

64 Chinese Generals Rearm (Morally) as Chiang Plays

The Argus Correspondent

Taipeh (Formosa), Monday.

IN an idyllic fold of hills nine miles east of Taipeh, Formosa, Chiang Kai-shek is spending his days in abortive conferences. His home, hung on the green hillside, is a rambling, old Japanese clubhouse, and just above it is a hostel where 64 generals live while they go through a course in "moral rearmament."

In company with his large staff, Chiang prays, bathes in hot sulphur water led from a volcanic spring through bamboo pipes and nurses his dwindling funds, which are still in the neighbourhood of 100,000,000 United States dollars worth of gold.

He is now an embittered, stubborn old man. Baffled by the discovery that he is not a superman after all, he is still playing the part of a superman — part majesty, part Methodist, part mystic and part megalomaniac miser who hoards his gold.

A FRAUD

He is a patent fraud who dominates even in defeat, because he holds the money-bags and can still play the politician against rivalries in world personal rivalries. Formosa, however, is collapsing under the economic strain of an army of 600,000 and an expensive blockade.

Madame Chiang, on the other hand, is a tireless Boadicea.

Slim, chic and at 53 still youthfully attractive, she bustles imperiously from public meeting to public meeting, rallying women, talking to wounded

soldiers and proclaiming that she will "soon go to the front" in a reconquering of the mainland.

Below, in Taipeh, a sprawling city of shabby boulevards and pretentious public buildings, some honest, able men are trying to save Formosa from total wreck.

Nobody believes an invasion from the mainland could succeed and few expect the Communists to make a serious attempt. Most foreign observers and realistic Chinese think the Communists, while making a show of preparing for invasion, will sit back and wait for Formosa to collapse.

Collapse is inevitable unless Chiang helps and drastic steps to relieve the island's economic problems are taken quickly. One American authority predicts total collapse within six months at most, and possibly within a month.