

Evacuation of Tachen Islands.

The development of the international situation with regard to Formosa and the Nationalist-held offshore islands of China in February and March is described below under cross-headings.

Following repeated and heavy Chinese Communist air attacks on the Tachen Islands (see map, page 14017) the Chinese Nationalist Government announced on Feb. 6 that the islands were to be evacuated. The announcement stated that the evacuation had been decided upon “in order to meet the new challenge of international Communist aggression,” and so that the forces defending the Tachens could be redeployed “to strengthen the defence of other islands such as Quemoy, Matsu, etc.” The State Department in Washington had announced on Feb. 5 that, at the request of the Chinese Nationalists, the U.S. Seventh Fleet had been ordered to help in the evacuation of the Tachens.

The evacuation accordingly took place on Feb. 7–11, a U.S. State Department announcement on the latter date saying that the operation—which was under the command of Vice-Admiral Pride—had been completed and that the U.S. naval and air forces which had taken part would now “resume their normal operations in the Formosa Strait.” The statement added, however, that the U.S. forces would “be alert to any concentration or employment of Communist Chinese forces obviously undertaken to facilitate an attack upon Formosa, and will be prepared to take appropriate action.” The evacuation of the islands—which included also the small islands of Yushan and Peishan some 30 miles north and south of the Tachens respectively—was unopposed by the Chinese Communists, who withdrew all their forces from the area.

The only incident occurred on Feb. 9 when a U.S. plane on antisubmarine patrol was shot down by Communist anti-aircraft fire some 20 miles south-west of the Tachens; another plane was hit, but landed safely. Vice-Admiral Pride announced after the incident that the lost aircraft—whose crew were rescued by an American destroyer—had made an error in navigation.

The U.S. Seventh Fleet, in a communiqué issued on Feb. 13, said that it had employed 132 vessels and 400 aircraft in covering the evacuation, and that it had taken off

10,000 Nationalist troops, 4,000 guerillas, 14,500 civilians, and 40,000 tons of military equipment and supplies.

Shortly after the completion of the evacuation the Communist New China News Agency announced on Feb. 13 that the Chinese People's Liberation Army had "liberated Tachen, Yushan, and Peishan islands," that all "enemy-occupied" islands off the Chekiang coast had now been "liberated," except the southernmost, Nanchisan island, and that the "liberation" of the islands had "created favourable conditions for the liberation of Taiwan (Formosa) and other coastal islands." Earlier (Feb. 7) the Chinese Communist radio had described the U.S. assistance in the evacuation of the Tachens as a "war provocation against the People's Republic of China" and "a grave threat to the peace of the Far East."

The Nanchi Islands (of which Nanchisan is the most important), south of the Tachens and some 130 miles north of Formosa, were evacuated by the Chinese Nationalists on Feb. 23–25, about 6,000 troops and some 2,500 civilians being taken off. The evacuation, which was carried out despite repeated Nationalist assertions that the Islands would be defended at all costs, was effected without assistance from U.S. forces. The islands were occupied by the Chinese Communist forces on Feb. 26.

Following their occupation of the Tachen and Nanchi Islands, the Chinese Communists renewed their attacks on the Nationalist-held islands of Quemoy and Matsu, the most important islands, remaining in Nationalist hands besides a Formosa and the Pescadores. The Nationalists reinforced their garrisons on the two islands, and by mid-March were reported to have more than 60,000 troops on Quemoy alone, whilst the Communists, who on March 25 announced that they were withdrawing a further six divisions from North Korea into China, were reported to be massing troops in Fukien Province on the mainland opposite the islands. It was also reported that the Communists had brought up heavy artillery pieces, opposite Quemoy, putting the whole of the island within range of heavy artillery fire.

An attempted assault by 40 Communist motorised Junks on Kaoteng Island (In the Matsu group) was driven off on March 4, whilst on March 14 the Nationalists announced that their aircraft had destroyed three Communist gunboats and seven armed Junks west of Wu Yu Island, south-east of Amoy; apart from these engagements there was little activity during February and March except for exchanges of gunfire between Quemoy and the mainland opposite and Nationalist air attacks on Communist shipping.

The Chinese Nationalist Government continually reiterated their intention to defend Matsu and Quemoy and not to evacuate them, but opinion among the Western Powers remained divided. In Britain, Sir Winston Churchill stated on Feb. 23 that there

was “a great deal of difference” between the coastal islands of China and the island of Formosa, whilst Sir Anthony Eden suggested on March 8 that the Nationalists should withdraw from all the coastal islands (see 14100 A). In the United States on the other hand, where a number of leading Republicans argued that U.S. forces should go to the assistance of the Nationalists if Quemoy and Matsu were attacked, both President Eisenhower and Mr. Dulles refused to say what U.S. policy would be in that eventuality. In Canada, Mr. Lester Pearson (Minister for External Affairs) declared on March 24 that he did not consider a conflict over Quemoy or the Matsus “to be a situation requiring any Canadian intervention in support of the Chinese Nationalist regime.” The Indian Prime Minister, Mr. Nehru stated on Feb. 25 that the offshore islands were “obviously” parts of China and should be immediately evacuated by the Nationalists. The attitude of the various Governments is summarized below.

Nationalist China. General Chiang' Kai-shek stated at a press conference on Feb. 14 that it had been made “perfectly clear “that the U.S.A. would defend, the Matsu and Quemoy islands, as these two outposts were vital to the defence of Formosa itself. In no case, he said would they be abandoned to the enemy. Similar statements were made by the Nationalist Foreign Minister (Mr. Yeh) on Feb. 18 and Feb. 25, and by the Prime Minister (Mr. Yui) on March 11.

Britain. Sir Winston Churchill, in his statement, said that, as there was no question of Britain being involved militarily in the defence of the coastal inlands, “we should be careful of what advice we offer to our friends and allies on it.” “The decision on whether or when these particular islands should be evacuated,” he continued, “is not one the burden of which falls upon this Government, and we must recognize the natural preoccupations of other Governments who are immediately, affected by the threatened attack from Communist China. This is especially true at a time when the Chinese Communists keep stridently asserting that the islands are to be regarded as a stepping stone to the seizure of Formosa itself, with all that that must mean for the Chinese Nationalists, who have been given shelter and protection there by the U.S.A., and to whom the U.S.A. are bound.”

United States. Mr. Dulles made an important statement on the U.S. attitude when he addressed the Foreign Policy Association; in New York on Feb. 16. Speaking of the U.S. mutual defence treaty with the Chinese Nationalists he said that it was important to note that the treaty, except where it related to U.S. territories, covered only the islands of Formosa and the Pescadores, and an armed attack against them. He also drew attention to the fact that U.S. armed forces had not been used to help the Chinese Nationalists retain the Tachen islands, but had in fact helped them to evacuate, the islands and regroup their forces, thus avoiding “a bloody and wasteful battle which would have inflamed public emotions.” The U.S.A. and Nationalist China had thus made an important-contribution to the cause of peace.

“It has been suggested,” Mr. Dulles went on, “that the Chinese Nationalists should go further and surrender to the Chinese Communists coastal positions which the Communists need to stage their announced attack on Formosa. It is doubtful that this would serve either the cause of peace or the cause of freedom.

The Chinese Communists have been the initiators of violence in this area. They have already formally declared their intention to take Formosa by force. It the Chinese Nationalists now oblige by making it easier for the Chinese Communists to conquer Formosa, will they be less apt to do so? I gravely doubt it. The United States has no commitment and no purpose to defend the coastal islands as such. I repeat, as such. The basic purpose is to assure that Formosa and the Pescadores will not be forcibly taken over by the Chinese Communists,” After referring to the Chinese Communists' declared intention of taking Formosa by force and using the coastal islands as a means to this end, Mr. Dulles said: “We shall, be alert to subsequent Chinese Communist actions, rejecting for ourselves any initiative of warlike deeds. It is hardly to be expected, of course, that the Chinese Communists will renounce their ambitions. However, might they not renounce their efforts to realize their-goals by force?”

Senator Knowland, the Republican “leader in the Senate, declared on March 28 that he thought Quemoy and Matsu should be defended no-matter-what-the “cost” unless we are prepared to See all of Asia go down the drain.” A similar statement In favour of holding Quemoy and Matsu was made on the same day by Senator Bridges, chairman of the Senate Republican Policy Committee, who added that he had heard “in an informal way “that President Eisenhower and Mr. Dulles “will so decide.”

President Eisenhower himself, answering questions at his press conference on March 30 about reports that the Chinese Communists planned to attack Quemoy and Matsu in mid-April, ruled out any further U.S. commitments, but gave a warning that the surrender of the two islands would have to be weighed against the “disastrous, impact” which such a policy would have on the morale of the Nationalist forces on Formosa. Asked if he thought that it would be possible to hold Formosa if Quemoy and Matsu were lost, the President answered that a” terrific burden” would fall on the forces and people of Formosa, and added that high morale was essential. “You have to have something to believe in if you're going to fight,” he said, “We must be careful not to weaken or destroy their morale. That is always a military (actor when you talk about surrendering this place or that.”

Nevertheless he called upon Americans “to be patient and strong in your patience,” lest the country be tempted into believing that the-time had come for it to attack first in order to forestall an inevitable and imminent aggression, and gave a warning that “the cause of peace will not be served by making further commitments in that area, that is, commitments of intention.” (The reports in Washington about an

impending Chinese Communist attack on Matsu and Quemoy had originated in remarks made to reporters on March 24 by Admiral Carney, Chief of Naval Operations.)

Admiral Felix B. Stump, C-in-C. of the U.S. Pacific Fleet, visited Matsu on March 6 to inspect defences. He stated on March 7 that “if the United States is willing, we can defend anything against the Communists.”

Canada. Mr. Lester Pearson, stating the Canadian position on the question, said that he thought a distinction, politically and strategically, could be made between Formosa and the coastal islands. “I do not consider a conflict over Quemoy or the Matsus to be a situation requiring any Canadian intervention in support of the Chinese Nationalist regime,” he declared. “The fact that we have no commitments does not mean that we have no concern. We have a deep and abiding concern because of considerations which make isolation from these questions well-nigh impossible. Canadians understand and accept the inescapable interdependence of Canada and the U.S.A. in the policies required for our Joint security and the preservation of peace. It does not mean that whenever the U.S.A. is engaged in any kind of war we are at war. It does not mean that we must participate in limited or peripheral war, although the danger of such war spreading gives us the right to express our concern. I have personally made known our serious doubts and anxieties to Mr. Dulles and have received from him a full statement of the American position, and the reasons why it has been adopted ... “Mr. Pearson said that it would be tragic if widespread hostilities were to develop over Quemoy and Matsu, as the two islands “are in effect part of the mainland, and their strategic role would seem to be more important in the defence of the mainland against attack than in offensive action against Formosa and the Pescadores.” He concluded by saying that his main fear was that “even limited intervention by the U.S.A. might have a chain reaction with unforeseen consequences, which would cause the conflict to spread for beyond the locality where it began.”

India. Mr. Nehru, who referred to Matsu and Quemoy in the course of a speech on foreign affairs to the House of the People, said: “There is hardly a country which does not recognize that the offshore islands, notably Quemoy and Matsu, are obviously and definitely parts of China ... They are a few miles—five miles or ten miles—beyond the shore. And no country can tolerate any enemy sitting ten miles from their shore, bombarding them all the time. It is an intolerable situation. Therefore, it is almost generally recognized that those islands should immediately be evacuated and taken possession of by the Government of the mainland. But that has not been done ...”

As a result of the rejection by the Chinese Communist Government of the Security Council's invitation to send a delegate to discuss New Zealand's cease-fire proposals (see page 14020), the Council accepted on Feb. 14 a British proposal that debate on

the matter should be adjourned. At the same time it refused, by 10 votes to one (the Soviet Union), to consider the Soviet resolution complaining against U.S. "acts of aggression" against Communist China, or to act upon the renewed Soviet contention that Nationalist China should be replaced on the Security Council by a delegate from Communist China.

The British delegate, Sir Pierson Dixon, proposing that the debate on the matter be adjourned, said that the British Government was in consultation with other Governments and would welcome any constructive step. He thought that the attitude of the Peking Government was "unhelpful, to say the least," but that there was no point in rushing matters. For New Zealand, Sir Leslie Monroe said that his Government "profoundly deplores" the Chinese Communist reply to the Council's invitation, but would not relax its efforts to end a situation, the dangers of which "are now obvious to all." He added that it was "idle to pretend that the Chinese Communist attitude has not made the attainment of a cease-fire more difficult." After Dr. Tsiang (Nationalist China) had urged the Council to "muster enough courage to face the monstrous fact of international Communism in the Far East," the Soviet delegate M. Sobolev, again urged adoption of the Soviet resolution. All the talk about a cease-fire, he said, was intended only to cover up the "aggressive intent" of the U.S.A., the danger of whose "aggressive acts was on the increase; he referred in this connexion to the cover afforded by the U.S. fleet for the redeployment of Nationalist forces [i.e. the evacuation of the Tachens] and to the shooting down of the U.S. aircraft after it had invaded Chinese air space.

Mr. Lodge affirmed that the U.S.A. sincerely desired the ending of a situation which clearly endangered peace, and that in the U.S. view the Security Council should continue its efforts towards that objective, He emphatically denied the charges made by the Soviet delegate, which he called "the same trumped-up Communist mythology that has become so familiar to the world," and pointed out that M. Sobolev in his speech had completely disregarded the proposal for a cessation of hostilities.

Following discussions in Moscow between the British Ambassador (Sir William Hayter) and the Soviet Foreign Minister (M. Molotov), and in London between Sir Anthony Eden and the Soviet Chargé d'Affaires (M. Belokhovostikov), the Soviet Government proposed in a Note to Britain on Feb. 4 that a 10-Power conference should be called in February to consider means of resolving the Formosa question. The conference should be convened by Britain, the Soviet Union, and India, and should meet either in Shanghai or New Delhi; the other countries represented should be Communist China, France, Burma, Indonesia, Pakistan, Ceylon, and the United States. The British Foreign Office, however, in a statement issued on Feb. 12, expressed the view that any meeting on the question of Formosa would not have

any useful result if Nationalist China were excluded, and that such a meeting should in any case “be organized in a form acceptable to the United Nations.”

The Soviet proposal, the text of which was published on Feb. 12, reiterated that the present situation had resulted from the “seizure of Formosa and the Pescadores by the United States with the aid of Chiang Kai-shek.” and referred to the rejection of its resolutions in the Security Council for the admission, of Communist China to the U.N. “The unwillingness of the U.S.A. and Britain ... to take into account this Just and lawful demand of the People's Republic of China,” it continued, “makes it impossible lawfully and impartially to consider in the Security Council the question of the situation of Formosa and other Chinese islands and the adoption by it of proper measures towards lessening the tension in that area and protecting the national rights of the People's Republic of China. With the aim of strengthening peace and lessening international tension in the Far East, the Soviet Government in the circumstances considers that it would be expedient to try and find other ways which would facilitate the settlement of the question ... After listing the 10 countries which should participate in the proposed conference the Note declared that the proposal “would comply with the wishes expressed by Sir Anthony Eden regarding the need for Joint efforts by Britain and the U.S.S.R. for solving unsettled international problems.”

The British Foreign Office statement was worded as follows: ... H.M. Government have given the [Soviet] proposal serious examination. It was discussed with the Commonwealth Prime Ministers in London, and the U.S. Government were informed. Pending further exploration of the proposal, H.M. Government made certain observations to the Soviet Government. Their first comment related to the composition of the conference which, as proposed by M. Molotov, does not appear to be representative in particular, they note that the Chinese Nationalist authorities in Formosa are to be excluded. H.M. Government are convinced that a conference that did not include both of the two parties most directly concerned could not have a useful result. Their second comment was that the position of the U.N. should not be overlooked. In the opinion of H.M. Government it is desirable that any meeting for the discussion of the situation in the area of the coastal islands and Formosa should be organized in a form acceptable to the U.N. Finally, H.M. Government stressed once more their earnest hope that all concerned will continue to use their best endeavours to stop the fighting in the area and to reduce the risk of incidents which might have serious consequences. H.M. Government asked for the views of the Soviet Government on these points and their reply has not yet been received.”

Sir Anthony Eden stated in the House of Commons on Feb. 14 that the exchanges with the Soviet Government were not yet closed, and that he would make a further statement as soon as possible. Sir Winston Churchill, who was asked in the House of Commons on March 31 by Mr. Fenner Brockway (Lab.) whether, in view of the

deterioration of the Far Eastern situation, it could be suggested to President Eisenhower that there should be a meeting of the heads of the U.S.A., Britain, France, the Soviet Union, and India to seek ways of preventing an extension of hostilities in the Formosa area, replied: "H.M. Government are prepared to examine any proposals which are likely to prevent an extension of hostilities in the area ..." He agreed, however, with Sir Anthony Eden's statement of March 8 that the necessary conditions had not yet been brought about where progress could be made at such a conference.

The U.S. Senate approved the mutual defence treaty with Nationalist China on Feb. 9 by 64 votes to six, the dissenting votes being cast by Senators Chavez, Gore, Kefauver, and Lehman (Dem.). Senator Langer (Rep.), and Senator Morse (then Ind.). Before the final vote two amendments by Senator Morse were defeated: (1) stipulating that the treaty was not to be interpreted as giving support to Nationalist claims to ultimate sovereignty over Formosa (rejected by 57 votes to 11); (2) specifically excluding Matsu, Quemoy, and the other coastal islands from the defence area of the treaty (defeated by 60 votes to 10).

The National Executive Committee of the British Labour Party adopted a resolution on Feb. 23 in which it outlined the basis for a settlement of the Formosa situation as follows;

(1) The first step towards such a settlement should be a cessation of hostilities upon both sides and evacuation of all the offshore islands by the Chinese Nationalist forces. The National Executive committee urge the Government to make it clear to the U.S. Administration that it could not reckon on any military assistance from Britain in hostilities connected with the offshore islands, and to exert their influence with the U.S.A. to obtain the withdrawal of Nationalist troops from these islands.

(2) The admission of the Peking representative to the U.N. is an essential part of a Far Eastern settlement. Formosa and the Pescadores should be neutralized by international guarantee and placed under U.N. administration and protection which will ensure that in due course the people of those islands shall be free to make their own choice without intimidation from either side. This will involve the withdrawal of Chiang Kai-shek and his principal supporters.

(3) The National Executive Committee call on the Government to seek acceptance of such a settlement by both the U.S.A. and the Chinese People's Republic"

The U.S. Foreign Operations Administration announced in Washington on March 13 that it was allocating a further \$48,000,000 to Nationalist China for the defence of Formosa. The new allocation, which included \$8,000,000 for technical co-operation, was made available from the special \$700,000,000 fund "for the support of forces of

nations in the area of South-East Asia,” and brought the total of U.S. aid to Formosa since July 1, 1954 to \$138,000,000.—(New York Times - New York Herald Tribune - Times - Daily Telegraph - Manchester Guardian -U.N. Information Centre, London - Soviet Weekly - The Hindu, Madras) (**Prev. rep. 14081Aj; 14017 A.**)

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