

A few weeks ago the AP reported that Radio Peking in the Chinese Peoples' Republic ordered provincial newspapers throughout China to stop printing. The AP noted at the time that this was a highly unusual event and surmised that the order might be connected with an important political event in China, such as the death of Chairman Mao Tse-tung. But three hours later the AP reported that the newspapers had been told to resume publication, and that the order to stop doing so was made only to include a paragraph from an editorial in the Peking newspaper, The People's Daily, that had been left out of a previous broadcast. The AP did not make any reference to the contents of the missing paragraph.

The current edition of the Weekly Manchester Guardian contains an analysis of that paragraph, which was devoted to reports in the Japanese and Swedish press of the possibility that the United States will employ nuclear weapons against North Vietnam. The Guardian finds this remarkable in that this is the first time in more than five years that the Chinese government has alluded to the possibility of a nuclear escalation in Indochina. The Guardian says, "Sober-minded analysts in the West may be inclined to think that the Chinese are going off the deep end, but it is most unlikely that Peking would be prepared publicly to discuss the nuclear question unless it had some evidence, at least in its own view, to justify the hypothesis that the weapons might be used."

The Guardian speculates that the Chinese fear that the United States will employ nuclear weapons is based on the following scenario: President Nixon is trapped in a contradictory situation. He wishes to pacify public opinion in the United States by withdrawing ground troops but still wishes a "U.S.-dictated peace." He cannot achieve this unless the revolutionary forces in Indochina stop fighting or unless North Vietnam ceases to aid them. So he must expand the use of U.S. air power, as has been done in Cambodia and Laos. Since it has been demonstrated that conventional bombing cannot win the war Mr. Nixon may eventually threaten to employ nuclear weapons against North Vietnam.

The Guardian adds that "China would be inclined to believe the worst of Nixon's nuclear intentions just by recalling her own situation in similar situations." The Guardian says that during the administration of President Eisenhower while Mr. Nixon was Vice President the United States contemplated or threatened the use of nuclear weapons against China five times, just after the Korean war in February and May of 1953, in the spring of 1954 just before the Geneva conference on Indochina, and during the Quemoy and Matsu crises in 1955 and 1958. The Guardian notes that all these incidents are different, but "they have one common

element, the alternative to nuclear escalation as seen by the Americans was either a negotiated compromise or a military stand-off. For the Chinese there may be a compelling parallel with the situation today, when the U.S. hopes, as it sees it, to negotiate or if necessary enforce the status quo in Vietnam."

See NYTimes 11 Jan 71, "Saigon Plans Vast Peasant Shift," filed Indochina.