Mischief Red China Could Do With Nuclear Device Is Boundless

By JOSEPH L. MYLER
United Press International

Communist China will trigger an atomic test explosion some day, whether in this or some future year, authorities agree.

Some experts take comfort in the assumption that this first explosion will not be a weapon but of an experimental device of some sort that couldn't be used in warfare.

They say what is obviously true — that in this age of supersonic bombers and hypersonic missiles an effective system for delivering nuclear warheads on targets is not only costlier but by all odds more important than development of the warheads themselves.

In short, an atomic test explosion will not by itself mean Red China has suddenly emerged as a mature nuclear power capable of trading blows with the United States or, for that matter, Soviet Russia.

But other experts consider this a cold sort of comfort. Of course, said one, the first Red Chinese contraption "won't be the sleekest A - bomb ever made."

"But," he said, "suppose they decide to test it over Quemoy or Mat su—or Taipei. Suppose it is just something they can hoist aboard a piston job and roll out the side door when the time comes."

What mischief Communist China could do with the crudest sort of nuclear weapons, or devices, seems boundless. There has been much talk that some day Nationalist Chinese soldiers may invade the Communist mainland.

To do some more supposing, suppose the Reds don't have a trim and glossy warhead for a trim and glossy missile or a trim and glossy bomber. Suppose they simply mine the invasion routes with awkward and bulky gadgets capable of blowing entire divisions into eternity in a second.

Suppose for their own purposes the Chinese Communists figured a nuclear war between the United States and USSR would be good for them. They just might be able to trigger it by dropping a sneak atomic "device" on Formosa at a moment of tension between the two great nuclear powers.

The French, who want to become a nuclear power, have staged at least five atomic explosions in the past three years. But France still isn't a nuclear power. It has no border - jumping missiles. It has some good airplanes. But are they good enough to get past Russia's rocket defenses against bombers? Experts doubt it.

Not Likely to Attack

So the French cannot yet consider themselves a nuclear power compared with Russia, the United States, or Great Britain. They are hardly likely to attempt a nuclear attack against anybody.

But who knows what the Red Chinese, who are not in the same league even with France, might attempt if they had a few crude atomic "devices" available.

"They might roll them on a boat, beach the boat on Quemoy, and roll 'em off," one student of atomic warfare remarked. "Then the fat would be in the fire. We might feel impelled to retaliate in kind. If we did, what would Russia do?"

It takes a lot of testing to condense the power of a city-killing nuclear bomb into compact missile warheads which can be flipped across oceans and continents to targets deep in an enemy's territory.

It takes a lot of testing to make an atomic weapon that can be fired by a battlefield bazooka against an enemy platoon. It takes test after test after test to double the violence of a Polaris warhead.

Without testing there could never have been an H-bomb, and without much further testing there could have not been pint-sized "clean" H-bombs which the Atomic Energy commission says it is developing for peacetime blasting relatively free of radio-activity.

The first H-bomb ever exploded was a huge machine which could have been delivered on target only by an ocean liner. The very next, however, was one that could be dropped from a high-flying airplane.

So there is a difference between test "devices" and actual weapons. The difference is in ease of delivery. But one may be as destructive as the other.

Said one authority, "Anybody can knock off an atomic explosion if they have enough of the stuff."

In the case of Red China, the "stuff" undoubtedly would be plutonium, a bomb explosive manufactured in nuclear reactors.

Red China does have some nuclear reactors. Russia helped her get them and may now wish she hadn't. Mainland China also has some very fine atomic and aerospace scientists. Two of them, Dr. H. S. Tsien and Dr. W. Z. Chien, received their scientific training in the United States.

Given the mechanical, electronic, and ordinance engineering skills modern weaponry demands, there is no doubt that Communist China could one day become a genuine nuclear power.

As for raw materials, "in any land mass as huge as China there are bound to be large uranium reserves," one expert said. Mining uranium is not easy, but Red China with its 700-million population, this source said, "has a lot of hands and a lot of backs."

The first Red Chinese atomic test will reverberate throughout the world. To the nations of Asia, one student said, "It will be a psycho - military event of tremendous symbolic significance."

East Has Not Forgotten

The first A-bomb was exploded by a Western power against an Eastern nation. The East has never forgotten that.

Many a Japanese will tell you his country, after the agony of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, would never think of making atomic weapons.

But if Red China should explode just one atomic test device, however primitive, how would Japan react?

"Japan," said one man who has seen much of that island nation, "would never stop until she had become a nuclear power. She would go all out.

"And there is no doubt whatsoever," he added, "that she could do it."

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