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NSC BRIEFING

1 December 1954

SNIE 100-6-54: WORLD REACTIONS TO CERTAIN  
US COURSES OF ACTION AGAINST COMMUNIST CHINA

I. Following is summary of SNIE 100-6-54, of 28 November 1954, entitled "World Reactions to Certain U. S. Courses of Action Against Communist China."

A. Problem: to estimate Communist and non-Communist reactions to offshore and/or inshore blockade of Communist China imposed by US in retaliation for recent sentencing of 13 US nationals to prison terms as "spies."

B. Assumption: imposition of US blockade would be announced and scope defined, and would be accompanied by formal US statement of "bill of particulars" and expression of support by US Congress.

C. Note: this special estimate is made in context of NIE 10-7-54, "Communist Courses of Action in Asia Through 1957."

II. Economic effects of blockade would be substantial.

A. Blockade which included Port Arthur, Dairen, Hong Kong and Macao would cut off Communist China's seaborne foreign trade, estimated for 1953 as at least 1.5 million tons of imports and three million tons of exports. Blockade

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extended to coastal waters would virtually eliminate ocean-going coastal traffic, estimated for 1953 at about 4 million tons per year.

- B. Communist China's economic adjustments to blockade would take considerable time and in short run blockade would impose serious economic problems. Additional strains would be placed on inadequate internal transportation system and trade would be reduced. Bloc would be unable to fill entirely Chinese requirements for critical items.
- C. Sum of these adverse effects would retard Peiping's economic growth, but would be small in relation to gross national product or budgetary expenditures. Moreover, adverse economic effects would decline over extended period as Peiping expanded own production of critical goods and with expected growth of Soviet ability to export capital goods.

III. Chinese Communists would be seriously concerned over economic effects of blockade, but their reactions as regards both blockade and issue of US prisoners would be determined to much greater extent by political and military considerations and counsel of USSR.

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- A. Peiping would probably estimate that blockade offered possibility of isolating US on this issue, but also that US willing to proceed without its allies. Peiping would be concerned lest US action signified intention to take still more aggressive action, and would probably believe that US psychologically prepared to attack mainland in reaction to attack against blockading forces.
- B. As regards offshore blockade, we believe initial Chinese Communist reaction would not include either military force against it or conciliatory line on US prisoners. We believe Peiping would attempt to exploit fear of war, would produce evidence designed to refute US denials of spy charges, and would mark time while assessing effect on US of non-Communist reactions.
- C. If blockade were extended to coastal waters (inshore blockade), we believe Peiping would almost certainly use its air capabilities and limited naval capabilities in raids against blockading forces. Inshore blockade might make Peiping more disposed to seek face-saving solution, but even this would be unlikely to effect early release of US prisoners.

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D. In case of either offshore or inshore blockade, USSR would counsel Peiping to caution and would attempt to localize incidents arising from US-Chinese encounters. However, Moscow would afford Peiping necessary support for course decided on and would employ political means of exploiting issue. USSR might also attempt to bring ships into Port Arthur and Dairen, or attempt to breach blockade at other points, or increase Peiping's capability to wage mine and submarine warfare. While USSR unlikely to initiate general war on this issue, would not be deterred from attempts at counteraction by risk of general war.

IV. As for non-Communist reaction, South Korea, Nationalist China and probably Manila Pact nations would approve US blockade of Communist China.

- A. Opinion in most other non-Communist countries would vary from indifference to strong criticism.
- B. India would almost certainly condemn US action and would attempt to bring about solution favoring Peiping.
- C. Certain non-Communist nations would critically reappraise confidence in US leadership, and there would almost certainly be sharp rise in neutralist sentiment among states now allied with US.

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- D. UK would probably acquiesce in blockade but would attempt to dissuade US from continuing it.
- E. However, as time went on and if no large-scale warfare developed, we believe that free-world nations would in varying degrees adapt themselves to US action while continuing to attempt mediation.

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