

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

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Peking story - 1955

28 Feb.

Conversation between U.S.A. representatives
and China officials in Geneva.

(sent by G. S. Babcock to D. H.)



UNITED STATES MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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

March 2, 1955

Babcock
Hand

Dear Andy:

I am enclosing for your confidential information the gist of a conversation which took place February 28, 1955 in Geneva between United States representatives and Communist Chinese officials concerning Americans detained in China who do not come under the United Nations resolution at present being implemented by the Secretary General.

I would appreciate your passing the enclosed text to the Secretary General upon his return, it may be useful to him as an indication of what the United States is presently doing to hasten the release of Americans of one category or another presently incarcerated in Communist China.

Sincerely yours,

Stanton

G. Stanton Babcock
Brig. General USA
Counsellor of Mission

Enclosure
As stated.

Mr. Andrew Cordier,
United Nations Headquarters,
New York.

UN 3466

Shillock and Gowen met with Chinese Communist officials Shen Ping, Acting Consul General, Li Kuang-tze, Consul, Yeh Chin-pa official and Hsu Wei-chin, interpreter, February 28 at Hotel Beau Rivage, Geneva. French was spoken. The meeting lasted about two hours. Before the meeting began, the Chinese officials offered to shake hands first.

Gowan started the conversation as follows, "I have been directed by my government to say that according to the recent resolution of the United Nations, Secretary General Hammarskjold is now making efforts to obtain the release of fifteen members of the United States Air Force attached to the United Nations Command in Korea and who are now being held by you. Therefore, we plan to confine this meeting today only to discussing other Americans now held in Communist China whose names were listed on the document previously delivered to you at Geneva. I should like to add the following names to that list: John Thomas Downey and Richard Fecteau. You make no mention whatsoever of these two although our Ambassador Johnson requested you to during previous meetings held in order to ascertain the names of United States civil prisoners mentioned on that list".

The Chinese Communist answered as follows, "We take note of your statement. Downey and Fecteau have already been condemned by our government and they are included in a group of thirteen spies tried and condemned by us as we have previously told you.

Gowan replied, "I should also like to express my satisfaction on the departure of sixteen Americans from Communist China since the first meeting".

The Chinese said, "We will take note of this".

Gowan then said, "No information has been furnished by you on the status of other Americans you hold. Therefore, I wish to renew my request for information about them".

The Chinese answer was, "We shall have to seek advice on this question and let you know in the future".

Gowan replied, "I wish to emphasize the grave and strong opposition of my people and my government to these unwarranted detentions. I am instructed to demand the liberation of these citizens of the United States".

The Chinese Communist replied, "Our government's policy has been and will continue to be that those Americans who wish to leave for the United States will be granted authorization to leave our country after examination has proved that no cases of a civil or criminal nature are pending against them".

-2-

Gowan said, "I have been instructed to ask you the following questions. At a meeting with American Ambassador Johnson on June 10, 1954, Mr. Wang Ping Nan said that you would make the necessary arrangements for the interchange of correspondence between United States citizens held by you and their families by means of the Chinese Red Cross. According to our information no communication whatsoever has been received by the families of the following Americans: Richard George Fecteau, Frederick D. Gordon, Reverend Joseph Eugene Hude, John Thomas Downey, Doctor and Mrs. Homer V. Bradshaw, Reverend James Gerald Joyce, Reverend John William Clifford, Dalmus T. Kanady, Dorothy Middletown, Marmand Proulz, Reverend Joseph Patrick McCormack, Hugh Francis Redmond, W.A. Rickett. Grave anxiety is being caused to these families by the lack of news from these persons".

The Chinese answer was, "We shall note this and will let you know if we obtain more information on this question. We would like to say that their families can send small parcels which may include medicines, as well as letters by means of the Chinese Red Cross".

Gowan replied, "I wish to ask you to assure us that these fourteen Americans are alive and well".

The Chinese said, "We will let you know about this".

Gowan said, "I also wish to ask you to request the Chinese Red Cross that in order to expedite the transmission of letters to the families of these Americans, that the Chinese Red Cross do everything possible in order that their families be reassured as to their welfare."

The Chinese replied, "We have noted this". "The letters of these families should be addressed to the Chinese Red Cross Society at Peiping by mail and can be written in any language."

Gowan then said, "We have received reports which indicate Dalmus T. Kanady and Father Howard W. Rigney are ill. Are you in a position to tell me now if that is correct?"

The Chinese Communists answered, "We do not know if they are ill."

Gowan asked, "Since you were unable to answer this question in detail now, will it be possible for you to obtain this information at the earliest opportunity?"

The Chinese answered, "We have taken note of your question. We will inform you if we receive news of these persons."

Gowan asked, "Is there any possibility of forwarding such medicines and food through Red Cross channels as we believe these persons are ill and require this?"

The Chinese answered, "Small packages, including medicines and food, can be sent by their families through the Chinese Red Cross.

Gowan asked, "If these persons need medical and hospital care, can we assume they will receive such care and attention?"

The Chinese answered, "They will receive all medical care and attention.

The answers by the Chinese were made after they had consulted for some time with their files as well as amongst themselves. The Chinese read from a prepared statement which was subsequently translated as follows: "The policy of the government of China has already been proclaimed during the Geneva conference with regard to Americans wishing to leave China. This policy consists in protecting foreigners who wish to leave China providing such foreigners respect Chinese laws. Authorization to Americans who wish to leave China is already granted and will be granted after examination. However, foreigners who have committed crimes are condemned according to Chinese law. This policy has always been applied by the Chinese Government since the Geneva conference and has been communicated to you. Moreover 10 Americans or more have already left China. Therefore your opposition on this subject is groundless. Our policy is already known to you and is clear, therefore we are unable to agree on the subject of the departure of Americans. Concerning any news on the departure from China of the 13 American spies, we do not have any information. We have always made use of the Chinese Red Cross concerning the exchange of small packages, including medicines and letters, between Americans in China and their families in the United States and you can always do so in the future. Certain members of the families of the 13 condemned Americans in China have expressed the intention to visit these prisoners in China according to an American press agency. Our government is in a position to take care of their visas if any relatives wish to go to China."

Gowan replied, "My government has examined this question as it has examined a similar offer which you have made to enable relatives of United States military personnel to visit those persons imprisoned in Communist China. In view of the uncertainties created by the actions and belligerent attitude of the Chinese Communists my government has decided not to issue passports for the time being to any Americans to visit Red China. The situation has certainly not improved since that decision. The release of these detained Americans by the Chinese Communists could benefit their American relatives the most."

The Chinese Communists answered, "The Chinese government is prepared to undertake the necessary action to procure visas in order to meet the desires of relatives of condemned Americans in China who wish to visit these condemned persons in China. However, the American government is

afraid that the American people as well as the relatives of these prisoners will realize the reality of the crimes committed by these condemned men and the United States government is afraid that the people of America and the relatives of these men will become aware that the Chinese government really wants peace. Therefore the United States government refuses to give passports to the relatives of these persons who wish to travel to China. The responsibility for this refusal remains with the United States government."

Gowan answered them, "Your accusations against my government are rejected. They are totally false and groundless."

The Chinese Communists made no reply.

Comment: No reference was made by the Chinese to their students. With reference to the Chinese statement that they intended to seek advice and inform us when they might have information concerning the welfare of the 14 Americans, Gowan asked them how soon they could give us a reply. After talking together for some time amongst themselves they replied, "Our government will be advised by us about this matter and we shall get in touch with you when we receive a reply."

The overall attitude of the Chinese was calm and rather relaxed, in fact not tense. Upon adjourning the meeting they were, again, first to shake hands and all said the single word "goodbye". It was clear to all of us the Chinese desired to emphasize that Red Cross channels were available for small parcels, including medicine and mail, and they made it quite clear without saying it that similar meetings might be held here in the future with regard to our desire to obtain information concerning the whereabouts and welfare of detained Americans. We consider of special interest, since it was entirely unsolicited, the Chinese remark quoted above that they do not know if there is any news of the departure of "13 American spies".



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