

CHINA COAST CRISIS

SO much has happened in the last fortnight that it's difficult to summarise it briefly. But, briefly, the Communist Government in Peking calculated that the time was ripe to intensify its efforts to drive the forces of Chiang Kai-shek from the islands occupied by them close to the China coast. . . . When I mention that part of these attacks consisted of artillery fire you will understand they are close enough to the Chinese mainland for artillery attack to be practicable. It is therefore not a matter for wonder or surprise that the Peking Government wants them. Any government in the world, faced with a similar situation, would not rest until it possessed them. And it is to my mind idle to denounce such actions as aggressive. The primary aim of any political regime, Communist or non-Communist, is self-preservation.

These islands are held by forces which are not only hostile to the Communist regime, but avowedly hope to invade the mainland to overthrow it. In the circumstances the move by the Peking Government was quite certain to come, and in itself, in my opinion, it was unexceptionable.



But, of course, the situation is not as simple as that. The Chinese Communists make no secret of asserting that these attacks are a prelude to the conquest of Formosa. They well know that there is a mutual defence treaty between the United States and Chiang's Government on Formosa, and they also know very well that in the Formosa Strait is the American 7th Fleet. So their attacks on the inshore islands, combined with the plain declaration of their intention to conquer Formosa, constitute a straight challenge to the United States. If they had declared their intention of seizing the inshore islands, but had let it be known that, however unwillingly, they would leave the question of Formosa in abeyance provided they were assured that it would not be used as a base for the invasion of the mainland, they would occupy a much stronger position in world opinion than they do today. For their right to occupy Formosa is in any case much less clear than their right to the inshore islands. . .

The position there is that Formosa is a piece of territory which Japan lost in the war, but its ultimate disposition has never been settled. It may be that if a settlement could be made by the United Nations on the basis of justice, Formosa would not be given to the Chinese of either political brand, but to the people of Formosa. However, whatever settlement may ultimately be reached, it is in everybody's interests that it should not be imposed by force. . . .

I shall no doubt provoke dissent among you when I express the opinion that the United Nations isn't well qualified to deal successfully with this situation. It may even make it worse, because it provides a forum for the delegates to

Extracts from a recent commentary on the international news broadcast from the main National Stations of the NZBS

strike extreme attitudes in sight of the world—and particularly of the American people—attitudes from which it is hard to withdraw. This matter is far, far too serious to be made the occasion of a feast for the television cameras. What could have been hoped, if the Peking Government had sent a representative, was that the opportunity would have been used to hold private meetings of the leading Powers, at which all might have been able, without publicity, to cease striking attitudes and state their minimum terms. Unless Peking is reckless of the risk of a major war, such a meeting even now could find a way out. I mean it would find a way out if both sides are fully conscious of the consequences of war.

There is a greater responsibility than ever before in history on the leaders of great nations to go to extraordinary lengths to extinguish fires that may lead to a major war. The consequences of the last war against Germany were immense destruction—but not irreparable destruction—the wiping out of the Nazi regime, and, of course, enormous frontier changes in favour of Russia. But the consequences of a major war in which thermo-nuclear bombs were used would go so far beyond this that comparison with the last war would be silly. To give you an idea, there has been recently some discussion in Britain of how long Britain would survive if it were attacked by hydrogen bombs. One estimate, by the defence representative of the *Manchester Guardian*, was 20 or 30 hours—not months, or weeks, or days, but hours. Others didn't make a time estimate; they merely estimated that five bombs, or 10 at the most, would blot out half the population of Britain. Such possibilities throw an unprecedented burden of responsibility on the leaders of the nations today—the responsibility to seek peace and not allow considerations of pride, still less of internal politics, to sway them. For is it not certain that if a major war started and thermo-nuclear bombs were used, the cause of the war would be forgotten after the first bomb was dropped on an industrial city?

We can, I am sure, feel thankful that the power of decision on one side in this most perplexing and dangerous situation is in the hands of President Eisenhower. We need no knowledge of secret matters to realise that he could unleash the most frightful weapons of destruction that the world has ever known. He will never do so unless, through blind ignorance, the Peking Government drives him to it. To me it seems that Mr. Eisenhower's greatest and most difficult task—difficult because of the climate of opinion in the United States—is to make absolutely sure that the Chinese leaders fully realise their peril. It is not only frustrating but dangerous that at this time there should be no direct diplomatic communication between Washington and Peking.

—E. V. DUMBLETON,
February 5, 1955.



WEAR AND TEAR

A firm specialising in precast concrete work were using inflated canvas-covered rubber tubes—known as pneumatic cores—to form holes in cast concrete slabs, but the wear and tear on the canvas was so severe that a more durable covering had to be found. They required a fabric that would not stretch when the cores were inflated, and which would not be effected by chemical action in the wet concrete mix. In addition the material had to be exceptionally resistant to the abrasion that occurred when the cores were deflated and withdrawn from the cast slab.

The firm took the problem to I.C.I. Leathercloth Division whose technical service department suggested the use of 'Vynide'—a tough, pliable upholstery material consisting of a textile fabric coated with a plastic—polyvinyl chloride. To do the job the division produced a reinforced type of 'Vynide' with a specially smooth surface. This fulfilled all requirements and increased the life of the cores from three months to nine months.



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