

Formosa, Subject to Top U.S. Talks, Described by Visitor



By JOHN SEHON

New York, Jan. 3 (AP)—Formosa, Nationalist China's last hope for life, is a fairyland with all modern conveniences, a proven breadbasket of empire, and a barely-tapped storehouse of strategic natural resources.

From a military standpoint, the 200-mile long island is virtually unassailable with weapons which Communist China, entrenched on the mainland 100 miles to the west, now has.

B.t., unless governmental conditions have undergone a drastic change since I was there four years ago, the island that is the last barrier to Communism in the Far East could be collapsed easily by the age-old Chinese plague, internal dissension.

Thanks to the Japanese, however, Chiang Kai-shek has a ready-made, highly developed fortress from which to fight.

For during its 50-year tenure, the Japanese turned a pest-ridden sub-tropical island into one of the most progressive agricultural and industrial areas of the Orient.

I was amazed to find Formosa developed in almost complete secrecy by the Japanese, to be virtually self-sustaining.

About the only thing which must be imported, if the Japanese level of production is to be maintained, is phosphate for fertilization of the rice crop.

And as a place to live, it has no equal, by eastern standards. It has modern cities, railroads, highways, resorts and could be turned into a tourists' paradise.

The scenery is superb. Heavily-forested mountains top 13,000 feet. Gorges on the precipitous eastern coast drop 7,000 feet to sea level.

Within easy commuting distance of the capital, Taipei, are luxurious hot springs. Cottages dot the mountains, each with its own private spa.

Before and during the war, the island was Japan's main grocery store. Rice, sugar, pineapples, salt, fruits, tobacco and other commodities were furnished to the homeland.

Japan's largest aluminum plant was on Formosa. It was bombed out, but the intricate electric power transmission system and its great hydro-electric sources were untouched.

Bombers also did considerable damage to the main cities, Taipei, Takao and its fine harbor, Keelung, which has one of the best man-made harbors in the east, and others. But the foundations of modern civic planning are there for rebuilding.

In Taipei, for example, foreigners can use water for drinking right out of the tap. This is a sanitary luxury unknown even in modern Shanghai, where all water must be boiled to guard against dysentery.

Lying about 500 miles north of the Philippines and 300 miles southeast of Okinawa, Formosa also could control the sea lanes and coastal airways so vital to China's life.

Keelung at the northern tip and Takao in the south can handle the largest ships of peace, or war. In addition the Japanese built more than 50 airfields throughout the island.

Any full-scale military operation other than airborne against the island could be conducted only on its western, or Formosa Straits side. There broad plains sweep down gradually to the sea. The east side rises abruptly from the Pacific in mountain ranges which reach almost 14,000 feet.

The Japanese thoughtfully fortified the western coastal approaches with underground bastions which controlled just about every potential landing spot.

And this whole fertile western plain which runs the island's entire length is connected by railroads and highways.

Physically, it would be a tough nut to crack from the outside. Enemies might hope to work from within.

Most of the 6,500,000 inhabitants are hinese in origin.

However, since the war, and tanks are Chinese in origin. China's return as administrator, various Formosan factions which

Swiss President—Max Petitpierre (above), Foreign Minister, was elected President of the Swiss Confederation by the National Council, and Council of States in Bern.

were kept tightly suppressed by the Japanese have agitated for a so-called independence.

In conversation just at war's end, Formosan leaders said that the greatest desire of the people was for a "free" country. They were overjoyed, however, at the thought of returning to "Mother" China.

After the first Chinese administration had been in command for little more than a month, these same leaders said to me:

"Why don't our people (the Chinese) go back home? They have upset the rice rationing system; they have changed our monetary structure; we don't understand all these new taxes; we are not free. Why doesn't the United States look after us?"

This was their reaction to being treated like any other Chinese province, governed by administrators appointed from "outside" and not being given too much voice in the running of their own affairs.

Kirk to "See" Russia

Moscow, Jan. 3 (AP)—U.S. Ambassador Alan G. Kirk plans to make his second trip in the Soviet union this week. Accompanied by Mrs. Kirk, the ambassador plans to go to Leningrad to see various tourist attractions. They expect to return to Moscow next week.

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