

# Peking story (American prisoners in China) - correspondence, letters and ca...

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Dag Hammarskjöld's samtl.

Peking story

18 Jan. 1955

- a.) Press conference by Secretary of State Dulles (USA)  
conc. D.H.'s mission to China
- b.) Personal Note for D.H. (from Wilder Foote)
- c.) Note to correspondents (from U.S. Mission to the U.N.)

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

January 18, 1955

FOR THE PRESS

HAMMARSKJOLD MISSION

At his news conference today, Secretary of State Dulles was asked a series of questions relating to the efforts of Secretary General Dag Hammarskjold to obtain the release of UN Command personnel jailed in Red China. These questions followed this statement by Secretary Dulles:

I have one item of possible interest to report before you put your questions. I have asked Secretary General Hammarskjold to come to Washington to talk with me and he and probably Ambassador Lodge will be here tomorrow morning. I want to have a direct first-hand report from him as to just what took place.

Asked whether the meeting with Mr. Hammarskjold implied doubt on the part of Mr. Dulles that the efforts taken so far have been effective and whether the Secretary was seeking to find whether there was any hope of success, Mr. Dulles replied:

No, I am doing it because I feel that we owe a duty to the families of the prisoners to get all the information we can. I want to get it first-hand for my own guidance and to inform the families. I think it is only right that I should deal with it first-hand and I will probably be able also to explain to Mr. Hammarskjold the problems which we face here in this country in maintaining a position of standing aside to let the United Nations try to work this problem out. I don't think that can go on for ever.

Asked what the basis of his judgement was as to whether the mission is or will be a success or failure, Secretary Dulles replied:

The mission will be a success when our wrongly imprisoned fliers are back in the United States. It will not be a success until then.

Asked whether independent efforts would be made to obtain the release of the two civilians who received prisoner sentences at the same time as the fliers since they did not come under the purview of the Hammarskjold mission, the Secretary replied:

Yes, we are very much concerned about them and with the very considerable number of civilians that are improperly detained by the Chinese communists. There is quite a large group of them, forty or fifty or thereabouts. We did get a few of them out and we intend to continue to try to get them all out.

Asked whether there would be any inclination on the part of the State Department not to press for ratification of the Formosa Treaty during the period of UN effort to release the fliers, Secretary Dulles replied:

We expect to continue to request the Foreign Relations Committee and the Senate to proceed rapidly to consider, and we hope to consent to, ratification of that treaty. I believe it is planned to have initial hearings on the treaty probably next week.

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(Excerpt from Q + A)

Q. Mr. Secretary, Senator Knowland has been quoted in reports this morning as quoting the Hammarskjold mission a failure. Do you share that view in any degree?

A. I think it is premature to pass any final judgment upon the efforts being made by the United Nations. At this particular stage you can neither call it a success nor a failure.

Q. Mr. Secretary, the other day Ambassador Lodge at the airport said he was quite confident the fliers would be released. Doesn't that indicate he thinks the mission was a success?

A. I doubt whether he would consider it as a success until our prisoners are actually home.

Q. Mr. Secretary, has Senator Knowland had any conversations with you before he made this speech yesterday on this subject?

A. Yes, Senator Knowland talked with me on Saturday afternoon.

Q. Mr. Secretary, do you know of any so-called mass of propaganda built up within the UN which might be intended to obscure a judgment on the Hammarskjold mission at this time? I am quoting from Senator Knowland, I believe.

A. I don't want to pass upon anybody else's remarks without seeing them in their context because it is difficult to judge an isolated statement, but I would say in general that I am not conscious myself of any particular propaganda efforts being conducted from the UN.

Q. Mr. Secretary, do you feel that the imprisonment by the Chinese of these American airmen is an effort to locate and put pressure upon the allergic point in the American emotions in an effort to achieve Chinese entry into the UN?

A. I doubt very much whether the Chinese communists are so stupid as to think that this is the way to get in the UN. I think on the contrary all it is doing is creating a further impediment toward their getting into the UN.

Q. Mr. Secretary, have you had any reports this morning on the Chinese communist effort to take one of the offshore islands from the Nationalists, whether it appears to be successful?

A. I have had <sup>some</sup> reports about the fighting which is rather severe apparently around the island of I-Kiang, an island which lies I believe about eight miles to the north of the Tachen Islands.

Q. Mr. Secretary, Mr. Robertson made a speech last Friday night in which he went to great length to excoriate the Chinese communists. Can you tell us whether you read and approved that speech and whether that represents the State Department's present attitude?

A. I had not personally read the speech before it was delivered. I have read it since and I can say that all he says is in my opinion a reflection of the State Department attitude. Much of what he says is the same thing that I have said myself earlier.

Q. Sir, how important are the Tachen Islands to us?

A. I would not say that the Tachen Islands are in any sense essential to the defense of Formosa and the Pescadores which we do regard as vital to us.

Q. Are they useful in the defense of those places?

A. Well, that would call for a better military judgment than I would want to try to express as a civilian. There is I believe on the island a radar point which is perhaps of some utility in picking up possible air attacks against Formosa. It lies about 200 miles north of Formosa but whether they could pick it up more quickly there and get word to Formosa in advance of the detection of it by radar on Formosa, I wouldn't know.

Q. Does it have any value to our position on Okinawa?

A. No.

Q. Does that comment cover the island that is currently under attack? I am not sure whether it is considered one of the Tachen group or not.

A. No, it is not one of the Tachen group. It is part of a group of islands several of which passed actually from the Nationalist to communist hands last May. There is a little group of four or five islands there and most of them were taken over by the communists last May. It didn't attract any particular attention at that time. Since then public opinion has been focused more on these islands than was the case last May, but the island itself is without any particular importance. It is subject to artillery fire from some of these islands that were taken over last May and was not held by any regular forces of the Republic of China.

Q. Mr. Secretary, would you go back to my original question -- do you think that the Chinese are holding these 11 airmen in the hope of trading with the United States, trading for some benefits the Chinese want?

A. I don't think so. Let me just correct one point. You talk about the 11. I think it is a pity to talk about 11. Actually there were 15 that were covered. You see, there were 11 from one plane and 4 pilots of jet planes that were shot down. I wouldn't want to forget those four because their holding is fully as indefensible as the holding of the 11. They are all covered by the Korean Armistice Agreement. It is hard to fathom what was in their minds but I would doubt very much

that they were holding them and condemned them for purposes of bargaining. I think they more likely did it for propaganda reasons to try through forced confessions and the like to indicate to their people that we had been invading what they would call their own territory outside of the area of Korea. Probably if you were going to have to guess, I would say they were doing it more for entirely propaganda purposes than for external bargaining purposes. That is necessarily speculative.

Q. Don't you think they realize the enormous arousing effect that the retention would have on the American people, on the rest of the world, that it was rather a high price to pay for values they might derive in propaganda gain?

A. I think they miscalculated but people often do miscalculate, particularly if they don't have a very acute understanding of psychology of the American people.

Q. Will further communication on the subject of the American airmen be conducted through the UN?

A. At this stage we are relying on the UN and we are standing by as a nation, except as we participate in the UN action. Our point of view is quite clear. These people were under UN command, fighting a UN war and it is up to the UN to try to get them out. Now, if they fail and can't get them out, then we will have to deal with the matter ourselves, but as long as there is a reasonable hope in the UN action we are going to give them a chance to do what they can and we certainly hope that they will succeed.

Q. Mr. Secretary, did I understand you correctly to say that the Tachen Islands were not essential to the defense of Formosa and the Pescadores?

A. I didn't put it as flatly as that. I put it that it was a matter for military judgment. My own information is that the only relation that it has to the defense of Formosa and the Pescadores is that there is a radar station on the island and whether or not that radar station can usefully pick up a possible air attack against Formosa and relay knowledge of that to Formosa before that air attack could be detected by the radar on Formosa itself, that is something that I do not have any precise knowledge of. I would say the relationship to the defense of Formosa was at most marginal.

Q. Mr. Secretary, in connection with that treaty some people have raised the point that from their point of view that this treaty would turn the conflict between Nationalist China and Communist China into a civil war in terms of international law and that this might inhibit our ability to obtain allies if we become involved in conflict under it with the communists. Could you tell us your opinion on that point?

A. I feel that when the United States has a treaty position in relation to these islands such ~~is~~ that an attack on the islands would involve the United States, that that creates the clearest possible picture of an international conflict. If fighting between the Chinese communists and the United States is not international, then I do not know what it is.

Q. Mr. Secretary, in London yesterday, Sir Anthony Eden made quite a statement warning Red China to be a little quiet. I wonder if you can comment on this and tell us whether you knew he was going to make such a warning and what you think the reason for such a warning is at this time, why it comes at this time?

A. I had no advance knowledge of what Mr. Eden was going to say. I do know from prior talks I have had with him that he like many others are gravely concerned at the continuing evidence of military aggressive qualities that are being displayed by the Chinese communists. In this offshore island area that we have been talking about, the situation has been virtually quiescent for approximately five years until last spring, I guess it was, when the Chinese communists started up actively fighting in the area. That came shortly following the conclusion of the intensified fighting in Indochina. That intensified fighting in turn came following the fighting in Korea. So that there is a sequence of belligerency and aggressiveness which is evidenced there which I know is causing concern to all countries which are desirous of seeing peace in that part of the world.

Q. Sir, would a cease fire be a desirable thing in that situation between the Chinese Nationalists and the Chinese Communists in the Formosa Straits?

A. That is a possibility which has many pros and cons. I think in general the United States is sympathetic toward the solution of problems by peaceful means and not by means of warfare and fighting; and we are, of course, committed by the United Nations Charter to seek the peaceful settlement of contraversies which might otherwise mean the use of force and violence. So something of that sort would be in general line with the broad policies which the United States has and to which it is committed by the United Nations. But the working out of these things is not as simple as it is to establish the principle. There are a good many factors to be taken into account, including the point of view of our allies who have been loyal to us for a good many years. I refer to the national forces of the Republic of China. The United States would not want to move in this matter without the utmost consideration of their point of view.

Q. Would you have any objection to the United Nations attempting to negotiate such a cease fire?

A. I don't think we could object if they wanted to move into this somewhat troubled situation.

Q. Mr. Secretary, when you said that something of the sort would be in line with U. S. and U.N. policy, were you referring to the cease fire?

A. Yes, that was the question then.

Q. Mr. Secretary, has any move you know of been made toward seeking a cease fire in the Formosa Straits?

A. I know of no such move.

Q. Mr. Secretary, on that point, would it be fair to summarize our position by saying that the United States would not oppose such a move but will not initiate such a move?

A. I would rather not predict anything in the future. We have not initiated any such move. That is obvious, and we would not initiate any such move except after consultation with our allies in that area of the world. On the other hand, we would never, I think, object to the invoking of the normal procedures of the United Nations to which we are committed by treaty.

Q. Will the United States be agreeable to <sup>resuming</sup> ~~assuming~~ bilateral negotiations at Geneva on the question of the fliers and the Chinese situation?

A. I think I made the position clear that at the present time as far as these people who were serving under the United Nations, and any free men, we are standing outside and letting the United Nations assume responsibility.

They have undertaken to try to get these fliers back and we will give them a fair chance to get them back. So, while they are working on the matter, we don't intend to possibly cross them up by getting into it independently.

Q. Is there any light you can throw for us on the status of the two civilians who the President said were in a different category than the fliers?

A. All I can say is that they were civilians. They were not under the United Nations Command and therefore they are not within the compass of the United Nations action.

Q. In other words, do we know how they got into Chinese hands?

A. My recollection is that they were on a plane that was shot down, but I am not certain about that.

Q. Mr. Secretary, since they are not under the jurisdiction of the United Nations and not involved in Hammarskjold's discussions, will we independently and individually try to do something to save them?

A. Yes, we are very much concerned about them and with the very considerable number of civilians that are improperly detained by the Chinese Communists. There is quite a large group of them, forty or fifty or thereabouts. We did get a few of them out and we intend to continue to try to get them all out.

Q. Mr. Secretary, several weeks ago there was a lot of discussion in various quarters in Washington about a special aid effort for Asia and not communist Asia. There does not seem to be a provision in the budget or mention in the State of the Union message about any additional special effort in that area other than what we have been doing. Can you tell us what has happened to that idea?

A. Well I would say this: There has been a rather unjustifiable view as to what we had in mind doing. I can recall that at most of our recent press conferences I have tried to warn that nothing was in contemplation comparable to the Marshall Plan. But there has persisted nevertheless a general idea in many quarters that there was in contemplation some very massive aid program. I have done my best to try to puncture that idea, but without complete success.

I can recall I have said many many times here nothing like the Marshall Plan was in contemplation; that the area was totally different from Europe; Europe was an industrialized area where the people knew how to use factories and tools and it was just a question of rebuilding a machine that had existed. I pointed out in Asia you are starting from scratch where there is no industrialization and people don't know how to use tools, and where it is only possible to proceed very slowly. It does not mean we are not going to proceed. We are. But it does mean that the dollar figure on it does not emerge as conspicuous and the <sup>course</sup> ~~use~~ of the budget which deals in terms of billions and

hundreds of millions and where anything else than that seems to drop out of sight. We do intend to proceed in an orderly way. There is nothing vastly different from what we had been doing, but there will be somewhat more emphasis thereupon trying to develop the economies of these countries.

We have been providing very materially for some years now toward the so-called five-year plan in India, which is their program for moving into a greater industrialized area. We are contributing, I think, this year between \$80 and 90 million to that. And we have our economic programs for many of these countries.

We are working now with the so-called Colombo Plan where there is a whole series of projects that have been kept out as possible. These are taken on a bilateral basis between the different countries that are associated with that program. These things will go forward but they will not go forward in any great spectacular way, particularly in terms of the dollar figure on them.

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Personal Note for the Secretary-General:

1. If Secretary Dulles brings up Tom Hamilton's story again, I was not sure whether I had told you that in addition to yours and Mr. Cordier's work, Matt Gordon called all the major wire agencies and persuaded them not to pick up or use in any way the first edition story, *or the later revision.*

2. We have not been given any information yet by the U.S. Mission, nor did they seem to have any from the State Department, as to how and when information on the health reports, etc., is being released in Washington. The U.S. Mission has promised to tell us when they know. But I got the impression that the release might be delayed until Thursday or Friday.

3. You are likely to run into heavy press and picture pressure at the State Department and certainly at the White House if you go there. It would, I think, simplify matters for you if you agreed with Mr. Dulles as to what should be said. *Something obvious would be much better than nothing.*

18 Jan., 1955

Wilder Foote

P.S. - Here is the transcript just arrived from the U.S. mission on the Chinese parts of Dulles' press conference. *WF 5:30pm*

## UNITED STATES MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

2 PARK AVENUE  
NEW YORK 16, N. Y.

MURRAY HILL 3-6810

### NOTE TO CORRESPONDENTS

January 19, 1955

The following is the text of a statement by ~~Secretary of State Dulles~~ issued by the Press Office of the State Department, following ~~Secretary of State Dulles' meeting today with United Nations Secretary of State Dulles' meeting today with United Nations Secretary General Dag Hammarskjold:~~

Secretary of State Dulles, Ambassador Lodge and Assistant Secretary Robertson met with the United Nations Secretary General Mr. Hammarskjold and the United Nations Under Secretary Mr. Bokhari. They conferred for about an hour and one half. Mr. Hammarskjold gave Secretary Dulles a detailed report of the conversations that he had had in Peiping in pursuance of his mandate from the United Nations to make continuing and unremitting efforts to effect the release of captured personnel of the United Nations Command detained by the Chinese Communist regime in violation of the terms of the Korean armistice.

The Secretary General gave a full account of the information and views that had been exchanged at Peiping on the question of the United Nations Command prisoners and expressed the hope that given restraint on all sides it will be possible to effect their release. In the meantime he had made inquiries and received assurances regarding the well being of the prisoners and he has transmitted this information to the Secretary of State. This will be transmitted in turn to the families by the United States Defense Department.

Secretary Dulles expressed on behalf of the President and himself their appreciation of the painstaking efforts which had been made and their hope that the United Nations would persist effectively in the course upon which it had embarked pursuant to the United Nations General Assembly resolution of last December. Secretary Dulles pointed out that there was in the United States a strong sentiment in favor of direct action but that it was the policy of the President for the time being to leave the handling of this matter insofar as it was covered by the United Nations resolution to the United Nations itself, and to abstain from direct intervention which might embarrass the activities and efforts of the United Nations itself. The Secretary did however point out that the United States Government and indeed the entire American people were strongly aroused by the unlawful imprisonment of United States citizens and that they awaited with eagerness and anxiety the further developments in this matter.

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