

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

*HS L 179:81*



Dag Hammarskjöld's saul.

Peking story - 1955

27-28 Jan.

Dulles, John Foster (Secy of State, USA)

- 1 letter to D.H.
- 1 letter from D.H.
- 1 letter issued by U.S. Dept. of State sent to D.H. by C.S. Babcock

Mr. John Foster Dulles,  
Secretary of State,  
Washington, D.C.

27 January 1955

My dear Mr. Secretary,

I wish to thank you for our talk last week. I feel that it was useful to have had this off-the-cuff report on the Peking talks on the table, although the limited time at our disposal made it impossible to analyze what had been said in such detail as it seems to merit. I regret especially that time did not suffice for an exchange of views of my ideas concerning the next steps or for a discussion of our relationship in this matter as a basis for the necessary co-operation in the follow-up, from my side, of the negotiations.

The weakness represented by the fact that we have not had such a discussion has become increasingly apparent to me in the week that has passed since our talk. I would, in all frankness, like to explain to you this reaction.

In view of the possible essential link which exists between the release of the prisoners and the visit of the families, I feel that we went very far in risk-taking by handling the visit question in the way we did up to last Friday. From another point of view it may be said that I, as Secretary-General, was balancing on the outer margin of the permissible in trying to make the issue more manageable for you. At the time of publication it was essential to put the responsibility for the offer squarely on the shoulders of Chou En-lai, while at the same time not giving any impression of double-crossing him. That I think we achieved in two ways: by indicating clearly that our news release was only a confirmation of Chou's statement and by not releasing our communique until Peking was already on the air. As I have written to Ambassador Lodge, I was most surprised to see that this handling of the matter -- which I considered to be directly in the interest of the United States and in conformity with the objectives agreed upon in our talks -- was criticized in terms of unusual strength. On the other hand, I was

His Excellency,  
Mr. John Foster Dulles,  
Secretary of State,  
Washington, D.C.

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concerned when I saw that comments from the State Department were such as to present the Chinese initiative -- which, in my view, should be handled with the utmost care as a possible bridge to solutions -- as if it had been nothing but a propaganda move. Finally -- again to my concern -- I was informed yesterday that the United States Government does not intend to issue exit permits for the families' visits.

Without now entering upon the substance, I must confess that I am worried when, in this way, I see issues which may be vital to the further negotiations, handled and settled without any consultation with the negotiator himself. This operation is, under all the circumstances, most difficult and delicate.

Due to questions raised by delegations other than yours, I have been able to follow from a distance the discussion concerning the Formosa problem, especially as it relates to the United Nations. In view of my exposed position in the negotiations concerning the fliers, I have preferred to stand aside for the time being and have not myself put any questions to the United States Mission or to any other government representatives. I have, however, expressed the hope that if any action were taken, it would not be given such a form as to turn the Security Council operation into something which would widen the gulf between East and West as it would do, for example, if a proposed solution were so phrased as to make unavoidable a Soviet veto. I have also expressed the hope that if any action were taken it would be such as to give some momentum to the developments which may arise out of the prisoner talks in Peking. In view of the vital importance of this whole issue to peace, and more specifically to the United Nations efforts to achieve peace, I would, under all the circumstances, have regarded it as natural if some contact had been established with the Secretary-General. As matters now stand, when the Secretary-General has a more direct impression of the Chinese aspect of the problem than anybody else in the West, and, furthermore, is himself already in a certain sense a party as he is negotiating with China at the request of the General Assembly, this view

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is reinforced. It is obviously for the Governments to decide how they will act, but it seems to me that their decisions should take into account also such aspects of the problem as, in this case, could have been represented by the Secretary-General.

The two points I raise here serve to illustrate what I said in the beginning: I regret that time last Wednesday did not suffice for mutual exploration of lines of action. I hope that it will be possible to engage in such an exploration and to work more closely together in the future. Else I, as Secretary-General, will find it very difficult to serve the member nations in the way which would be possible on a basis of continued and open contact on those issues where the Secretary-General necessarily must have a special responsibility.

Yours sincerely,

Dag Hammarskjöld,  
Secretary-General



UNITED STATES MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

2 PARK AVENUE  
NEW YORK 16, N.Y.  
MURRAY HILL 3-6810

January 28, 1955

Dear Mr. Secretary-General:

With reference to our telephone conversation last night concerning the United States Government's decision with respect to travel of the families of the fliers to China, I enclose herewith a copy of the letter which was sent out yesterday by the Secretary of State.

Sincerely yours,

C. Stanton Babcock  
Brig Gen USA  
Counselor of Mission

Enclosure  
As stated

His Excellency  
Dag Hammarskjold,  
Secretary-General  
of the United Nations,  
United Nations, New York.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE  
WASHINGTON

January 28, 1955

TOP SECRET - EYES ONLY

My dear Mr. Secretary General:

I have your letter of January 27th. It illustrates, I am afraid, the difficulty of you and me trying to deal with these matters on a direct personal basis. We were together for over one and one half hours. Yet you feel the time was inadequate. Perhaps it was, in the sense that it would have taken many hours to have covered the subject in detail. That is why I have to do a measure of delegating to Ambassadors and assistants.

I quite realize that China matters have many aspects, any one of which might perhaps influence, for better or for worse, the fate of the prisoners. However, I thought that the United Nations Assembly mandate was to deal with it as a simple issue, namely -- will the Chinese Communist régime comply with the provisions of the Korean Armistice? Other issues were, I thought, not to be tied into this prisoner matter.

You refer to a "possible essential link which exists between the release of the prisoners and the visit of the families". I do not recall that this thought was communicated by you during our extended conversation. On the contrary, I recall that you and I were somewhat puzzled as to how to reconcile the invitation to the families with a readiness to release the prisoners; for then, the arduous, hazardous and expensive trip would be unnecessary.

In any event, you will have noted that we merely declined to issue passports "for the time being". That decision was reached in the interest of peace and to avoid affording occasions for what might be further provocations in a sensitive situation.

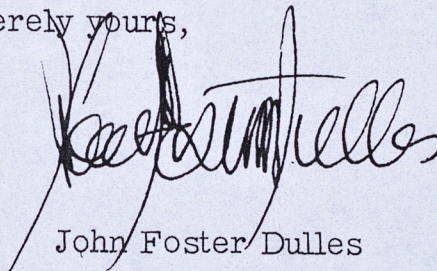
His Excellency  
Dag Hammarskjöld  
Secretary General of the United Nations  
New York

TOP SECRET - EYES ONLY

If you have reason to believe that the visit of the families will, in fact, procure the release of the prisoners, and you feel satisfied that the visits would not lead to provocative incidents, then we would be glad to reconsider the matter.

Won't you talk these matters over fully and frankly with Ambassador Lodge, who has the complete confidence of the President and myself?

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "John Foster Dulles", written in a cursive style. The signature is positioned above the printed name.

John Foster Dulles

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

FOR THE PRESS

JANUARY 27, 1955

NO. 50

CAUTION - FUTURE RELEASE

FOR RELEASE AT 9:00 P.M., E.S.T., THURSDAY, JANUARY 27,  
1955. NOT TO BE PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED, QUOTED FROM  
OR USED IN ANY WAY.

Following is the text of a letter from the Secretary of State, the Honorable John Foster Dulles, that is being communicated to the families of the United States flyers imprisoned in Communist China:

January 27, 1955

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

I want to express to you the deep personal sympathy and concern of your Government in the cruel dilemma which the Chinese Communists have forced upon you through the continued illegal imprisonment of your \_\_\_\_\_. Public opinion throughout the free world will judge the words and deeds of those who have it within their power to end promptly the tragic grief which they have visited upon you. Only by releasing those they hold can the Chinese Communists convincingly demonstrate concern for the human suffering they have caused.

The increasingly belligerent attitude and actions of the Chinese Communists in recent days have forced this Government to the reluctant conclusion that it would be imprudent for the time being to issue passports valid for travel to Communist China to any American citizens. This decision is made only after careful deliberation and in the belief that it is in the best interests of our nation. In the interest of peace we do not think it prudent to afford the Chinese Communists further opportunities to provoke our nation and strain its patience further.

Knowing the anxiety to which you have been subjected, we cherish the hope that the unremitting efforts to which the United Nations has dedicated itself will secure the release of the imprisoned United States military personnel. If the United Nations efforts should be unavailing, we shall renew our own efforts.

With admiration for the fortitude which you have manifested, and with my warm personal sympathy,

Sincerely yours,

/s/

JOHN FOSTER DULLES

Note to correspondents: The letters are identical except for the reference to the relationship of the individual captive to the addressee.

State--FD, Wash., D.C. \* \* \*