

Peking story (American prisoners in China) - correspondence, letters and ca...

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Peking story - 1954

6 Dec.

British comment on U.S. Foreign
Policy and American Prisoners in China

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BRITISH COMMENT ON U.S. FOREIGN POLICY AND AMERICAN
PRISONERS IN CHINA

THE BIRMINGHAM POST, 6 December 1954 (Conservative), is impressed by what it considers a change in United States foreign policy, due to President Eisenhower's determination to be a President rather than an uneasy politician trying, with little success, to hold his party together. The paper feels he is now being guided much more by his own judgment than by considerations of party strategy. It says:

"The President is constructive, balanced and realistic. It was the highest realism that led him recently to reject a proposal, suggested by the Chiefs of Staff and apparently by Mr. Dulles, that American planes should, in certain circumstances, bomb the Chinese mainland. There has been equal realism in negotiating the pact with Nationalist China, and in the moderate yet firm approach about the imprisonment of American airmen in Communist China on spying charges."

The paper suggests that the change of policy will strengthen the Western defense against Communism because the European nations will have more confidence in the United States Government.

"While the President was a prisoner of his party," it says, "there was a widespread fear in Britain that war might be brought on by sheer recklessness. The President's attitude now gives grounds of real hope that America's influence will be thrown wholly into an attempt to work out a policy of coexistence with the Communists."

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THE TIMES today considers it right that the United Nations Assembly should be asked to give its urgent attention to the case of the thirteen imprisoned Americans:

"Most of them were shot down in a theatre of war where the United Nations was fighting, and their detention seems to flout both international law and the specific terms of the Korean armistice."

The paper asks why the existence of the prisoners was kept so long secret and what Peking hopes to achieve by its present actions and the propaganda surrounding them. It warns against crediting Communist intentions with more coherence than they may possess, and it suggests, for example, that the Americans might have been kept until recently by one of those regional

commanders whose powers have now been curtailed by Peking, or perhaps that their trial was a propaganda affair, designed to keep alive on the mainland fear and hatred of Nationalist Formosa. But THE TIMES wonders why Communist China should revive discreditable memories just when her international stock is slowly rising and when Far Eastern tensions seem to have been slackened.

"To Western minds," it says, "such timing is illogical. But all Communist regimes need, for internal reasons, to keep alive the obgey of an external threat, and it is during unexplosive periods that they can most safely exploit it."

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DEC 8 1954
The Secretary General
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U.K. COMMENT ON THE THIRTEEN IMPRISONED AMERICANS

Several British papers today support the United States Government's attitude about the thirteen Americans held and sentenced by the Chinese Communists.

The NEWS CHRONICLE hopes the United Kingdom Delegate to the United Nations has been told by the Foreign Office to speak strongly and bluntly in support of the American demand that the eleven airmen should be set free at once. The paper maintains that they should have been sent home with other prisoners under the Korean armistice agreement. It says:

"It is a nauseating form of politics to exploit them as object lessons for a propaganda week designed to make the Chinese more security-conscious. Whether or not it pleased the Russians, who may want to prevent any reconciliation between the Americans and the Chinese, this has been a savage and uncivilized stunt."

The DAILY EXPRESS notes that the United Kingdom spokesman at the United Nations has called the jailing of the airmen "outrageous."

"So it is," says the EXPRESS. "The men were shot down while flying in the Korean war, and the United Kingdom Delegate deserves praise for backing their government."

The paper criticizes a Labor Member of Parliament who, it says, has attacked the United Kingdom spokesman as "a little American lap-dog."

The EXPRESS COMMENTS:

"This critic merely expresses the twisted Socialist attitude by which it is conciliatory to excuse your foes but provocative to support your friends. But that is not the way with the British people. They do not forget the insults and injuries inflicted on Britain by Red China. They know that their friends are on the other side of the Pacific. So they are right behind the Americans in refusing to be taken in by this latest Chinese infamy."

THE MANCHESTER GUARDIAN agrees with President Eisenhower that in the affair of the American airmen we ought to restrain the instinct to lash out. Pointing out that two of the Americans were civilians, the paper observes:

"Their presence in an aircraft over a zone of war inevitably raises grave suspicions. Hence the need for caution. Also we may be fairly sure that both sides have been making reconnaissance flights over the other's territory and we may ask if crews captured in such circumstances ought to be treated as spies or as prisoners of war. How can they be treated as prisoners if we are not at war? The third reason for caution is that to lash out will not do any good. The course adopted by the United States Administration, taking its case before the United Nations, is the correct one. The United Nations cannot shirk the issue. It must ask the Chinese to release those men who were captured in uniform. On that point the American case deserves the fullest support."