

“...pertinent excerpts...”

By JOHN S. SERVICE

The JOURNAL has commented generally on the current threat to the integrity and independence of Foreign Service reporting which can result from investigative autopsies without regard to context, either in time, substance or circumstance. No less ominous is that type of public investigation which by “interpretation” ascribes to a report a meaning completely unwarranted or opposite to the writer’s intent and language.

A recent example of both techniques is the treatment a few weeks ago* by the Senate Judiciary Committee’s Internal Security Subcommittee of a memorandum I wrote in April, 1944.

FIRST, SOME BACKGROUND is necessary. In the Spring of 1944, I was a relatively junior officer—FSO VII—attached to the staff of the Commanding General of the China-Burma-India Theater, then General Stilwell. Popularly (but never officially) called a “political adviser,” my duties consisted of many minor chores and very occasionally providing a little advice. A fully operating Embassy was just down the road and routine liaison between it and Headquarters was one of my regular duties. Ambassador Gauss, by specific instruction of General Stilwell, received a copy of everything I wrote and any advice I might give the Army was always known to the Embassy.

During this Spring of 1944, there was a flurry of excitement in Chungking over a border incident in the remote Central Asian Chinese province of Sinkiang. Sometime before, the USSR—for reasons not relevant here—had withdrawn its longstanding protection of a local warlord and the Chinese National Government, for the first time, had assumed *de facto* control.

The shift in administration was amicable and the local situation peaceful. Nonetheless, the National Government, despite a still unchecked Japanese threat in China proper, proceeded to send several divisions of troops into the province.

Outer Mongolia and Sinkiang

The need for this foray was not readily apparent: the war with Japan was a very long distance in the opposite direction. There appeared to be some basis for the gossip-report from Kuomintang circles that the intention was to create a military base for post-war establishment of Chinese control over Outer Mongolia and Tibet and to provide an “impregnable bulwark” against Russia.

John S. Service, born in China of American parents, was graduated from Oberlin College, B.A. in 1931. He joined the Foreign Service in 1933, first as clerk, and in 1935 after examination as Vice Consul and Secretary in the Diplomatic Service, assigned Peiping as language officer. He served continuously in the Far East until 1946, then at Wellington, New Zealand until assigned to the Department in 1948. Posted as Counselor at New Delhi in March 1950, he was recalled when enroute to India and is now on duty in the Department in the Office of Operating Facilities.

*September 19, 1951.

There is no space here to detail the “pipe dream” aspects—politically, economically or logistically—of Sinkiang as a Chinese military bastion to dominate Central Asia. Whatever their objective, the Chinese soon began having troubles—as might have been predicted from their comparatively large scale invasion of a poor and sparsely settled desert country, with a limited and non-expansive oasis-nomad economy, and a population some 95 percent non-Chinese.

One difficulty was with the Kazaks, a hardy nomad tribe living on both sides of the Sinkiang-Outer Mongolia frontier. Chinese official sources reported in March, 1944, that planes “bearing a red star insignia” had committed repeated acts of aggression by bombing Chinese forces in this area. Tass, reporting from Ulan Bator, presented an opposite account: the Chinese were the aggressors.

While a battle of communiques raged, the National Government plied the Army Headquarters with requests to send American officers to the spot to investigate and fix the blame. Headquarters was puzzled: we were fighting the Japanese—not the Kazaks, Outer Mongols or Russians; how to transport American investigators into that remotest part of Central Asia; and, by the time they got there, would a few shell or bomb craters on the vast Gobi mean much? I was told to watch the situation and “advise.”

This was not easy from Chungking. After struggling with daily-different reports, I hit on the idea of comparing the best available maps: American, Chinese, British, Russian and any others. To my surprise there was the wildest disagreement on this particular section of Sinkiang. Even some official Chinese maps did not support the Chinese boundary claim. The “aggressor” depended on which map you used.

We could assume Russian sponsorship of the Outer Mongolian action. But how immediately important was a sharply defined line in this un-mapped, open and semi-desert country, containing no permanent settlements worthy of the name and peopled by nomads continually moving back and forth with the pasture and seasons?

I questioned the motives behind the Chinese request. To have given no inkling of the vagueness of the border was less than forthright. Chinese policies in Sinkiang had dangers which made our involvement seem unwise. Finally, we had enough problems in our relations with Russia in early 1944 without an added controversy of doubtful validity and certain futility.

I could not see that American interests would be served by our intervention. They might be harmed. I recommended that we decline the Chinese request to investigate.

China, Russia and the United States

I had written a series of reports on the border incident. In my final memorandum on the subject, I related my recommendation to the broader aspects of the situation in Sinkiang and then went on to some general remarks concerning China, Russia and the United States. The following is the relevant passage, dated April 7, 1944 (Italics have been added; their significance will be apparent later.)

"We must be concerned with Russian plans and policies in Asia because they are bound to affect our own plans in the same area. But our relations with Russia in Asia are at present only a subordinate part of our political and military relations with Russia in Europe in the over-all United Nations war effort and post-war settlement. *We should make every effort to learn what the Russian aims in Asia are.* A good way of gaining material relevant to this will be a careful study of the strength, attitudes, and popular support of the Chinese Communists. But in determining our policy toward Russia in Asia we should avoid being swayed by China. The initiative must be kept firmly in our hands. To do otherwise will be to let the tail wag the dog.

"As for the present Chinese Government, it must be acknowledged that we are faced with a regrettable failure of statesmanship. *Chiang's persisting in an active anti-Soviet policy, at a time when his policies—or lack of them—are accelerating economic collapse and increasing internal dissension, can only be characterized as reckless adventurism. The cynical desire to destroy unity among the United Nations is serious.*

**"Do You Swear To Preserve, Protect, And Defend
The Government Of Chiang Kai-Shek?"**



But it would also appear that Chiang unwittingly may be contributing to Russian dominance in eastern Asia by internal and external policies which, if pursued in their present form, will render China too weak to serve as a possible counter-weight to Russia. By so doing, Chiang may be digging his own grave; not only North China and Manchuria, but also national groups such as Korea and Formosa may be driven into the arms of the Soviets.

"Neither now, nor in the immediately foreseeable future, does the United States want to find itself in direct opposition to Russia in Asia; nor does it want to see Russia have undisputed dominance over a part or all of China.

"The best way to cause both of these possibilities to become realities is to give, in either fact or appearance, support to the present reactionary government of China beyond carefully regulated and controlled aid directed solely toward the military prosecution of the war against Japan. To give diplomatic or other support beyond this limit will encourage the Kuomintang in its present suicidal anti-Russian policy. It will convince the Chinese Communists—who probably hold the key to control, not only of North China but of Inner Mongolia and Manchuria as well—that we are on the other side and that their only hope for survival lies with Russia. *Finally, Russia will be led to believe—if she does not already—that American aims run counter to hers, and that she must therefore protect herself by any means available; in other words, the extension of her direct power or influence.*"

The Army accepted my recommendation. The Embassy raised no objection and forwarded a copy to the Department. Months later there came one of those always pleasant surprises—an instruction from the Department saying that my memorandum had been "found of much interest and value . . . given the grade of Excellent."

THE SCENE SHIFTS now to September 19, 1951—almost seven and a half years after the memorandum was written.

General Wedemeyer, who took General Stilwell's place in China and to whose staff I was attached for a short while in early 1945, is being interrogated by the Internal Security Subcommittee in public session. The General has been led to testify that *subsequent* re-examination of reports made to him by his State Department "advisers" has caused him to believe that their recommendations were pro-Communist and contrary to American policy.

Testimony

The Subcommittee Counsel (Mr. Robert Morris) has therefore turned to some specific reports to provide illustration of the General's testimony. The following is from the official transcript of the Subcommittee hearing:

"Mr. Morris. General, may I call your attention to the report of April 7, 1944, that is before you?"

General Wedemeyer. Yes, sir.

Mr. Morris. Mr. Mandel, will you read pertinent excerpts from that?"

The Chairman (Senator McCarran). Before we go into that, what is this instrument, where does it stem from and what is the foundation for it?"

Mr. Mandel (the Research Director of the Subcommittee staff). The date is April 7, 1944, "Subject: Excerpt from memorandum, April 7, 1944, by John S. Service forwarded to Department as enclosure no. 1 of despatch no. 2461, April 21, 1944, under title 'Situation in Sinkiang; Its Relation to American Policy vis-a-vis China and the Soviet Union'."

This was also introduced in the Loyalty Board proceedings before the State Department in the case of John S. Service.

'Chiang's persisting in an active anti-Soviet policy, at a time when his policies—or lack of them—are accelerating economic collapse and increasing internal dissension, can only be characterized as reckless adventurism. The cynical desire to destroy unity among the United Nations is serious.'

Mr. Morris. What paragraph is that?"

Mr. Mandel. The second paragraph. Further,

'Finally, Russia will be led to believe—if she does not already—that American aims run counter to hers, and that she must therefore protect herself by any means available; in other words, the extension of her direct

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power or influence.'

Mr. Morris. General, can you comment on that?

General Wedemeyer. This statement was made at a time when there were a lot of people in our country who were making similar statements. Today they are on the bandwagon of opposing Communism. Quite a few Americans were making statements along that line. In fact, when I came back after the war, I found it rather dangerous and I could talk to a very few people, found it very dangerous to talk realistically about the implications of Communism in this country and in the world in general. I am very glad that Chiang Kai-shek even at that time epitomized opposition to Communism and thank God for General MacArthur out in Japan for the same reason when others were playing footsie with Communism, many others. I think Chiang showed a shrewdness, a political shrewdness, in continuing his position.

As far as cooperation was concerned, the Soviet Communists did not persist in the China Theater. The contribution they made in the war against Japan was negligible. The American people ought to understand that clearly.

Senator Ferguson. Might I ask in relation to this, is this not an indication that this was a warning at least to America that she had better see what Russia wanted in Asia and go along with Russia's desires rather than what was well for America or the world? That is, when he says 'We should make every effort to learn what the Russian aims in Asia are,' and the previous sentence that was read to you about Russia having her way. Is that right?

General Wedemeyer. It could be interpreted that way. I think that is a sound interpretation of the statement.

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PERTINENT EXCERPTS (from page 44)

Mr. Morris. General, may I refer you to a report now of Mr. John P. Davies, one of the four political advisers?"

LET US ANALYZE this transcript.

We will pass over the fact that although the General was supposedly testifying concerning my views while working for him, the Counsel selected and interrogated him on this memorandum written nine months *before* I joined the General's staff. There are more important matters.

Gerrymandering an Excerpt

First, the Subcommittee did not use the whole memorandum, not to mention the series of which it was a part. It used only an excerpt from the memorandum's conclusions without any of the essential background—the border incident, the Sinkiang situation and related events of the period—which led to those conclusions. Unexplained and shorn of context, many of these statements are meaningless—or capable of varying interpretation.

Second, not even the whole excerpt was actually considered. The Research Director, by some unexplained logic, selected three unrelated sentences as "pertinent excerpts." These poor fragments are actually subordinate to the principal thesis. From them one cannot hope to discover—much less understand—what I was recommending. But they are all that are put into the transcript. The question presents itself: to what does the Research Director consider these excerpts "pertinent"?

Third, required by the Counsel to comment on these meaningless fragments, the unfortunate witness could hardly be expected to give a very meaningful response. He can scarcely be blamed for seeming irrelevancy: ". . . a lot of people in our country were making similar statements. Today they are on the bandwagon of opposing Communism. . . I found it

very dangerous to talk realistically about the implications of Communism in this country and in the world in general . . . thank God for General MacArthur out in Japan . . . Chiang showed a shrewdness . . . the contribution they (the Soviet Communists) made in the war against Japan was negligible. The American people ought to understand that clearly."

Should not this investigative body, after such loose criticism by innuendo, have asked General Wedemeyer how my views differed from some of his own? As late as September 19, 1947, in his report to the President after a survey of China he said:

"Adoption by the United States of a policy motivated solely toward stopping the expansion of Communism without regard to the continued existence of an unpopular and repressive government would render any aid ineffective. Further, United States prestige in the Far East would suffer heavily, and wavering elements might turn away from the existing government to Communism."

Fourth: The omission of the actually pertinent material, even from the limited excerpt used by the Subcommittee, leads a Subcommittee member to come to the apparent conclusion—and permits the witness to agree—that an isolated sentence: "We should make every effort to learn what the Russian aims in Asia are," really meant that America "had better see what Russia wanted in Asia and go along with Russia's desires rather than what was well for America or the world." Is this not the exact opposite of the meaning of my whole memorandum *and particularly* that portion of it which was omitted by the Research Director between his first and second "pertinent excerpts"?

Such an investigative technique, I submit, is neither helpful to public understanding nor fair to the reporting officer, be he an officer of the Foreign Service, the Department of State, or any other part of our government.