



THE Stilwell Papers

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CONFERENCE ON POLICY IN CHINA

December 6, 1943, at Alexander Kirk's home, Cairo. After Teheran.

Present: Roosevelt, H.H. [Harry Hopkins], J.W.S. [Joseph W. Stilwell], and ——³

F.D.R. Well, Joe, what do you think of the bad news?

J.W.S. I haven't heard yet how bad it is.

F.D.R. We're in an impasse. I've been stubborn as a mule for four days but we can't get anywhere, and it won't do for a conference to end that way. The British just won't do the operation, and I can't get them to agree to it.

J.W.S. I am interested to know how this affects our policy in China.

F.D.R. Well, now, we've been friends with China for a gr-e-e-at many years. I ascribe a large part of this feeling to the missionaries. You know *I* have a China history. My grandfather went out there, to Swatow and Canton, in 1829, and even went up to Hankow. He did what was every American's ambition in those days—he made a million dollars, and when he came back he put it into western railroads. And in eight years he lost every dollar. Ha! Ha! Ha! Then in 1856 he went out again and *stayed there all through the Civil War*, and made another million. This time he put it into coal mines, and they didn't pay a dividend until two years after he died. Ha! Ha! Ha!

J.W.S. I take it that it is our policy to build China up.

F.D.R. Yes. Yes. Build her up. After this war there will be a great need of our help. They will want loans. Madame Chiang and the G-mo wanted to get a loan

³ Name of the fourth American deleted.

now of a billion dollars, but I told them it would be difficult to get Congress to agree to it. Now, I'm not a financial expert (!!) but I have a plan to take fifty or a hundred million dollars and buy up Chinese paper dollars on the black market. It wouldn't take much. (!!) When the Chinese found out that these notes were being bought up, they would tend to hold them and the rate would come down. We might beat the inflation that way. And I'd share the profit with the Chinese government—I'd put the notes in escrow and when they were needed I'd sell them to the Chinese for what I paid for them.

—— The effect on the Chinese of failing to reopen communications—

F.D.R. Yes. Yes. How long do you think Chiang can last?

J.W.S. The situation is serious and a repetition of last May's attack might overturn him.

F.D.R. Well, then we should look for some other man or group of men, to carry on.

J.W.S. They would probably be looking for us.

F.D.R. Yes, they would come to us. They really like us and just between ourselves, they *don't* like the British. Now, we haven't the same aims as the British out there. For instance, Hongkong. Now, I have a plan to make Hongkong a free port: free to the commerce of all nations—of the whole world! But let's raise the Chinese flag there first, and then Chiang can the next day make a grand gesture and make it a free port. That's the way to handle that! Same way in Dairen! I'm sure that Chiang would be willing to make that a free port, and goods could come through Siberia—in bond—without customs examinations.

—— What in your opinion caused the noble attitude of the Russians in allowing China to have Manchuria?

F.D.R. Well, I think they consider they've got enough as it is. You can put a hundred million more people into Siberia. Stalin doesn't want any more ground. He's got enough. He agreed with me about Korea and Indo-China. We should set up commissions to take charge of those countries for twenty-five years or so, till we get them on their feet. Just like the Philippines. I asked Chiang point-blank if he wanted Indo-China, and he said, "Under no circumstances!" Just like that—"Under no circumstances."

J.W.S. Chiang will have trouble explaining to his people the Allied failure to open Burma.

F.D.R. Yes. Yes. But if we don't put on this operation, we can put more tonnage over the Hump. Yes, we can get more freight into China that way.

H.H. Is this CNAC a Pan American subsidiary?

J.W.S. Forty-nine per cent is American, fifty-one per cent is Chinese.

F.D.R. Well, that's all right. The Chinese can run their airline *inside of China*. I have no objection to that. Now, I would agree to the British, after the war, running passenger planes for Australia from England to New York, letting off passengers for New York, taking on passengers for *Australia*, and then flying to San Francisco, letting off passengers from England, and taking on passengers for Australia. But not to take passengers on at New York and letting them off at San Francisco. Oh, no. No, sir.

J.W.S. We need guidance on political policy on China.

F.D.R. Yes. As I was saying, the Chinese will want a lot of help from us—a lot of it. Why, K'ung one time asked

me for a loan of fifty million dollars for developing transportation and I said to him, "Mr. K'ung, that's a lot of money!" Then I said to him, "What are you going to use this money for?" and he said, "Construction materials," and he said, to try and influence me, "If we get this loan, we'll buy those materials right here in the United States." And I came right back at him and said, "Mr. K'ung, in your country you have construction materials already. You have cement, you have sand, you have rock—you have all those materials." Then he said, "Yes, but we need technical help—engineers and other technicians. We would pay a good engineer \$100,000 a year, and give him a house and twenty servants." And I said, "Mr. K'ung, when I was governor of New York State, I had a superintendent of highway construction named Green—(ever know Green?)—and he was paid \$15,000. And he was the best road engineer I ever saw. But he's dead. But don't pay \$100,000—pay \$15,000—no house, no servants. You don't want to pay \$100,000. Why, there are any number of good engineers in the Army—not the regular service, men from civil life—and you can get them for \$8,000. They can do that kind of work. But no exploitation."

STOOGES The Prime Minister is here.

F.D.R. Well, now, there you are and remember, YOU'RE AMBASSADORS! Ha! Ha! Ha! Yes, sir, you're my Ambassadors.

End of Conference

Draw your own conclusions.



instructors can't live with Chinese troops—they wouldn't be comfortable. We can't *chao tai* [accommodate them] properly," etc., etc. Told him I had done so⁹ often and my people would, too. [He said] the Russians [previous Russian observers] had complained; it was very unpleasant. Told him we wouldn't and that we'd relieve the kickers. He pulled some stuff about training programs and time limits and crap, and I told him the G-mo said we were welcome in all units, for indefinite stay. He said of course if I did not trust the Chinese officers we could send checkers to watch the motor movement. I told him that wasn't the reason: U.S. [money] was being spent and I was responsible for it and had to report. We got him on every count, and had him running so much that McCammon couldn't look at him toward the end.

(4:00 p.m.) Conference with the Peanut. More history made. When he says anything, it's so: i.e., "There are eight Jap divisions in Burma." He just says it, so it must be so. If I say everybody agrees that there are five divisions, he just says "No, there are eight." Again flatly—"We have only one chance in a hundred of winning." Again—"We have even less chance of winning now than we had in 1942!" Good God. And if I mention air, artillery, tanks, 200,000 Chinese, and 180,000 British he still sticks to it.

He "reasons" that "we have a better chance to win if we take the defensive and let the Japs attack." I asked him where we would be if the U.S. had adopted that attitude two years ago. No answer. He has an idea that the British won't fight, and that he will sit on his ass till the Americans come and save him. "We'll get ready and tell Mountbatten to go ahead with his plans—and then, if everything is favorable, we'll fight. We must wait for the opportune time."

Good God. He's so ignorant of military matters that he thinks he can get an offensive started at the word "Go." Very nice guarantee of co-operation for the British to lean on.

"Let the British go ahead and attack Akyab." ¹⁰ I told him *they* would naturally expect *him* to do something to take pressure off of them, just as *he* is insisting in treble notes that *they* attack and take pressure off him. Oh, no, that's different. "We must have three to one to beat the Japs." I tell him we have more than three to one—in Yunnan we have fourteen divisions against one and a third. "Oh, no, they have several divisions there." Nothing is possible without a big amphibious operation. He doesn't know what a big amphibious operation is, but unfortunately Mountbatten was honest about it. So now that it is on a reduced scale, he screams. It is fatal to promise anything.

Another unfortunate thing was the President's message, giving him a choice of jumping off [in Burma] in March, or waiting till November, and promising "heavy amphibious operations" then. *That* will be insisted on now. F.D.R. should have insisted on his co-operating as planned, under pain of cutting off all supplies. Now he believes he can go just as far as he likes and the U.S. will cringe and take it. He's not going to fight at any time, regardless of what he says.

The pay-off is that I can go ahead and fight with the Ledo force. He is afraid that even concerted attack by all available forces has only one chance in a hundred and yet he'll sit back and let a small force take on the Japs alone. Madame is discouraged, disgusted, and a little dismayed. She can't do a thing with him.

⁹ Lived with Chinese troops in the field.

¹⁰ A port in southwestern Burma.

JANUARY 12 Cleveland back with bad news. Generalissimo now demands [before committing Yoke force] amphibious operations on Andaman Islands plus . . . plus . . . plus cutting of communications between Bhamo and Lashio. No replacements in sight. We are out on a limb.

LETTER TO MRS. STILWELL We eat straight rations or Chinese chow and we live where we have to and the trails are tough, and we get wet and muddy, but we sleep soundly and the food tastes good because we are usually hungry. The principal hazard is being hit on the head by a bag of rice dumped out of a plane. Once in a while the Japs' patrols get ambitious but they have pulled in their horns lately and the trails to the rear are quite safe. Progress is slow; the jungle is everywhere and very nearly impenetrable. Yesterday, on a cut trail I took $3\frac{1}{2}$ hours to do 3 miles, tripping and cursing at every step. It takes a long time to even locate the Japs, and a lot more to dig them out. We are in tiger and elephant country although I haven't seen any yet. Some of the men have and I've seen droppings and tracks. When an elephant leaves his card in the trail, it takes a pole vaulter to climb over it. I expect to see Tarzan any day now. The jungle is full of his long swinging vines. This experience is different from the last time. Now we have aviation and ammunition and artillery and a certain amount of training, so we don't have to take it on the nose as we used to, with no chance of answering. The Chinese soldier is doing his stuff, as I knew he would if he had half a chance. It's only the higher-ups who are weak and they are still pretty terrible. The Americans are all doing a good job and they all enjoy the life. If I could just have a couple of U.S. divisions. But the Brain Trust won't turn them over, so I've got to go on struggling with my shoestring. The Glamour Boy [Mountbatten] is just

