

*External Affairs*

on Formosa. In any event, it would be tragic if widespread hostilities, or indeed hostilities of any kind, were to develop over the possession of these two islands which are, in effect, part of the Chinese mainland, and the strategic role of which would seem to be more important in the defence of that mainland against attack than in offensive action against Formosa and the Pescadores.

This problem of Formosa and the coastal islands is one of the most difficult which the free world at this moment has to face. It is one on which it is possible for friends and allies to honestly hold different opinions. Although the basic issues between the free world and the communist world are clear enough, we have here a dispute in which that clarity is not, to say the least, obvious. On the one hand, I think we have to recognize that in dangerous times like these positions which are demonstrably of tactical or strategic advantage in the struggle with communist aggression or imperialism cannot lightly be abandoned in the face of communist threats by those who hold them. Formosa is considered by many to be one such important position. There is also—and this has been particularly emphasized in Washington—the political problem arising out of the bad effect on morale in Formosa and in neighbouring free Asian states, if further losses or retreats take place in the face of Chinese communist attack or pressure, or both.

Then, finally, the people of Formosa, about whom we do not hear very much, unfortunately, in connection with these matters, and those Chinese from the mainland who have fled there from communism, have a claim to consideration, both in respect of proposals to hand them over to a communist regime against their will, and in respect of proposals to involve them in a Chinese civil war without any regard to their own wishes.

So, in a situation as complex as that, it is not surprising that there are doubts and divisions among the governments and the peoples of the non-communist world. But it would be a sorry development if these were allowed to split or seriously weaken our peace coalition. It is true that some members of that coalition, including Canada, cannot subscribe to all aspects of United States policy in this Asian area, especially in regard to the coastal islands. But we are certain, I am sure, that that policy is not intended to lead to conflict. Personally I am satisfied that those who are directing it in Washington feel that it will help to avoid rather than provoke conflict.

In any event, Mr. Speaker, it is United States policy determined by the United States and embodied in a bilateral security treaty

[Mr. Pearson.]

which she has signed with the Chinese nationalist government. Canada, of course, is not a party to or not committed by that treaty or that policy. We certainly have the right to comment on that policy but we should be careful, I suggest, that our comments on it are constructive and responsible, and not merely negative and divisive. Carping and unbalanced criticism is, to say the least, unhelpful at this time, or indeed at any time.

What is the United States position? In regard to Formosa itself, as I have said, the United States is firmly committed to its defence by treaty, even though the legal and political status of that island may be uncertain. But—and this is often forgotten—that same treaty gives the United States the right to restrain aggressive Chinese nationalist action from Formosa.

What about the coastal islands of Quemoy and Matsu, the immediate point of armed conflict between the two Chinas, and therefore the point of most immediate danger? United States policy here is based on acceptance of the responsibility to make secure and protect "positions and territories" which, in the judgment of the President, "are necessary to, or related to the defence of Formosa." That does not involve a commitment or a purpose, as Mr. Dulles put it in New York on February 17, to "defend the coastal islands, as such"; but, he added, the Chinese communists themselves have "linked the coastal positions to the defence of Formosa". Therefore, in his own words, the United States "will be alert to Chinese communist actions, rejecting for ourselves any initiative of warlike deeds".

As I understand it, this is a warning to the Peking government not to use force against these islands, preparatory to attack or as a build-up for an attack on Formosa. The President alone has the power to decide at the time whether such an attack is local against the islands or a stage in an assault on Formosa itself. Mr. Dulles restated that position on March 8, and he added something to his earlier statement when, in discussing the responsibility of the President in this matter, he said:

How to implement this flexible defence of Formosa the President will decide in the light of his judgment as to the over-all value of certain coastal positions to the defence of Formosa and the cost of holding these positions.

Well, that is not going to be an easy decision for the President to make if unfortunately the time ever arises that he has to make it. If it has to be made, I am glad the decision is in the hands of a man like President Eisenhower, a man of character and integrity, with a passion for peace.