

Quick

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John Gunther

Inside Southeast Asia: If America Loses Korea It Loses the World

John Gunther, special QUICK and LOOK correspondent, sends this report on how Hong Kong views the Asia war.

HONG KONG (by Cable)—Though it was eight in the evening, the sun was boiling in the western sky. A young American military attache said: "Please don't be alarmed by the news from Korea. We're bound to win."

A cultivated, severe and venerable English lady, who managed to look crisp even with the thermometer at 93 and the humidity at 86, put her Tom Collins down next to a blazing purple hibiscus bush and said tartly: "Young man, whether or not you're bound to win has nothing to do with it. You *have* to win. Otherwise you will have lost the world."

As this colloquy took place, I looked beyond the rim of our lawn and saw one of the two or three most beautiful sights in the world—Hong Kong harbor. This is a snug community that hugs the scalloped shore and rolling peaks of Hong Kong island. And just beyond, clearly visible against the fiery sunset, were the profiles of three gray islands, all Communist-held.

Watch Over Turmoil

The English lady was right. The war in Korea obviously was part of a larger war. But Americans back home may not appreciate how widely this war is being fought—already.

Here are some sample headlines, picked from Hong Kong papers this week: "Red Forces in Tibet," "Bangkok Orders Police Alert," "RAF Planes Drop Supplies in Malay Fighting," "Huks Seize Town 80 Miles From Manila"

In other words, some sort of armed action, big or small, has occurred in the past week in every one of the group of countries for which Hong Kong is the watch tower—Tibet, Burma, Thailand, Malaya, the Philippines and Indo-China—to say nothing of China itself, where some scattered guerrilla fighting still occurs, and the forlorn island of Formosa, where Chinese Nationalists under Chiang Kai-shek take potshots at British ships or planes practically every day.

If you ask which is the country where the situation is the most dangerous, the answer will certainly be Indo-China. An American military mission started work there last week to co-ordinate plans for defense with French and Indo-Chinese authorities. But as seen here it's a grave question whether we have not entered the Indo-Chinese theater too late.

If you ask which is the country where the most serious fighting is taking place at the moment, except in Korea, the answer is Malaya. This war—between the British and Communist guerrillas—has been going on since 1948

If you ask which is the softest spot—the place where Communism might most easily make a quick coup to counterbalance future setbacks—the answer will be Burma.

Nobody Loves Chiang Kai-shek

If you ask which leader in Asia is the most discredited, the answer is Chiang Kai-shek. I have talked with dozens of Chinese, Britons and Americans here and have yet to hear a good word for Chiang. Even British Tories who detest their own Labor Government in London prefer the Communists in China to the shabby, mildewed and dilapidated Chiang regime.

Few people ever seem to think of the Formosans themselves. But one American official who just arrived here from Formosa told me that, if the fate of the island were put to its inhabitants, they would prefer the following regimes in the following order: 1) United Nations, 2) United States, 3) the Japanese, 4) Chiang, 5) the Communists.