

That was Admiral Radford's conclusion, and that same conclusion has led many to doubt that the communists have in mind an invasion of the coastal islands of Quemoy and Matsu as a prelude to or part of an attack 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 it is United States policy determined by the United States and embodied in a bilateral security treaty which she has signed with the Chinese Nationalist Government. Canada, of course, is not a part 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.