

A WRONG MAN IN THE WRONG PLACE:
AN ASSESSMENT OF THE FAILURES OF GENERAL
JOSEPH W. STILWELL IN CHINA

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In the long history of Sino-American relations, the decade of the 1940s is one of the most crucial and controversial periods. The Pearl Harbor attack in 1941 initiated the active cooperation between the United States and China in the fight against Japan. But unfortunately, in a short period of eight years, the warm relationship between the two countries had so deteriorated that by the end of the decade the American Government would wash its hands completely of the Chinese affairs. When the Nationalist Government tried desperately yet futilely to fend off the onslaught of the Chinese Communists, the United States remained a mere spectator. What induced this change of attitude on the part of the United States? To a great extent the answer to this question can be found in the failure of the military mission carried out by General Joseph W. Stilwell in wartime China between 1942-1944. It is the purpose of this paper to deal with the circumstances that led to the Stilwell mission and analyze the factors contributing to its failure.

Before going any further, it is important to point out that when the United States declared war on Japan on December 8, 1941, one day after the Pearl Harbor attack, China had been resisting Japanese aggression alone for almost four and a half years without receiving any substantial support from the outside. However, China did not formally declare war on Japan until December 8, 1941. In order to facilitate military cooperation between the United States and Great Britain, a series of

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conferences were convened by American President Franklin D. Roosevelt and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill in Washington between December 22, 1941 and January 14, 1942. The conferences were also known under the code name ARCADIA.¹

It was during these meetings that the Declaration of the United Nations was drafted and a British-American Combined Chiefs of Staff (CCS) was set up. Also resulting from the ARCADIA Conference was the decision to strengthen the Allies' military cooperation by establishing a Chinese theater, which was to include China and "such portion of Thailand and Indochina as may become accessible to troops of the United Powers."² With a sincere intention to promote China's position among the Allied Powers and give Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek equal status with other leaders of the Allied Powers, Roosevelt suggested that the Allies invite Chiang to serve as Supreme Commander of the Allied forces in the Chinese theater, with a joint planning staff consisting of British, American and Chinese representatives to work under him.

Though unwilling to treat Chiang as an equal, Churchill, however, consented to Roosevelt's suggestion. On behalf of the Allied Powers, Roosevelt telegraphed Chiang on December 29, telling him about the decision and urging him to take the post which, according to Roosevelt, would influence "the formulation of the general strategy for the conduct of the war in all theaters."³ The Generalissimo replied on January 2, 1942 and agreed to accept the offer.⁴ Two days later, Chiang instructed T.V. Soong, Chinese Foreign Minister who was then

¹ Robert E. Sherwood, *Roosevelt and Hopkins: an Intimate History* (New York, 1950), revised edition, p. 442; 梁敬鎔 (Liang Ching-shuen), *史迪威事件 (Stilwell Affair)*, Taipei, 1975), p. 19.

² Sherwood, p. 458; U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States* (hereafter *Foreign Relations*), 1941, Vol. IV, p. 763.

³ President Roosevelt to the President of the Chinese Executive Yuan (Chiang), December 29, 1941, in *Foreign Relations*, 1941, Vol. IV, p. 764; Barbara W. Tuchman, *Stilwell and the American Experience in China, 1911-45* (New York, 1971), p. 238.

⁴ Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek to President Roosevelt, transmitted to Roosevelt

in Washington, to ask Roosevelt to appoint a high-ranking American officer to serve as Chief of Staff to the Supreme Commander in the Chinese theater.⁵ Roosevelt concurred with the idea and started looking for a suitable military man to fill the post. It was against this backdrop that the Stilwell mission emerged.

Among the possible candidates considered by the U.S. War Department was Lieutenant General Hugh A. Drum, commander of the First Army. During World War I Colonel Drum had served in France with the American Expeditionary Force (AEF) under General John J. Pershing as Chief of Staff of the First Army and later became Pershing's Chief of Staff and subsequently commander of the First Army. While Drum served in the First Army, Lieut. Colonel George C. Marshall was his deputy. With the AEF in France were also Colonel Henry L. Stimson and a young major, Stilwell. It was in France that Stilwell made the acquaintance of both Marshall and Stimson, who later were to become his loyal friends and staunch supporters.

Marshall and Drum remained friends after the War until their relationship soured in 1939 over the competition for the position of Chief of Staff of the Army left vacant by the retirement of General Malin Craig. Brig. General Marshall stood thirty-fourth in seniority on the list of eligible candidates, among whom were twenty-one major generals and eleven brigadier generals. However, in late April President Roosevelt selected Marshall to fill the post and promoted him to the temporary rank of lieutenant general.⁶ The appointment of Marshall irritated Drum and relations between the two

on January 3, 1942, *Foreign Relations* 1942, China, p. 1. See also 郭榮趙 (Kuo Jung-chao), 從珍珠港到雅爾達：中美戰時合作之悲劇 (*From Pearl Harbor to Yalta: the Tragedy of Sino-American Cooperation During the War*, Taipei, 1979), p. 68. For the Chinese text of Chiang's telegram, see Kuo's 蔣委員長與羅斯福總統戰時通訊 (*Wartime Correspondences Between Generalissimo Chiang and President Roosevelt*, Taipei, 1978), pp. 57-58.

⁵ Liang, p. 21.

⁶ Forrest C. Pogue, *George C. Marshall, Education of a General, 1880-1939* (New York, 1963), pp. 327-330. Hereafter, *Marshall*, Vol. I.

were never the same.

When Marshall was looking in January, 1942, for a high-ranking officer to send to China, he first thought of Stilwell, who was then a major general. Since the Chinese Government in Chungking indicated that a lieutenant general would be more desirable, Secretary of War Stimson strongly recommended Drum, whom he highly regarded, for the post.⁷ Stilwell also suggested Drum, though in a rather unfriendly way.⁸ After talking with Marshall, Drum discovered that the value of the Chinese theater was low in the war plans of the Chief of Staff, and therefore he turned down the mission, much to the disappointment of Stimson. This left Stilwell, one of the very few American high-ranking officers with enough knowledge of and personal experience in China, as the only alternative. Persuaded by Stimson, Stilwell accepted the job on January 14 and told the Secretary of War: "I'd go where I am sent." Pleased with Stilwell's decision, Stimson said to him, "more and more, the finger of destiny is pointing at you."⁹ Stimson believed that in Stilwell he "had discovered a man who will be very useful to us in the problems that are coming [in China]."¹⁰ History was to prove how false and ironic his prediction was.

During the next two weeks or so, a series of discussions were carried out between Soong, Stimson and John McCloy, Assistant Secretary of War. While Generalissimo Chiang wanted a high-ranking American officer to serve as his Chief of Staff, Stimson intended to send Stilwell to Chungking as the

⁷ Forrest C. Pogue, *George C. Marshall, 1939-1942* (New York, 1967), pp. 356-7. Hereafter, *Marshall*, Vol. II.

⁸ Responding to Marshall's inquiry whether he was willing to go to China, Stilwell replied: "Me? No, thank you. They remember me as a small-fry Colonel that they kicked around. They saw me on foot in the mud, consorting with coolies, riding soldier trains. Drum will be ponderous and take time through interpreters; he will decide slowly and insist on his dignity. Drum by all means." See Joseph W. Stilwell, *The Stilwell Papers*, arranged and edited by Theodore H. White (New York, 1972), p. 19, entry of January 1, 1942.

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 25-6.

¹⁰ Meeting of Stimson and Stilwell: Stimson Diary, 14 January, 1942, cited in Tuchman, p. 243; see also Henry L. Stimson and McGeorge Bundy, *On Active Service in Peace and War* (New York, 1948), p. 530.

Representative of the U.S. Army with the authority "to command all United States forces in China and such Chinese forces as may be assigned to him."¹¹ The Generalissimo was worried that the same American military personnel serving both functions at the same time might cause confusion and conflict later. He instructed Soong that the obligation and power of the two should be clearly defined.¹² Unfortunately, Soong failed to relay Chiang's fear to Stimson. Instead Soong took upon himself to explain to Chiang that since the U.S. Army Representative was concurrently Chief of Staff, he was naturally to be subordinate to the Supreme Commander.¹³ Persuaded by Soong, Chiang gave his consent to the American designation with reluctance. Official letters were exchanged between Stimson and Soong on 29th and 30th of January 1942, thus formalizing Stilwell's mission.¹⁴ According to Stimson's letter, the functions of the "United States Army Representative" were to be:

(1) To supervise and control all United States defense-aid affairs for China. (2) Under the Generalissimo to command all United States forces in China and such Chinese forces as may be assigned to him. (3) To represent the United States Government on any International War Council in China and act as the Chief of Staff for the Generalissimo. (4) To improve, maintain and control the Burma Road in China.¹⁵

The U.S. War Department made the official announcement of Stilwell's appointment on February 2nd and instructed Stilwell, now promoted to lieutenant general, to select and assemble his staff and get ready to leave for Chungking at an

¹¹ Secretary Stimson to the Chinese Minister for Foreign Affairs (Soong), Washington, January 29, 1942, in *The China White Paper*, reissued by Stanford University in 1967 in two volumes, vol. I, Annex 27 (a), p. 469.

¹² In Generalissimo Chiang's viewpoint, the Representative of the U.S. Army should be subordinate to the Chief of Staff, who in turn took orders from the Supreme Commander of China theater. See Liang, p. 28.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ For text of Stimson and Soong's letters, see *The China White Paper*, Vol. I, pp. 468-9, Annex 27 (a) and (b).

¹⁵ Ibid., Annex 27 (a).

early date.¹⁶ Before going into the details of Stilwell's mission in China, it is important here to study his military education and his personal experience in China because they were to have a significant effect upon the outcome of his mission.

Joseph Warren Stilwell, eldest son of Benjamin and Mary Stilwell, was born on March 19, 1883, in Florida. Entering West Point at 17 Joe Stilwell graduated in 1904 as 32nd in a class of 124. While at the Military Academy, according to one of his most sympathetic biographers, Stilwell was proficient in languages and did all right in other studies, but he lacked the "high seriousness and self-belief" that characterized such prominent West Point graduates as Robert E. Lee, John J. Pershing and Douglas MacArthur.¹⁷

After graduation in 1904, Stilwell chose the Infantry and was commissioned as a second lieutenant. During the next seven years, he served with the Army in the Philippines, taught at West Point as a language instructor and served several other missions which carried him to Japan, Latin America and finally China.¹⁸ Even though his first contact with China in late 1911 was a brief stay of seventeen days, Stilwell, however, witnessed the turbulence of the Chinese Revolution from which the first republic in Asia was born. Despite the fact that he observed the turmoil with curiosity and "arrived at no profound judgments," Stilwell's first impression with China was certainly not too favorable.¹⁹

The United States entered World War I in late August 1917. Stilwell, now promoted to the temporary rank of major, was appointed as military attaché in Spain. In December he was assigned to France, working as a staff officer in charge of intelligence for the AEF. Though not a graduate from the Command and General Staff School at Fort Leavenworth,

¹⁶ See the Memorandum for the Adjutant General, 2nd February 1942, in Charles F. Romanus and Riley Sunderland, U.S. Army in World War II, *Stilwell's Mission to China* (Washington, 1953), p. 74, cited in Liang, note no. 3.

¹⁷ Tuchman, p. 15.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 18-25.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 37-41.

Kansas, Stilwell got the job mainly because of his command of French. This experience in France proved to be one of the turning points in his military career. It was in France where Stilwell made the acquaintance of both Marshall and Stimson as already mentioned. Later during the War, Stilwell was promoted to the temporary rank of full colonel. After the War, he returned to the United States and became a captain again as a result of the general reduction of temporary ranks.²⁰ In early August, by his own request Stilwell was appointed the first language officer for China, though originally he asked for Japan, to represent the Army in the language training program of Military Intelligence Division (MID).

Stilwell and his family spent a year in California, where he studied the Chinese language at the University of California at Berkeley. He was promoted to major in July 1920. The Stilwells sailed for China in early August with the family of one of his fellow language officers. Stilwell's second stay in China was much longer, almost three years during which time he studied Chinese at the North China Union Language School and acquired a Chinese name 史迪威 (Shih Ti-wei, derived from the sound of Stilwell).²¹ Shortly afterwards, Stilwell was appointed military attaché in Peking's American Legation. During 1921 he was borrowed by the International Relief Committee of the Red Cross from the Army to serve as Chief Engineer supervising the road-building program in Shansi for four months.²² This road-building experience gave Stilwell a real chance to improve his language proficiency with the Chinese workers and learn their ways of living. It was also during his second stay in China that Stilwell saw the friction among the Northern Warlords, a matter of realpolitik which was not unusual in Europe but which was incomprehensible to Stilwell's soldier's mind.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 60.

²¹ Ibid., pp. 66-7.

²² The Shansi road was designed with dual purposes: to give work to famine refugees and to improve transportation so that in the future relief could be sent to the stricken areas. See *ibid.*, p. 71.

In early July 1923, the Stilwells sailed for the United States. Stilwell took the Infantry course at Fort Benning in Georgia between 1923-24 and spent the school year of 1925-26 at Leavenworth. In August 1926 the Stilwells sailed again for China, for Joe was assigned to the post of battalion commander in the 15th Infantry, the American regiment then stationed in Tientsin in accordance with the Boxer Protocol.²³ Major Stilwell's third tour in China proved to be significant and fruitful. In Tientsin he met the friend he had become acquainted with in France during World War I—Lieutenant Colonel Marshall, who was now serving as Executive Officer of the 15th Infantry. Though Marshall was a cold man, a mutual respect, if not a close friendship began to grow between the two.²⁴

Marshall left China in May 1927 to become an instructor at the Army War College and subsequently took the position as assistant commandant and concurrently head of the Academic Department of the Infantry School at Fort Benning, Georgia, after the death of his wife in September of the same year.²⁵ In order to execute his program to revolutionize the teaching of military tactics, Marshall recruited the best instructors for Benning. To head the Tactical Section, he had an ideal man in mind, Joe Stilwell. However, Stilwell, then in China, was not available. Marshall wanted Stilwell so badly that he held the position open until the latter was able to take it in July 1929.²⁶ At Benning, the relationship between the two grew closer. It was also at Benning that Stilwell's acid and sarcastic comments aimed at student officers earned him the famous nickname of "Vinegar Joe."²⁷ At Benning Stilwell was

²³ Ibid., p. 91.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 102. General Albert C. Wedemeyer recalled decades later: "It was typical of him that no one I know, with the exception of General Stilwell, ever called him by his Christian name or was on terms of even the beginnings of familiarity with George Catlett Marshall." See his *Wedemeyer Reports!* (New York, 1958), p. 122.

²⁵ Pogue, *Marshall*, Vol. I, pp. 244-8; Tuchman, p. 117.

²⁶ Pogue, *Marshall*, Vol. I, p. 257; Tuchman, p. 123.

²⁷ Tuchman, p. 125.

also well known for his nonconformist attitude. One of Marshall's biographers wrote:

He (Stillwell) was a rebel by instinct, chafed against any and all authority, mocked at those in command, continually burned to remake the situation in which he found himself, and throughout his army career walked the razor's edge of insubordination.²⁸

Conflicts soon emerged between Stilwell and Maj. Gen. Campbell King, the Commandant at Benning who had three times asked Marshall to relieve Stilwell. However, Marshall was able to persuade King to keep him.²⁹

When Marshall left Fort Benning in 1932, Stilwell also quit his job shortly afterwards, and for the next two years his duty was to train the reserves in San Diego. Before Pearl Harbor Stilwell was to make his fourth trip to China. In January 1935 Stilwell was appointed military attaché with the rank of full colonel, in the American Legation in Peking under Minister Nelson T. Johnson. The Stilwells arrived in China in early July.³⁰ This time they were to stay for four years during which Stilwell undertook several journeys that took him to South China, North China and Manchuria. Stilwell's first two years in China also coincided with one of the most eventful periods in the history of modern China. He witnessed the abduction of Generalissimo Chiang by "Young Marshal" Chang Hsueh-liang and his associates in Sian in December 1936, the Marco Polo Bridge (Lukouchiao) Incident on July 7, 1937, which touched off the Chinese War of resistance against Japan, and the "Rape of Nanking" in mid-December in which at least 42,000 Chinese civilians were "hacked, burned, bayoneted, raped and murdered" by Japanese soldiers.³¹

Unfortunately, it was also during this same period that

²⁸ Pogue, *Marshall*, Vol. I, p. 257.

²⁹ Tuchman, p. 130.

³⁰ In September 1935 the United States raised its Legation to Embassy and soon moved it to the new capital of Nanking. However, Stilwell remained with the Consulate-General in Peking. See Tuchman, pp. 145-6.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 178. According to the Chinese estimate, more than 300,000 Chinese were killed in Nanking.

Stilwell's prejudice against Chinese political and military leaders in general and Generalissimo Chiang in particular gradually took shape. Moved by the scene of flooding hapless Chinese refugees uprooted by the devastation of war, Stilwell criticized the Generalissimo for not making a stronger resistance against the Japanese. Stilwell felt that the Generalissimo was at fault for using his best troops to contain the Chinese Communists in northwestern China. As the war dragged on in China, it became more difficult for Stilwell to discharge his duty as military attaché and some of the independent actions undertaken by him without consulting his superiors in Washington incensed Colonel E. R. W. McCabe, head of MID which supervised all military attachés abroad. McCabe sent Stilwell several messages of reprimand which at one time drove Stilwell to the verge of resignation.³²

Nevertheless, the Stilwells did not leave China until May 1, 1939 when Joe was assigned to a new and rather unpromising job. Stilwell, at 56 and facing mandatory retirement unless he was promoted within a year, was depressed and disgruntled. However, an unexpected development back in the United States was to change his fate. Four days earlier on April 27 Marshall was appointed Chief of Staff.³³ Marshall immediately initiated changes in the Army and replaced "dead wood" with men to his taste. Stilwell was one of the first two names he recommended for promotion to brigadier general. Stilwell arrived in the United States in September and was assigned as commander of the 3rd Brigade of the 2nd Division at Fort Sam Houston in Texas.³⁴ Before taking up the post, Stilwell went to Washington to report on the situation in China and took the opportunity to "have it out with McCabe," who was now outranked by him.³⁵ Stilwell took up his post in late September and in early July 1940 he was named Command

³² Ibid., pp. 181, 190, 199.

³³ Pogue, *Marshall*, Vol. I. p. 330.

³⁴ Tuchman, p. 204.

³⁵ Ibid. According to Tuchman, Stilwell, during his talk with McCabe, purposely left the door open "for the benefit of listeners."

General of the 7th Division, which assured him that another star was coming soon. Two months later he was promoted to major general.³⁶ The Marshall connection undoubtedly played a major role in Stilwell's rapid advancement in the Army.

It was because of his personal experience in China, four tours totaling almost ten years, and as a protégé of Marshall that Stilwell was appointed Representative of the U.S. Army to China in early February 1942. In the weeks following his appointment, Stilwell recruited a staff of 35 officers and five enlisted men. Most of them had experience in China or had worked with Stilwell in China before. Among them were: Colonel Frank Dorn, to be Stilwell's aide and chief assistant; Colonel Frank Roberts, to be a G-2 in charge of the Intelligence Section; Colonel Willard Wyman; Colonel Haydon Boatner; and Captain Dick Young, a Hawaiian-born Chinese. All these men except Young had worked with Stilwell in China before. The rest of the staff included Brigadier Franklin Silbert as chief Infantry officer and Thomas G. Hearn (nick-named "Long Tom" because of his height) as Chief of Staff. For political advice, Stilwell borrowed from the State Department John Paton Davies, who was born in Szechwan of missionary parents and had worked on the American Embassy staff in Hankow where Stilwell first met him in 1938.³⁷

Stilwell and his staff left the United States for China on February 13, 1942, by air via South America, Africa and India.³⁸ Ten days after Stilwell's arrival in India, Rangoon fell to the Japanese on March 7. Four days earlier, Stilwell met Generalissimo Chiang, who was then in Burma to inspect the military situation at Lashio. He entered Chungking, war capital of China in the Szechwan province, on March 4 and was re-

³⁶ Ibid., pp. 212, 213.

³⁷ Ibid., pp. 247-8. Besides the regular staff, the War Department was also sending by ship 400 technicians and instructors to aid Stilwell in training Chinese troops.

³⁸ The plane took off from Miami on February 11 but turned back after an hour due to engine trouble. It finally succeeded on 13th on the third try. See *The Stilwell Papers*, pp. 39-40; Tuchman, p. 254.

ceived in audience by the Generalissimo two days later.³⁹ Stilwell asked Chiang to let him lead Chinese forces into Burma to fight the Japanese. Chiang, fearing that the British might not cooperate and thus force Chinese to bear the burden alone, insisted that he would not move unless a British commitment could be assured.⁴⁰ However, the Generalissimo promised that he would delegate the command of the Chinese Fifth and Sixth Armies in the CBI (China-Burma-India) theater to Stilwell and he later also telegraphed Roosevelt proposing that Stilwell be appointed Allied Commander in Burma.⁴¹ Realizing that "never before has a foreigner been allowed any control over Chinese troops," Stilwell admitted that "the Chinese are doing a big thing from their point of view in handing over this force to a *lao mao-tzu* they don't know very well."⁴² Nevertheless Stilwell was deeply disappointed with the Generalissimo's cautiousness and reluctance to take prompt actions in Burma.

Stilwell left Chungking for Lashio on March 11, 1942. By that time Rangoon was already lost, and he found that the British forces in Burma had neither the strength nor the will to fight against the attacking Japanese. Six days later Stilwell flew back to Chungking to discuss the Burmese situation with the Generalissimo. In order to halt the Japanese northward offense from Rangoon, Stilwell planned to concentrate three Chinese divisions (200th, 22nd and 96th, all of the Fifth Army) near Toungoo by the middle of Sittang River while on the other hand Chiang insisted that Mandalay, much to the north by the Irrawaddy River, was the "key to the defense of Burma" and wanted it to be retained at all costs.⁴³ Here, disagreement between the two on the strategy in defending Burma first

³⁹ *The Stilwell Papers*, pp. 49, 50; Tuchman, pp. 259-60, 263.

⁴⁰ *The Stilwell Papers*, p. 54; Tuchman, p. 266.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *The Stilwell Papers*, p. 56, White mistakenly interpreted "*lao mao-tzu*" as "old hat" while the term literally means "Old Hairy" and is often used by Chinese in reference to Westerners.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 67; Liang, p. 44.

emerged.

Since he had already made the arrangement with the British to hold the Prome-Toungoo line, Stilwell, to use his own words, "kept at" Chiang and "asked for three more divisions to be sent down." Stilwell thought Chiang's decision to defend Mandalay was unsound because he had never seen it and the place "had no military significance and offered no advantages as a position for defense."⁴⁴ Pressed by Stilwell, the Generalissimo gave the permission to move the 22nd division to support the 200th which was at Toungoo. Stilwell conceded:

Considering his (Chiang's) feeling about the matter, this was a handsome concession to make. And in all fairness, it must have been a severe strain on him to put a foreigner in command of regular troops in action at all. It had never been done before, and he was trying it on short acquaintance with a man he knew little about.⁴⁵

Having obtained partial success with Chiang, Stilwell returned to Burma on March 21. On March 23 the Japanese forces attacked the Chinese Fifth Army on the left flank near Oktwin and took it two days later. Toungoo fell on 26th. On the right flank, the Japanese made a breakthrough on the British line at Prome on April 1 and took Allenmyo five days later. Yenangyaung fell to the Japanese on 16th. Henceforth the Allied Forces of the Chinese and the British were in no position to meet the Japanese onslaught in Burma. The Japanese drive on Lashio began on 25th and the city fell on 29th. In the night of 25th Stilwell and General Sir Harold Alexander, the British commander in Burma, held a conference with Generals Lo Cho-ying, executive officer of the Chinese Expeditionary Forces in Burma, and Tu Li-ming, Commander of the Fifth Army, at Kyaukse, about 25 miles south of Mandalay. It was at this meeting that the decision for a general retreat was made.⁴⁶ Subsequently Stilwell moved his headquarters to

⁴⁴ *The Stilwell Papers*, p. 67.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 68.

⁴⁶ Tuchman, p. 289; Liang, pp. 52-3.

Shwebo, 50 miles north of Mandalay, much against the instructions of the Generalissimo.⁴⁷

It was apparent that Stilwell, who had been repeatedly complaining about both Chiang's interference with his command and disobedience on the part of Chinese commanders, decided to act on his own. By late April, 1942 Stilwell, realizing the futility of attempting to hold northern Burma, decided to send American personnel north to Myitkyina by railway. However, his plans were impeded when a locomotive with 17 cars commanded by Gen. Lo Cho-ying collided with another train and blocked the railroad for two days.⁴⁸ With time running short, Stilwell decided to let his men walk out of Burma, leaving Chinese troops to their own fate.⁴⁹ Thus, the first Burma campaign ended as a humiliating disaster for the Allies.

Stilwell and his group of 115 began their march for life on May 4.⁵⁰ according to the American account, Stilwell and his men were threatened by "disease, jungle, the enemy, elephants, tigers, snakes, and most of all hunger and exhaustion." However, Stilwell kept the party together with "the thongs of his spirit." Though he "cursed, snarled, tongue-lashed his people," Stilwell was able to bring "every man through alive" and became a hero.⁵¹ Stilwell's party reached Imphal, India, a safe place in the British hands, and arrived in Tinsukia three days later. From Tinsukia they took a plane for New Delhi the next day.⁵² In twenty days Stilwell and his men walked 140 miles. An Associated Press dispatch reported from New Delhi on May 25 that Stilwell said: "I claim we got a hell

⁴⁷ Tuchman, p. 290; Liang, pp. 51-2.

⁴⁸ *The Stilwell Papers*, p. 97; Tuchman, p. 291.

⁴⁹ For description of battles in Burma between late March to mid-May, which is beyond the scope of this paper, see *The Stilwell Papers*, pp. 67-97; Tuchman, pp. 273-91, 299; Liang, pp. 46-53.

⁵⁰ Among the 115 were "26 Americans, 13 British, 16 Chinese, a bevy of Burmese nurses from the Seagrave military hospital, several civilians, some Indian cooks and Indians." See *The Stilwell Papers*, p. 96; Liang, p. 53.

⁵¹ *The Stilwell Papers*, p. 96; Tuchman, p. 296.

⁵² *The Stilwell Papers*, p. 105.

of a beating. We got run out of Burma and it is humiliating as hell. I think we ought to find out what caused it, go back and retake it.”⁵³ The last sentence stated the two jobs that Stilwell set himself to do after the debacle in Burma—“to find out what caused it” and “go back and retake” Burma.

Leaving India in late May, Stilwell arrived in Chungking on June 3 and reported to the Generalissimo on Burma the next day. According to Stilwell’s own account, he gave the Generalissimo “the full story, pulling no punches, and naming names.”⁵⁴ The superficially cordial relations between the two seemed unchanged. Nonetheless, what happened in Burma in 1942 was to cast a shadow over the relations between the Generalissimo and Stilwell which in turn would severely impede the latter’s mission in China.

The defeat suffered by the Allies in Burma was indeed “humiliating as hell.” However, it was the Chinese, not the Americans or the British, who suffered most. China lost more than ten thousand men in Burma, including at least one of her able divisional commanders, General Tai An-lan of the 200th Division. Then, what caused the humiliating defeat in Burma? While both Chinese and Americans were blaming each other for the debacle, the responsibility was probably evenly shared by the British, Chinese and Americans. There were several factors contributing to the Allies’ debacle in Burma in 1942:

- (1) the British troops lacked the will to resist the Japanese attack;
- (2) the Chinese forces, though willing to fight, were deficient in strict training and, above all, short of equipment and supplies;
- (3) despite the fact that Generalissimo Chiang might have been sincere in delegating command to Stilwell, some of the Chinese field commanders in Burma failed to follow Stilwell’s orders and their disobedience undoubtedly impeded Stilwell’s campaign efforts;
- (4) Stilwell was either unable or unwilling to press the British for closer cooperation with the Chinese forces under his command, and he unfairly deemphasized this British failure.

The reason behind the loss of Burma was probably even more

⁵³ Ibid., p. 106.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 113.

complicated. In fairness to Stilwell, history can not blame him alone for the defeat.

Since his escape from Burma, Stilwell had only one mission occupying his mind, namely, to "go back and retake" Burma to revenge his humiliation. To accomplish this, he asked that American divisions be sent to the CBI theater. He wired the War Department on May 25, the day when he reached New Delhi, indicating that he felt certain "a serious mistake is being made in not sending American combat units into this theater."⁵⁵ However, the United States, then fully committed to a second front in Europe, was unable to divert any of its strength to the CBI theater. All that Marshall could promise was to return the American Tenth Air Force, which was then stationed in India, to Stilwell's command. This forced Stilwell to rely more than ever on the Chinese in order to realize his plan of reconquering Burma.

Thus, since early June 1942, Stilwell had pressed the Generalissimo persistently for more men. He also requested authority to train Chinese forces in India and Kunming and thus strengthen the Chinese Army. Well-trained Chinese soldiers were necessary if he was to retake Burma. In late June while Chiang's decision was still pending, an event occurred that was to signal "the beginning of the long personal struggle between Chiang and Stilwell."⁵⁶ On the 25th of June Marshall ordered Maj. Gen. Lewis Brereton to transfer his Tenth Air Force to Egypt. The Tenth Air Force, consisting of 24 A-29 heavy bombers, was originally scheduled for use in China. Marshall made the change without even the courtesy of consulting the Chinese Government. Even Stilwell considered this action improper.⁵⁷ Naturally the Generalissimo was mad at this decision. It was under these circumstances that Generalissimo

⁵⁵ Stilwell's plan for reconquest: to Stimson, May 25, 1942, in Stimson Papers, cited by Tuchman, p. 301.

⁵⁶ *The Stilwell Papers*, p. 118.

⁵⁷ Stilwell wrote in his diary on June 25: "Now what can I say to the G-mo (Generalissimo)? We fail in all our commitments, and blithely tell him to just carry on, old top." *Ibid.*, p. 119.

Chiang presented his three demands to the United States on June 28:

- (1) Three American divisions to arrive in India between August and September to restore communications to China through Burma.
- (2) Five hundred combat airplanes to be made available to China beginning in August and to be maintained continuously at that strength.
- (3) Transport aircraft to maintain a delivery of 5,000 tons per month to China beginning in August.⁵⁸

Furthermore, the Generalissimo told Stilwell that the fulfillment of the demands outlined above was "humanly possible" and that "this was not a time for promises but for action." According to Stilwell, both the Generalissimo and Madame Chiang stated that "the China Theater can be washed out" if the requirements were not met by the Allies.⁵⁹ On July 2 Stilwell rejected the Generalissimo's request to transmit the demands with his own recommendations. The Generalissimo made the request on the ground that Stilwell was his Chief of Staff while Stilwell rejected it because he considered himself the Representative of the U.S. Army. It was apparent that the vagueness and confusion planted by Soong in early 1942 was showing itself. On the same day Stilwell presented a rather arrogant memorandum to the Generalissimo, clarifying his position. According to his own interpretation, Stilwell believed that:

- (1) he was the U.S. representative on any war council held in China... and that in any such council no other status he might hold was effective;
- (2) he was in command of American forces in China, Burma and India, and since Burma and India were not in the China War Theater, he had to co-operate with the British in those areas;
- (3) he was charged with the supervision and control of lend-lease material. He was given this responsibility to ensure that American lend-lease equipment would be employed solely for the effective prosecution of the war, and in such matters he acted as the representative of the President, who could under the law recall lend-lease materials at any time prior to delivery;
- (4) as Chief of Staff, his duties were concerned with planning,

⁵⁸ Three Demands Crisis: CBI History, Master Narrative, cited in Tuchman, P. 312; Liang, note 40, pp. 91-2.

⁵⁹ Liang, p. 92.

organization, training, and operation in the field and did not extend to procurement of material;

(5) he had his basic status as an officer of the U.S. Army, sworn to uphold the interests of the United States.⁶⁰

While what Stilwell stated was basically true, the way he presented it was unnecessarily arrogant. After Stilwell presented his memorandum, the Generalissimo had refused to meet with him for a month while at the same time he instructed Soong to ask the American Government for a clarification of Stilwell's status. Chiang also attempted to take the control of lend-lease materials out of Stilwell's hands. More damaging than the memorandum incident was Stilwell's insistence that he would reform and reorganize the Chinese Army.

As early as late May when he had just arrived in New Delhi, Stilwell prepared a "military reform plan" and later presented it to the Generalissimo in Chungking on June 4. In his plan Stilwell pointed out that "the Chinese Army is weak partly because of lack of equipment, but mostly for other reasons," and he emphasized that reorganization and reform must begin at once. Stilwell made three recommendations in the light of his analysis of the Chinese Army:

(1) I recommend the merging of divisions to bring all units up to full strength, and the assignment of all available weapons to these divisions as far as they will go.

[I think] The average of the rank and the file is willing, disciplined, inured to hardship, and responsive to leadership. The junior officers respond readily to direction.... Division and Army commanders are a great problem. Very few of them are efficient. They seldom get up to the front and they very rarely supervise the execution of their orders. Reports from the front are accepted without check, and very often prove exaggerated or entirely false.... Many of these officers are personally brave, but most of them lack moral courage.

(2) I recommend a rigid purge of inefficient high commanders.... Without a clearing out of the inefficient, the Army will continue to go downhill, no matter how much material is supplied for it.

[I think] The system of command must be clarified and unity of

⁶⁰ Ibid., pp. 96-7. For Chinese version of the memorandum, see Kuo, *From Pearl Harbor to Yalta*, pp. 142-3.

command insisted upon. The Generalissimo must pick some one man in whom he has confidence, give him a general directive, and then let him handle the troops without interference from anyone.... During the Burma campaign letters and instructions from various sources reached various commanders who as a result were confused. The Generalissimo himself writes to various commanders making suggestions based on his knowledge of the situation, and giving advice as to courses of action in certain contingencies. These commanders, in their high regard for the Generalissimo's experience and ability, invariably interpret these suggestions and this advice as orders and act on them as such.

(3) I recommend that in future operations one man be chosen with complete authority to direct the action with complete control over the services, and with no staff officer other than his own present. Liaison officers from the War Ministry can check all his orders and actions, as well as his reports, but his absolute control of the troops must not be infringed upon.⁶¹

In addition to the above, Stilwell also stated that it was also of vital importance to improve the system of communications and medical service. In the conclusion, he emphasized that in order to raise the morale, "rewards for gallant conduct should be made promptly and punishment must be prompt and ruthless, no matter what the rank of the offender."⁶²

Despite the fact that some of the problems pointed out by Stilwell, such as political corruption and incompetency among high-ranking officers in the Chinese Army, did exist and his recommendations to solve them were vital and sincere, he failed, or was rather unwilling, to consider these problems from the Generalissimo's point of view. Fighting the Japanese for five years with limited support from the United States had hurt the Chinese Army immensely. Admittedly after Pearl Harbor, the U.S. came in on China's side but even then the Generalissimo was faced with a puppet Chinese government in Nanking [put there by the Japanese] and a Chinese Communist army that was concerned much more with its plan to conquer China than with defeating the Japanese. And so the early 1940's were not roseate years for the Generalissimo. Thus, besides fighting Japan and coordinating war efforts with

⁶¹ For text of Stilwell's recommendations, see Liang, 83-6. Chinese translation can be found in Kuo, *From Pearl Harbor to Yalta*, p. 160.

⁶² Ibid.

the Allies, the Generalissimo also had to deal with the problems created by Wang's regime, Communists and some of his own subordinates who were in reality local warlords and apt to resist his orders. The Generalissimo managed to maintain a rather shaky balance, with extraordinary political tactics, among the incompatible elements within the Kuomintang (KMT) and thus preserved the strength of the Central Government. Any drastic reform, be it military or political, as suggested by Stilwell would certainly tip that balance. General Albert C. Wedemeyer, who was to succeed Stilwell as the Generalissimo's Chief of Staff and no less critical of the Chinese problems than was Stilwell, described the situation more accurately and with understanding: "Asking China to reform and democratize her government in these circumstances was like telling a man in the midst of a hurricane that he ought to repair and paint his roof."⁶³

Therefore, though he approved Stilwell's program of training Chinese troops in Ramgarh, India, and Kunming, the Generalissimo was unwilling to accept his military reform and reorganization plan. On the other hand, Stilwell was likewise unwilling to back off, for he seriously believed that military reorganization and reform were prerequisites for achieving his goal of retaking Burma. It was probably true, as pointed out by a prominent American historian, that Stilwell fully understood the problem faced by the Generalissimo but he had no patience with the "juggling act" of politics and thus refused to accept the fact that he had only one war to win to recapture Burma while Chiang had several to fight in order to survive.⁶⁴ Stilwell's uncompromising and arrogant attitude later proved to be his own undoing.

By early July 1942, the news of conflicts between Stilwell and the Generalissimo reached Washington. President Roosevelt sent his assistant, Lauchlin Currie, to Chungking to mediate the relations between the two. Currie arrived in Chungking on July 21. During his stay in Chungking Currie engaged in fourteen

⁶³ Wedemeyer, p. 374.

⁶⁴ Paul A. Varg, *The Closing of the Door* (East Lansing, Michigan, 1973), p. 54.

talks with the Generalissimo and half of them concerned Stilwell.⁶⁵ Currie left Chungking on August 7. He reported to Roosevelt and suggested on August 24 that Stilwell be recalled. However, the ever-protective Marshall intervened on Stilwell's behalf. Marshall wrote to Roosevelt on October 16 and emphasized the fact that "Stilwell has spent almost ten years in China," an experience without which it would be utterly helpless for an officer to deal with "Chinese methods, particularly in resistance to Occidental methods." Therefore Marshall recommended that "no action relative to General Stilwell should be taken at this time."⁶⁶

In their discussions with Soong, both Stimson and Marshall stressed that Stilwell was one of the ablest American generals and thus indispensable for the future Burma campaign. Soong transmitted their messages to the Generalissimo. Another event also helped soften Chiang's attitude. In early October the Chinese Government was negotiating for a new equal treaty with the American Government. Stilwell's recall might cause resentment in the United States which would certainly have a detrimental effect on the negotiations.⁶⁷ The Generalissimo agreed that Stilwell could stay and the recall crisis ended.

Between August 1942 and January 1943, relations between Stilwell and the Generalissimo ran rather smoothly. Stilwell flew to and fro between Kunming and Ramgarh where two training schools for Chinese troops were located. According to Stilwell's plan, the campaign in Burma was to begin on March 1, 1943, with five divisions of Chinese, American and the British forces, the so-called X-Force, to attack Mandalay from Assam while another twenty Chinese divisions (Y-Force) were to take Lashio from western Yunnan, and from Mandalay the two Forces were to move south to assault Rangoon. The Chinese assented to the plan. The Generalissimo insisted that unless the British were able to retain both sea and air dominance

⁶⁵ Liang, p. 103.

⁶⁶ The Chief of Staff (Marshall) to President Roosevelt, Washington, October 6, 1942, in *Foreign Relations*, 1942, China, p. 159.

⁶⁷ Liang, p. 108.

of the Bay of Bengal to cut off the enemy's enforcement from Rangoon he would not send any Chinese troops. After a conference with General Sir Archibald Wavell, the Commander-in-Chief of the British forces in India, Stilwell was forced by the British to alter his plan. He agreed that the British divisions of the X-Force should move from Imphal, a geographically better route, while the Chinese forces were to march through the Hukawang and Mogaung Valleys. He failed to get a sea dominance guarantee from Wavell.⁶⁸ The Generalissimo rejected the altered plan and the Burma campaign was postponed.

According to some official American sources, the British were not enthusiastic about the idea of retaking Burma by force. On July 31, 1942, John P. Davies, the Second Secretary of American Embassy, reported with insight from Chungking that:

... the British appear to have no intention of attempting to retake Burma in the foreseeable future. That reason would seem to be a British conviction that no Asiatic possession is worth any appreciable diversion of strength from the British Isles; that the war will be won in Europe; and that lost possessions will at the peace conference revert with clear title to the British if those colonies remain up to the termination of hostilities under enemy occupation, whereas if those possessions are reoccupied with Chinese and American assistance the British title may be compromised.⁶⁹

Davies further indicated that the "galvanization of the British into a counter-offensive against Burma can probably be accomplished by pressure from the highest American source on London."⁷⁰ But Stilwell was unable to persuade either Roosevelt or Marshall to apply that pressure. Though Stilwell confined his irritation with the British to his diary, he openly criticized the Generalissimo with contempt.

⁶⁸ Ibid., pp. 111, 115, 117-8.

⁶⁹ "The China-Burma-India Theater—A Reappraisal," Memorandum by the Second Secretary of Embassy in China (Davies), Chungking, July 31, 1942, *Foreign Relations*, 1942, China, p. 129.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

In mid-January 1943 Roosevelt met with Churchill at Casablanca. At Casablanca it was decided that the Burma campaign was to be reopened in mid-November. The date was to be postponed to February 1944 at the first Quebec Conference between Roosevelt and Churchill. At Casablanca the British and American leaders agreed to establish the Fourteenth Air Force to be led by Brigadier General Claire Chennault. On March 11, 1943, Chennault was appointed commander of the Fourteenth Air Force and promoted to the rank of major general, much to the displeasure of Stilwell and Major General Clayton L. Bissell, commander of the Tenth Air Force and former boss of Chennault.⁷¹ Chennault, a Texan and captain of the U.S. Army's air force, came to China in 1937 after he retired from the Army. When the American Volunteer Group ("the Flying Tigers") was set up in China in August 1941, Generalissimo Chiang appointed Chennault its commander with the rank of colonel. In early 1942 when the AVG was reabsorbed into the U.S. Army, Marshall promised Chiang that Chennault would be the ranking air commander in China. But Marshall failed to keep his word and later, under Stilwell's insistence, Marshall put Chennault under the control of Bissell, who in turn was subordinate to Stilwell. Stilwell, an Infantry man, tended to despise air power and moreover his dislike of Chennault was strengthened by the latter's warm and growing relations with the Generalissimo and Madame Chiang. Both Stilwell and Chennault were seeking support for their respective causes. While the Generalissimo, Madame Chiang, Roosevelt's chief adviser Harry Hopkins, and Currie supported Chennault, Stilwell was fully backed up by Marshall and Stimson. Relations between Stilwell and Chennault further deteriorated at the Trident Conference in Washington (May 12-23, 1943), where they criticized each other in the presence of Roosevelt and Churchill. The feud between the two was to continue until Stilwell's recall in October 1944.

The war cooperation between Washington and Chungking

⁷¹ Liang, pp. 143, 147; Tuchman, pp. 338, 359.

reached a turning point in late November 1943 when the Generalissimo met with Roosevelt and Churchill at Cairo. The Burma campaign was on the agenda. Only after Roosevelt gave his guarantee of a British dominance of the Bay of Bengal and simultaneous coordination of naval action with the land operations did the Generalissimo accept on November 25 the plan presented by Lord Louis Mountbatten, British Commander of the Southeast Asia Command (SEAC).⁷² Within two weeks, after meeting with Churchill and Stalin in Teheran, Roosevelt was to telegraph Chiang, telling him that an amphibious operation was impossible due to the war situation in Europe. Thus Churchill and Roosevelt reneged on their commitment. After Cairo and Teheran, American strategy in Asia changed significantly, which not only saw China's position as the United States's major war partner in Asia diminishing but also the emergence of Soviet Russia. This change was to have a great effect upon Sino-American relations during the rest of the 1940s and the decades to come.

It was also at Cairo that Stilwell got the hint from Roosevelt that inspired him to concoct a plot to assassinate Chiang. At a private meeting on December 6, Roosevelt asked Stilwell: "How long do you think Chiang can last?" To this Stilwell replied: "The situation is serious and a repetition of last May's attack might overturn him." Then Roosevelt continued: "Well, then we should look for some other man or group of men, to carry on."⁷³ Taking this rather casual remark for Roosevelt's approval to eliminate the Generalissimo, Stilwell returned to China and ordered his chief assistant Brig. Gen. Frank Dorn to prepare an assassination plan. Apparently Stilwell delivered a "top-secret verbal order" which he said came directly from Roosevelt. According to Dorn, Stilwell told him that:

The President (Roosevelt) was fed up with Chiang and his tantrums, and said so. In fact, he told me in that Olympian manner of his "if you can't get along with Chiang, and can't replace him, get rid of him once

⁷² Liang, p. 211.

⁷³ *The Stilwell Papers*, p. 252.

and for all. You know what I mean, put in someone you can manage."⁷⁴

Dorn dutifully devised three plans of assassination: (1) poison (2) coup (3) airplane crash. Stilwell selected the "crash" plan and ordered Dorn to make the preparation and wait for final authorization to carry it out. The plan was to sabotage Chiang's aircraft during his flight over the Hump to inspect Chinese troops in India. Both the Generalissimo and Madame Chiang would be provided with faulty parachutes when the passengers were forced to bail out. In the plan, a few American military personnel were also to be killed in order to make it look a real "accident."⁷⁵ However, the final authorization never came.

Despite Dorn's assumption that the "assassination order" came probably from either Roosevelt himself or Hopkins, or from somebody in the War Department, the real culprit has never been identified. However, Stilwell's involvement in the conspiracy was clear enough. This outrageous scheme revealed the unbalanced mentality of some American politicians and military leaders who would do anything to get rid of an ally if he refused to go their way.⁷⁶ The assassination conspiracy of 1943 was to serve as the precedent for what would happen twenty years later in another Asian country. Had the Generalissimo learned about the attempt on his life, Stilwell would certainly have left China long before he did.

Besides the "elimination" idea, to Stilwell, Roosevelt's comment that "we should look for some other man or group of men to carry on" also implied that he would go with "any

⁷⁴ Frank Dorn, *Walkout with Stilwell in Burma* (New York, 1971), pp. 75-9; Liang, p. 230; Kuo, *From Pearl Harbor to Yalta*, p. 337; Michael Schaller, *The U.S. Crusade in China, 1938-1945* (New York, 1979), p. 153.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Stilwell definitely believed that Americans could fare better if Chiang was out of the way. He wrote sometime in July 1944 that "the cure for China's trouble is the elimination of Chiang Kai-shek," see *The Stilwell Papers*, p. 321. Besides Stilwell, William Langdon, American Consul-General in Kunming, also reported on August 1, 1944, that "present trends (in China) can be changed only through the death of Chiang or by successful revolution," see Langdon's report, August 1, 1944, in *Foreign Relations, 1944, China*, pp. 493-7, cited in Tuchman, p. 466.

man or group of men" that Stilwell found cooperative. In Stilwell's eyes almost all political and military leaders within the Kuomintang were corrupt, incompetent, and, many of them, loyal to the Generalissimo. The only alternative seemed to be Chinese Communists who, according to Stilwell, were energetic, revolutionary, with organized forces and seemingly popular with the peasants.

Back in 1936 when he was American military attaché in Peking, Stilwell was already impressed by the "moral support" received by the Chinese Communists. He had made the acquaintance of Communist leader Ho Lung, then commander of the Communist Second Red Army.⁷⁷ He remembered favorably the Communists' 1937 victory over the Japanese at the pass of Pinghsingkwan as well as his meeting with Yeh Chien-ying, the Communist Chief of Staff, a year later.⁷⁸ During the years Stilwell's sympathy with the Chinese Communists had grown stronger. After his humiliation in Burma, Stilwell was particularly moved when he heard that Chou En-lai had said: "I would serve under General Stilwell and I would obey."⁷⁹ On various occasions Stilwell had seriously thought of employing Communist troops whenever he felt his plan to retake Burma obstructed by the Generalissimo.

In June 1943, John Davies, Stilwell's political advisor, suggested in a report to Stilwell that the U.S. Army send a Military Observers Mission to Yen-an, the stronghold of Chinese Communists in the Shensi province. However, the Chinese Government refused to grant the permission for such a visit. Now in January 1944, and after the Cairo Conference, Davies sent another report, probably at the instigation of Stilwell, and it reached Hopkins in the White House. In February, Roosevelt formally asked the Generalissimo for the permission. Chiang complied. Stilwell immediately selected men for the mission and named Colonel David D. Barrett its chief. Nevertheless, the Generalissimo did not grant his final permission until June

⁷⁷ Tuchman, p. 157.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 463.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

when pressed by Vice-President Henry A. Wallace during the latter's visit to Chungking.

Wallace's tour to China in mid-1944 as the personal envoy of Roosevelt was a peculiar mission. Wallace, a pro-Soviet, had made many enemies within the Democratic Party. Knowing that Wallace's presence at the Democratic Convention in July would cause resentment among the delegates and thus embarrassment to him, Roosevelt solved the problem by sending the "gadfly" to China on a fact-finding mission.⁸⁰ Wallace arrived in Chungking via Moscow on June 20. Between June 21-24 Wallace had four long talks with the Generalissimo, whom Wallace found to have "an almost feminine charm."⁸¹ During the conversations Chiang rejected Wallace's notion that the Communists were "agrarian democrats or reformers." The Generalissimo also told Wallace frankly that he "lacked confidence in Stilwell" and the attitude of the American press and military toward his army "had adverse effects on Chinese morale."⁸²

Wallace left Chungking on June 24. Despite the fact that in his report to Roosevelt Wallace made unsympathetic comments on Chiang, he suggested the recall of Stilwell. Wallace's recommendation was blocked by Marshall, who wanted to keep Stilwell in China more than ever because the British were pressuring F.D.R. to move Stilwell out of SEAC.⁸³ Marshall was very agreeable to Stilwell's suggestion that Chiang be stripped of command powers and let him direct the war effort in China with complete freedom. Marshall presented the idea to Roosevelt in early July. However, the President declined

⁸⁰ Tuchman, p. 464; Schaller, p. 160. According to another source, Wallace asked to make the China tour of his own accord, see J. Samuel Walker, *Henry A. Wallace and American Foreign Policy* (Westport, Conn., 1976), p. 104.

⁸¹ Walker, p. 108.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 109. For summary notes of the conversations between Chiang and Wallace made by John Carter Vincent, the Chief of the Division of Chinese Affairs of the State Department who accompanied Wallace to China, see *The China White Paper*, Vol. II, pp. 549-60, Annexes 43 and 44.

⁸³ Tuchman, p. 467. Stilwell could not get along with most of the British military leaders in CBI theater and SEAC, including Wavell and Mountbatten.

to take such a drastic action.⁸⁴ Nevertheless, Roosevelt, pressed by Marshall, had to send a series of messages to the Generalissimo urging him to appoint Stilwell commander of all Chinese forces while at the same time General Chennault and his aide Captain Joseph Alsop were maneuvering, apparently with the blessing of the Generalissimo, to have Stilwell recalled. Stilwell's group of "China experts" now included Davies, John Service, John Emerson and Raymond Ludden. Not realizing their master's days in China were numbered, they fanatically sought support for a coalition between Chungking and Yen-an which would ensure Stilwell's command of Communist forces.⁸⁵

On July 7, 1944, Roosevelt sent a message to the Generalissimo in which the President emphasized:

The critical situation which now exists in my opinion calls for the delegation to one individual of the powers to coordinate all the Allied military resources in China, *including the Communist Forces* [italics mine] . . . I am promoting Stilwell to the rank of full General and I recommend for your most urgent consideration that you recall him from Burma and place him directly under you in the command of all Chinese and American forces, and that you charge him with the full responsibility and authority for the coordination and direction of the operations required to stem the tide of the enemy's forces.⁸⁶

The Generalissimo accepted the proposal in principle but asked that another high-ranking officer be sent to Chungking to discuss the problem. In a message sent on August 10 Roosevelt informed Chiang that he had designated Maj. Gen. Patrick J. Hurley to be his personal envoy to mediate relations be-

⁸⁴ Schaller, pp. 164-6.

⁸⁵ According to David N. Rowe, Professor of Political Science, Emeritus, at Yale University, who had served under Ambassador Clarence Gauss in the American Embassy in Chungking, he "can certify that even as early as the spring of 1942, only shortly after the Pearl Harbor attack, the Embassy in Chungking was a hotbed of anti-Nationalist and pro-Chinese Communist sentiment, beginning even at that early date to show evidence of overt action." See his "The Department White Paper: A Suggested Response," a paper delivered at the Conference on the History of the Republic of China, Taipei, Taiwan, Republic of China, August 23-28, 1981, p. 5.

⁸⁶ *The China White Paper*, Vol. I, p. 66.

tween the Generalissimo and Stilwell. He also proposed that Donald Nelson accompany Hurley to Chungking to deal with lend-lease and economic matters. On August 23 Roosevelt sent another message to Chiang urging Stilwell's appointment.

Hurley and Nelson arrived in Moscow in late August where they carried out discussions with Soviet Foreign Minister Molotov and were informed by him that the Soviet Union would be "glad to see the United States taking the lead economically, politically, and militarily in Chinese affairs."⁸⁷ They met Stilwell in New Delhi on September 2 and the three reached Chungking on 6th. The Generalissimo met them the next day and between September 9-12 a series of discussions were held between Hurley, Nelson, Stilwell, Soong and Ho Ying-ch'in. By September 12 most of the controversial issues between the two sides concerning Stilwell seemed settled and Stilwell was to command all Chinese forces.⁸⁸

Just when a breakthrough in the frozen relations between Chiang and Stilwell was in sight, the situation in China took a drastic change. In early September Japanese troops in East China broke through the Chuanhsien pass and were moving toward Kwangsi, threatening the American air base in Kweilin, while at the same time Japanese forces in northern Burma also moved south to attack Lungling in Yunnan on September 15th. The Generalissimo demanded that the Chinese divisions at Myitkyina (X-Force) move south to attack Bhamo in order to relieve Lungling. Stilwell refused on the ground that the troops needed rest. Stilwell's objection infuriated Chiang.⁸⁹

On his way back to Kweilin, Stilwell telegraphed Marshall, who was then accompanying Roosevelt to the Second Quebec Conference, informing that Chiang was threatening to withdraw Chinese troops from Burma. Stilwell also complained that the Generalissimo had not yet placed all Chinese forces under his direct control. Marshall persuaded Roosevelt to send

⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 72.

⁸⁸ *The Stilwell Papers*, p. 328; Liang, p. 321.

⁸⁹ Liang, p. 323; Tuchman, p. 483.

a telegram to Chiang on September 16. The tone of the message was so stern that it was unfit to be the message of the head of state of one country to another. In the telegram, Roosevelt warned the Generalissimo:

... if you do not provide manpower for your Divisions in North Burma, if you fail to send reinforcements to the Salween forces and withdraw these armies, we will lose all chance of opening land communications with China and immediately jeopardize the air route over the hump. For this you must yourself be prepared to accept the consequences and assume the personal responsibility.

I have urged time and again in recent months that you take drastic action to resist the disaster which has been moving closer to China and to you. Now, when you have not yet placed General Stilwell in command of all forces in China, we are faced with the loss of a critical area in East China with possible catastrophic consequences.

... I am certain that the only thing you can now do in an attempt to prevent the Jap from achieving his objectives in China is to reinforce your Salween armies immediately and press their offensive, while at once placing General Stilwell in unrestricted command of all your forces. The action I am asking you to take will fortify us in our decision and in the continued efforts the United States proposes to take to maintain and increase our aid to you.⁹⁰

Receiving Roosevelt's telegram on September 19, Stilwell was overjoyed and ordered it to be translated into Chinese immediately. He delivered it in person to Chiang on the same day. According to Chinese account, when Stilwell reached the Generalissimo's summer residence on Huang Shan (Yellow Mountain) to deliver the message, Hurley, Soong and Ho were also there and the Generalissimo was just about to make the official announcement of Stilwell's appointment. Hurley asked Stilwell to disregard the message since Chiang already gave consent to his appointment. Stilwell, who was eager to see that Chiang be insulted, insisted on delivering the message in person as instructed by Marshall.⁹¹ So Stilwell delivered the message and took his revenge, without realizing that his fate of recall was also sealed.

⁹⁰ For text of the telegram, see *Foreign Relations, The Conference at Quebec, 1944*, pp. 464-6.

⁹¹ Liang, p. 327; Kuo, *From Pearl Harbor to Yalta*, p. 509.

Stilwell revealed his deep satisfaction for having a chance to humiliate the Generalissimo in the following words: "I handed this bundle of paprika to the Peanut [Chiang] and then sank back with a sigh. The harpoon hit the little bugger right in the solar plexus, and went right through him."⁹² Two days later, in a letter to his wife back in America, Stilwell put down a sarcastic poem to celebrate his achievement:

I've waited long for vengeance —
At last I've had my chance.
I've looked the Peanut in the eye
And kicked him in the pants.

The old harpoon was ready
With aim and timing true,
I sank it to the handle,
And stung him through and through.

The little bastard shivered,
And lost the power of speech.
His face turned green and quivered
As he struggled not to screech.

For all weary battles,
For all my hours of woe,
At last I've had my innings
And laid the Peanut low.

I know I've still to suffer,
And run a weary race,
But oh! the blessed pleasure!
I've wrecked the Peanut's face.⁹³

Between September 22-26, Stilwell sent two more reports to Marshall accusing Chiang of having "no intention of making further efforts to prosecute the war." These messages proved to be of no more importance since the die was already cast. On September 25, 1944, the Generalissimo formally asked Roosevelt to recall Stilwell from China. Between September 25 and October 12, Hurley attempted to persuade Chiang to change his decision and even Stilwell was willing to make concessions. The Generalissimo, however, would not budge.

⁹² *The Stilwell Papers*, p. 333.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 334.

On October 1, Stilwell sensed that the end was near and wrote to his wife: "It looks very much as though they had gotten me at last... Roosevelt has apparently let me down completely." Hurley telegraphed Roosevelt on October 13 and recommended that Stilwell be recalled.

Roosevelt finally made the decision to recall Stilwell on October 19 and appointed General Wedemeyer to replace him. Stilwell, warned in advance by a radio message from Marshall, marked the day with capital letters: "THE AXE FALLS." Stilwell was to leave Chungking within forty-eight hours. For his own good, Marshall ordered Stilwell to depart secretly lest his outspokenness cost him a major assignment elsewhere later. Before leaving Chungking Stilwell paid a farewell call on Mme. Sun Yat-sen, who was well known for her Communist leanings, and wrote a letter to Chu Teh in Yen-an expressing his "keen disappointment" that he was not able to fight against Japanese along with Chu and his excellent troops.⁹⁴

On October 20, Stilwell turned down the Generalissimo's offer of the the Special Grand Cordon of the Blue Sky and White Sun, the highest Chinese decoration.⁹⁵ Stilwell left Chungking on October 21, 1944, in a rage without leaving Wedemeyer, his successor, any information about his assignment.⁹⁶ He returned to the United States via New Delhi where he met with his old associates and subordinates and held a press conference of several hours' duration. Stilwell arrived in Washington on November 2 and the extraordinary precaution taken by Marshall to prevent him from talking to the press only deepened his hatred toward the Generalissimo. He finally returned to his home at Carmel, California on November 6. A Chinese tribute came in late January 1945 when the Ledo Road was named after him by the Generalissimo in memory of

⁹⁴ Tuchman, p. 503; *The Stilwell Papers*, p. 346.

⁹⁵ Tuchman, pp. 503-4; *The Stilwell Papers*, p. 346.

⁹⁶ Wedemeyer, p. 304. According to Wedemeyer, when he arrived in China he was confident that there would be a memorandum from Stilwell informing him about the main problems in the area. "But," Wedemeyer said, "there was nothing whatsoever, no message wishing me good luck, or go to hell, or anything else."

his "distinctive contribution and of the signal part which the Allied and Chinese forces under his direction played in the Burma campaign and in the building of the road."⁹⁷

In January 1945 Stilwell was appointed commander of the Sixth Army under MacArthur. He attended the surrender ceremony on board of the *Missouri* on September 2 and himself presided at the surrender in Ryukyu five days later. On his way back to the United States in late September he asked for permission to go to Peking to visit some old friends. The Generalissimo turned down the request on the ground that the situation in Peking was confusing due to the presence of both Communist and Japanese troops, and promised a formal invitation would be extended to Stilwell when the situation warranted. Stilwell returned to the United States on October 18. Commenting on the refusal of permission, Stilwell said: "Maybe CKS thinks I would start a revolution.... I would like to do just that." However, he was not to see China, to say nothing of a revolution led by him. He died on October 12, 1946 of stomach cancer. Thus ended the military career of a soldier.

Stilwell's mission to China failed, rather tragically. What caused it? Some American journalists, like Brooks Atkinson and Theodore H. White, who went to China to cover Stilwell's story, tended to blame the Generalissimo for the failure. Historians like Paul A. Varg were more objective in their treatment but nonetheless failed to provide much insight. In search for real reasons for Stilwell's failure in China, Barbara Tuchman, the sympathetic biographer of Stilwell, was not far from the truth when she wrote:

The recall was the inevitable outcome of the assumption, growing out of China's dependence and passivity, that an American solution could be imposed on China. Responsibility lay with Marshall for initiating the attempt, with Roosevelt for authorizing it and with Stilwell himself for agreeing to and promoting it. At a deeper level was the incompatibility, superficially of two men, fundamentally of two purposes.⁹⁷

Factors contributing to Stilwell's failure in China are prob-

⁹⁷ Tuchman, p. 511.

⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 502.

ably more complicated. To be specific, the following factors all played a significant role and in this order:

(1) some of the Allied decision-makers such as Churchill and Marshall were neglecting the strategic importance of China and therefore had no intention to provide her with substantial support and treat her as an equal. Roosevelt, though more sympathetic toward China and the Generalissimo, was unable to change the attitude of both Churchill and Marshall, particularly the latter, who was in charge of the execution of war plan in the CBI theater. Being unable to bring in substantial aid, Stilwell lacked leverage to induce the Generalissimo to go his way.

(2) Stilwell's mission was jeopardized by the conflict of personality between him and the Generalissimo and for this Stilwell himself was mainly responsible. Stilwell's mission as Chief of Staff to the Generalissimo required both gallantry of a soldier and tactics of a diplomat. Gallantry he had enough yet he was dreadfully short of tactics. Both Chiang and Stilwell were military men with strong personalities. While the Generalissimo accorded due courtesy to him as a guest, Stilwell, being egoistic, made no effort to conceal his contempt toward his host. He started referring to Chiang as "Peanut" in his diary and private letters even before he met the Generalissimo. In his China diary, particularly since the "Walkout of Burma," Stilwell persistently referred to the Generalissimo as "stupid little ass, little jackass, rattlesnake, little squirt, insect, stink in the nostrils, slippery little bastard, and unbalanced man with little education" and those Chinese political and military leaders around him were just a "gang of thugs."⁹⁹

Of course, the Generalissimo did make mistakes. But accusations as made by Stilwell were totally unjustified and biased and were to be repudiated by his successor General

⁹⁹ *The Stilwell Papers*, pp. 115, 148, 190, 209, 210, 310, and 320. General Wedemeyer recalled the description of the Generalissimo as "'coolie class,' prone to 'tantrums,' and 'incompetent,'" by Stilwell in Marshall's office in May 1943. See *Wedemeyer Reports*!, p. 269.

Wedemeyer. In a lecture at the National War College on November 18, 1946, Wedemeyer told his American audience:

In my two years of close contact with Chiang Kai-shek I had become convinced that he personally was a straightforward, selfless leader, keenly interested in the welfare of his people, and desirous of establishing a constitutional government according to the precepts of Sun Yat-sen. This was obviously impossible so long as China was fighting the Japanese and then the Communists backed by Soviet Russia. "One man alone cannot solve the complexities of China."¹⁰⁰

Wedemeyer, however, also pointed out frankly that:

Chiang Kai-shek's gravest weakness, it seemed to me, was his loyalty to friends and old supporters. Among his coterie of advisers there were both unscrupulous and incompetent men.... He had alienated some of the best and most able men in China by his refusal to jettison the cliques around him.¹⁰¹

Besides Chiang and his associates, some of the high-ranking British commanders in the CBI theater, such as Wavell and Mountbatten, also found themselves victims of Stilwell's abusive comments. Even the President could not escape his sarcasm. Some of Stilwell's closest aides found it difficult to work with him because of his abusive and unreasonable attitude.¹⁰² Stilwell could not get along with all these men and their cooperation was essential to the success of his mission. Probably just as his protector Marshall said of him, Stilwell was "his own worst enemy" for making no effort to conceal his contempt toward both the Chinese and the British.¹⁰³

(3) Despite the fact that he had spent almost ten years in China before taking up the 1942 mission, an experience much acclaimed by himself and those in the War Department,

¹⁰⁰ Wedemeyer, p. 373.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 373-4.

¹⁰² Varg, pp. 141-2. According to Varg, after the publication of Tuchman's book on Stilwell, General Haydon Boatner wrote a paper in which he criticized that Stilwell put on acts for the press, abused his subordinates when things went wrong even though the mishaps were a product of his own errors, that he neglected his staff work, and that he made serious mistakes in judgment. See Varg, p. 160, note 11.

¹⁰³ Tuchman, 425.

Stilwell's knowledge of China and her people was superficial and stereotyped. From the Chinese point of view, the three decades between 1911-1941, during which Stilwell had made his four tours to China, were decades of turmoil. During these years Chinese and foreigners in China had seen first the overthrow of the Manchu Empire in the revolution led by Dr. Sun Yat-sen, then the imperial fiasco of Yuan Shih-k'ai, the alliance and betrayal among Northern Warlords, the scramble for "spheres of influence" in China by Western imperialists and Japan, and finally the war against Japan. All these happened in thirty years. Thus what Stilwell had witnessed during his ten years in China were: turbulence, war, poverty, ignorance, destruction, humiliation, suffering, blood and tears shed by millions of Chinese. He attributed all these to the corruption and incompetency on the part of Chinese leaders, without realizing that many foreigners like himself were also responsible. Though sympathetic, Stilwell perceived China basically as a "White Man's Burden." Thus, instead of being an asset, Stilwell's experience in China became a liability, impeding his last mission to China in the 1940s.

(4) Stilwell's naive perception of Chinese Communists proved to be his undoing. He considered the Communist movement in China a "revolution" carried out by agrarian reformers to overthrow a "corrupt and totalitarian regime," just like the one he witnessed in 1911. Disillusioned with the Kuomintang, Stilwell believed that the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) was not only better but was also the only hope for China. In a short note written somewhere before his recall, Stilwell compared KMT and the CCP:

[KMT] Corruption, neglect, chaos, economy, taxes, words. Hoarding, black market, trading with the enemy.

Communist program... reduce taxes, rents, interest. Raise production, and standard of living. Participate in government. Practice what they preach.¹⁰⁴

Referring to the Generalissimo's worries about the spread of

¹⁰⁴ *The Stilwell Papers*, p. 316.

Communist influence, Stilwell wrote in another place: "He can't see that the mass of Chinese people welcome the Reds as being the only visible hope of relief from crushing taxation, the abuses of the Army and Tai Li's Gestapo."¹⁰⁵

Based on this illusion Stilwell formulated, with the assistance of his political advisers, the coalition plan between the two parties and sold it to Marshall and Roosevelt who in turn forced the Generalissimo to accept. With no other choice, the Generalissimo had to let Stilwell go. One prominent American scholar put it more bluntly: "Stilwell's proposals in China were the product of both himself and Marshall, and Marshall had never forgiven Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek for adamantly refusing to go along with them."¹⁰⁶ On Stilwell's ignorance of Communists, Wedemeyer commented in 1943:

Until now I had regarded Stilwell as a romantic fighting man, and the best-informed U.S. officer on China. It would be a long while before I finally pierced his legend to discover his gullibility concerning the Communists and his prejudiced view of Chiang Kai-shek and the Nationalist Government of China, whose problems he never seemed to understand.¹⁰⁷

(5) Marshall's indulgence increased Stilwell's arrogance and stubbornness. Like a spoiled child, Stilwell knew that he could always count on Marshall's protection and thus he didn't need to behave. In retrospect, it is fair to say that while Marshall's support facilitated Stilwell's rapid promotion in the Army, his indulgence eventually jeopardized Stilwell's China mission and shortened an otherwise brilliant career.

(6) The Generalissimo himself also made a mistake by not enlightening Stilwell on Soviet intentions in China and the real characteristics of Chinese Communists soon enough when Stilwell arrived in Chungking. Had he done that, though its effect would still be in doubt, Stilwell might have been aware of the scheme that his pro-Communist advisers led him into. The Generalissimo himself would admit the mistake twelve

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 317.

¹⁰⁶ Rowe, pp. 15-6.

¹⁰⁷ Wedemeyer, p. 197.

years after Stilwell left China:

When General Stilwell first came to China I should have confided in him all the facts about Soviet Russia's intrigues and her real aims in China's revolution and in the war. He might have had a better understanding of the situation and then taken appropriate precautionary measures. I regretted very much that I did not do this, but I thought he had just come to China and we had not had time to build up a relationship of mutual trust between us. On this point it might be said that I made a mistake. To this day my heart still aches over this unfortunate affair.¹⁰⁸

We may say that Stilwell's mission to China between 1942-1944 ended with tragic consequences. Stilwell was a brilliant soldier but he was not the suitable candidate for the China mission because of his personality and his stereotyped conception of China and her people. Had he been assigned to Europe Stilwell might have become a Patton or Eisenhower, given his ability and connections with Marshall. Yet Marshall sent the wrong man to the wrong place and ended an otherwise brilliant military career rather tragically.

Moreover, Marshall never forgave the Generalissimo for the recall of Stilwell and he carried the bitterness and bias with him when he arrived in China in December 1945 to mediate the conflict between the KMT and the CCP. Stilwell's death on October 12, 1946, while Marshall was in China, must have increased his grudge against the Generalissimo and his government, which in turn prevented him from being an impartial mediator. Thus the mediation failed and the enraged Marshall returned to the United States to become Secretary of State. He later would cut off both economic and military aid to the Generalissimo's government. It is conceivable that it might well have been in revenge for failures suffered by Stilwell and himself. For Marshall's mistakes and Stilwell's, the Chinese people paid a heavy price—the communization of China and the enslavement of hundreds of millions of her people.

To conclude this paper, I think it is appropriate to quote

¹⁰⁸ Chiang Kai-shek, *Soviet Russia in China* (New York, 1957), an English translation made under the direction of Madame Chiang, p. 118.

here a paragraph by a senior American officer. Colonel Linton, an able and perceptive officer serving in the Education Department of General Wedemeyer's headquarters in China, wrote in 1945 in *Stars and Stripes*:

It is almost tragic that American soldiers have eyes and do not see, ears and do not hear, minds and do not understand. They see the poverty, the filth, and humanity serving as beasts of burden, but they do not see how all these things are inherent in the history of a great nation struggling to emerge from the days of handicraft to the day of modern technology. They hear a strange language, but they do not hear the voice of a people singing faith and hope for its future. Their minds tell them that China is different, very different from the life they know, but they do not understand that, like ourselves and like all peoples, China must begin today from where she is.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁹ Wedemeyer, p. 378.

史迪威使華任務失敗之評析

魏 良 才

摘 要

民國三十年（一九四一）十二月七日，日本偷襲珍珠港，太平洋戰爭爆發，中、美、英共同對日作戰。爲促成盟國軍事合作，羅斯福與邱吉爾決定成立中國戰區，並敦請蔣委員長擔任最高統帥、委員長應允並請美方派遣高級將領來華出任中國戰區參謀長，此爲史迪威使華任務之緣起。

史迪威於三十一年（一九四二）三月初抵達重慶，晉謁委員長後即赴緬甸督導國軍作戰。緬甸之役，由於英軍鬪志盡失，國軍裝補欠缺而遭致挫敗，國軍傷亡慘重，史迪威於勢危之際率百餘人，潛遁印度，而置國軍安危於不顧。緬甸之敗，史氏引爲個人奇恥大辱，並歸咎於委員長掣肘及國軍將領之不服命令。史氏在其個人日記、書信及致軍部之文件中對委員長及中國軍政領袖，多所指責，自是間隙遂生。

其後，史迪威爲雪其緬敗之恥，屢次透過馬歇爾及羅斯福，強迫中國政府接受其重編與改革國軍以及容共之計劃，並謀求掌握對所有國軍之控制權。開羅會議之後，史迪威更暗中佈下圖害委員長之陰謀，計雖未行，但其仇恨心態已昭然若揭。委員長在忍無可忍之下，乃於民國三十三年（一九四四）九月請羅斯福將其召回。史迪威使華任務之失敗，令其長官兼至友之馬歇爾對委員長及中國政府深感不滿。其後馬歇爾來華調停國共之爭時，其態度偏私不公，史迪威之使華失敗，實爲主因。

本文之目的即在探討史迪威個人背景，使華緣起，任務失敗之主要原因及對其後中美關係發展之影響。