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CHINA'S MOTIVES

More than a month has passed since the guns began firing on Quemoy but the danger of serious conflict is still with us. While the talks go on in Warsaw and Notes are exchanged and returned, it is useful to take a longer view of this crisis that has wrenched the world away from months of preoccupation with the Middle East. Is the move against Quemoy simply a case of the Communists applying pressure against the West first at one point and then at another? This Chinese move could be so interpreted. But to read it in this sense alone would be to understand only a small part of China's motives. Quemoy involves many principles in the Chinese mind, and it is a mind which, both in China's own sphere and in the world at large, has much to distinguish it from the Russians.

The obvious difference which brings Mr. KHRUSHCHEV dutifully, but perhaps uneasily, to China's side is that the Chinese have not yet got back their old national frontiers whereas the Russians are holding on to STALIN's wartime gains. The Chinese, resurgent, powerful, and demanding, look back over a century of weakness and are determined to restore their country to what they conceive to be her old status and borders. We should not ignore this Chinese sense of history; this sense, alive in the minds of MAO TSE-TUNG and his colleagues, of a China that held the world's respect more than a century ago. This impulse of restoration took the Chinese into Tibet; it prompted them to insist that they should be a party to any unification of Korea; it made them stand firmly on the rights of a Communist neighbour in Vietnam, and to-day it is behind the claim not only on the offshore islands but on Formosa as well. MR. KHRUSHCHEV sits behind his east European *glacis*. He may be disturbed by the intricacies of a nuclear threat from distant points, but he can easily keep clear of the tripwire without loss of dignity. But the Chinese have less cause for restraint when they see American power in Formosa and an American fleet patrolling the straits.

If the demand for Quemoy and, in time, for Formosa is easily explicable in terms of a Chinese restoration, the question still remains why it is being pressed now. Here we can get only a hint from the course of Chinese thinking on the world which has led them lately to such firm and intransigent conclusions. It was the change in Iraq and the resulting American and British intervention in Lebanon and Jordan which may have brought this Chinese attitude to the sharp point of decision. The leaders in Peking may have concluded that China could put up no barrier to Western action in the Middle East, but clearly they were convinced that some riposte was necessary, the more so since the blow had to be struck in aid of the underdeveloped world of Asia and Africa of which the Chinese see themselves the natural leaders. In this world the Chinese find one common principle, whatever its variety of political outlook. It is that change is necessary and inevitable; revolution is of its essence. Thus the Chinese interpret western holding moves as intervention against the course of revolution. They would go farther and say that any action by the West, say, to prevent such a revolution as that in Iraq, necessarily means the imposition of a static world. Since they believe that change in Asia and Africa (and in Latin America) favours their world and not the West, they refuse to accept western intervention which puts an end to the process of change in any form.

It might not therefore be far-fetched to interpret the assault on Quemoy not merely as another stroke of Communist pressure, nor simply as another Chinese attempt to gain their own rights, but, besides these, as a belligerent ultimatum to the West in the one area where China can act. Within their chosen field there is much room for manoeuvre as well as for force; the Chinese are shrewdly using both. Though they have made it clear that in the last resort they have no fear of a nuclear war, their interpretation of that resort must still be subject to MR. KHRUSHCHEV'S veto. For all their belligerence, the operation against Quemoy has been proceeding by careful stages and the same will be true of the bargaining now under way in Warsaw.

But even if a temporary solution is found in Warsaw, the grounds of conflict in the area will remain.

Here again a difference between Peking and Moscow may be seen. Just as China feels herself better qualified to speak for the changing world of Asia and Africa, to speak in short for those parts of the world seeking liberation from a backward past, the Russian outlook is a little more complex. Russia shares China's aspirations and expectations. Its leaders remain fervent revolutionaries. But change as such has for them its own pitfalls. The Russians cannot have been fooled by their own version of the genuine revolution in Hungary. Poland still has internal pressures for change which MR. GOMULKA does his best to guide and control. The last few months have seen a fresh outburst of distaste in east Germany. In MR. KHRUSHCHEV'S immediate vicinity change has a

decidedly rum and forbidding flavour for him.

From this follows the much greater wish on the part of the Russians for the relaxation of tension. How could such relaxation advance China? In Moscow the pie is no longer in the sky, whereas in China the "uninterrupted revolution" which MAO TSE-TUNG has himself proclaimed is still gathering pace. While China remains an unsatisfied, have-not Power, the tension will go on. In spite of all his tub-thumping against Washington MR. KHRUSHCHEV might privately be grateful if a cease-fire in the Formosa straits took at least one burden off his shoulders and he may very well urge a sensible compromise on the Chinese if they can get some valid concession out of the talks in Warsaw. But just as the world shrugged off the Quemoy crisis in 1955 only to find it returning now in greater violence, so, to-day, a compromise over Quemoy will not end the demands of a China determined to win back what she lost during a century of weakness.

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