above is the most unlikely. It is hardly conceivable that the U. S. will relax its alertness to such a degree. The second and third conditions are very real—as we have noted in the years since 1948. There must, however, be a convergence of these three elements.

When, or if, that time comes, the Communists can send wave upon wave of paratroop personnel to establish a beach-head. The "beach-head" will certainly not be on a beach. It will be in the mountainous hinterland, among the civilized mountain people. There, although they may not be able to secure supplies from the mainland, they may be able to subsist (Korea taught us that much) while they draw to them the malcontents of the island.

To say that this latter plan is absurd would be the utmost folly. A short thirty-minute flight would suffice. And the end, the disruption of the Nationalist government, would make worthwhile the sacrifice of the planes that would be intercepted before they could return to their home bases.

However, the Communists do not have to use this direct attack plan. There are others!

2. The simplest of all plans, and the one most likely to be followed, is merely to wait for 9 years—until the average age of the army on Formosa is 40. This plan is not only bloodless—but it is also logical from the point of view of ancient and timeless Chinese practices.

3. There is also the possibility that the Chinese might wait for a split between the allies of the West. Again, this is not a foreseeable "probable." It is merely a possibility that would certainly work to their advantage.

4. Finally, the Red regime in China might simply choose to wait for the day when a home-grown break develops in Formosa itself. This, as has been indicated before, might easily occur from two sources: within the upper echelon of the governments or, between the refugee minority and the native majority.

Conclusion

As we have seen, the bulk of the "possibilities of attack" mentioned above indicate a waiting policy for the Red regime of Mao. This, as we have suggested, not only is good militarily, but it is sound Chinese thinking.

Opposed to this we have the statements of Mao and Chou to the effect that Taiwan "will be taken." There is no question that the Red leaders mean just what they say. But they have not announced a time element. They are safe. They can wait. They are good at waiting.

Should there be a split in the ranks of the allies, should the elements on Taiwan in administrative circles become divergent, should the native Chinese majority suddenly cry for a "change," should Chiang die, or should the U. S. Seventh Fleet relax its vigil, the time could well be considered ripe.

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