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**A POST-SCRIPT ON THE CAIRO CONFERENCE: CHURCHILL,
ROOSEVELT, AND THE CHINESE DILEMMA**

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A Postscript on the Cairo Conference:

Churchill, Roosevelt and the Chinese Dilemma

On the whole, Churchill and Roosevelt had very mixed feelings about the results of the summit meetings at Cairo and Teheran in November of 1943, particularly their encounter with Generalissimo and Madame Chiang Kai-shek in Cairo, but as Roosevelt remarked to his son Elliott before leaving Cairo, it remained to be seen how Sino-American relations would be affected when the Chinese received word that most of the “commitments” made to them during the course of the conference would have to be cancelled or modified at the insistence of Churchill in the interest of fulfilling promises that were made to Stalin in order to move ahead with Operation Overlord, the cross-Channel invasion of France in 1944.¹ All that was left for Roosevelt was to break the bad news to Chiang Kai-shek and frame it in the most positive way possible, no easy matter! He did this in a cable sent to the generalissimo on December 5, 1943.

Chiang received Roosevelt's cable on December 6th. According to Lord Mountbatten, Chiang was "jolted" by the news from Cairo, which he believed to be "a breach of faith."² When the SEAC commander saw Chiang in Chungking on December 7th, the generalissimo told him that since the Anglo-American leaders apparently felt no responsibility to honor the promises made to him at Cairo, he was no longer obligated to them to commit Chinese forces to any operation in Burma.³ Chiang also suggested that the Chinese would have to re-examine all of their options in light of the latest news from Cairo.⁴

Except for venting his spleen at Mountbatten, Chiang reserved his energies for an assault on Roosevelt. With the help of Madame Chiang and T.V. Soong, who did not

attend the Cairo Conference because of a “tiff” with Chiang, but who was called back to Chiang's inner circle from his “Babylonian exile” at the Foreign Ministry in Chungking, the generalissimo drafted a long cable to the president suggesting the grave consequences that would likely occur when the Chinese people learned that their allies were now renegeing on the promises they made two weeks before at the Cairo Conference:

If it should now be known to the Chinese army and people that a radical change of policy is being contemplated, the repercussions would be so disheartening that I fear the consequences of China's ability to hold out much longer...⁵

Chiang had often intimated that China might be forced to drop out of the war and seek a separate peace with Japan if certain conditions were not met. Now, he was making this point directly and suggesting that the allies would face "serious problems" should Chinese resistance collapse.⁶

Since it did not appear likely that Roosevelt would reverse himself again, Chiang offered him another way to demonstrate his good faith:

The only seeming solution is to assure the Chinese people and army of your sincere concern in the China theater of war by assisting China to hold on with a billion dollar gold loan to strengthen her economic front and relieve her dire economic needs...⁷

The generalissimo also suggested that doubling supply drops into China to 20,000 tons per month might be another appropriate demonstration of American good will.⁸

Chiang hoped to play Roosevelt's guilt over the decision to cancel Operation Buccaneer to the hilt, extracting as much from the United States as possible in payment for the president's capitulation to Churchill, who had not wanted to meet with Chiang in Cairo in the first place and had little use for the Kuomintang regime the generalissimo headed. Chiang was quite upset over the president's betrayal and saw nothing untoward in

suggesting that the Americans should compensate him for the losses China would suffer as a consequence of the change of plans made in Cairo on December 5th. The loss that Chiang was most concerned about was his loss of face and it was this loss for which he sought the greatest compensation. The cancellation of Operation Buccaneer wounded the generalissimo's ego not the Chinese nation. If anything, the cancellation of the campaign in Burma spared the Chinese army countless casualties in the jungles of Southeast Asia.

When General Stilwell returned to Chungking from Cairo on December 12th, he was informed that Chiang was crazy with anger over Roosevelt's seeming change of heart over policy in Southeast Asia.⁹ When he met with Chiang on December 15th, he realized that this was true.¹⁰ The generalissimo seemed totally irrational and even Madame Chiang was at a loss as to how to calm her husband, telling Stilwell that Chiang had not slept well for days after receiving Roosevelt's cable and that she had done "everything but murder him" to get the generalissimo to quiet down and rest.¹¹

American diplomat, John Paton Davies, heard much the same story from Wang Chung-hui, the highest-ranking Chinese diplomat to accompany Chiang to Cairo. Wang told him that members of the Chinese delegation to the conference were amazed to hear that Operation Buccaneer was now off and feared that news of Roosevelt's capitulation to Churchill would undermine the generalissimo's position in Chungking.¹² Davies could say little to reassure Wang because he agreed with him that the Kuomintang regime would be less secure in China as a consequence of the decisions reached in Cairo after Chiang's departure.¹³

Although no details of the agreements reached at Cairo had been given to the press when Chiang and his entourage returned to Chungking, specifics were provided to

the generalissimo's intimates in the Kuomintang leadership. Given the fact that it was virtually impossible to maintain secrecy in Chungking, discussion of the promises made to the generalissimo by Roosevelt in Cairo circulated widely enough to fuel the rumor mills in this city of rumor-mongers. Should it now become known that the president had reneged on these promises and “stabbed” him in the back, Chiang was sure to lose face with his peers, an intolerable situation in the context of Chinese politics.

Roosevelt had brought Chiang to Cairo to plump up his ego and to provide graphic evidence to the Chinese people that their leader was accorded an honored place among world leaders. The images brought back from the summit by Chinese journalists and Chiang's initial enthusiastic comments about his reception at Cairo seemed to indicate that Roosevelt had accomplished these goals, but with the latest news from Cairo, the bubble might soon burst unless the president agreed to the terms contained in Chiang's cable of December 9th.

Saving face for the generalissimo was so critical that T.V. Soong volunteered to press Chiang's case with his friend, Harry Hopkins, Roosevelt's confidant and most important advisor. If anyone was able to reach Roosevelt, it would be Hopkins and Soong was very well aware of this. Soong was preparing to return to Washington to resume his lobbying on behalf of the Kuomintang regime, but he did not wait until returning to the United States to alert Hopkins to the crisis brewing in Chungking. He sent a lengthy message to Hopkins in mid-December pleading with him to urge the president to provide Chiang with some face-saving way out of the crisis that was sure to occur when it became known that all promises made to the Chinese at Cairo were now off.¹⁴

Roosevelt returned to the White House on December 18th and found Chiang's

message on his desk.¹⁵ Later that day, Roosevelt briefed Secretary of War Stimson on the deliberations in Cairo and discussed Chiang's demands with him.¹⁶ According to Stimson, the president told him that the conferences at Cairo and Teheran had been successful save for the "Burma situation" which he blamed on Churchill's unwillingness to support any significant operation in Southeast Asia.¹⁷ Roosevelt also told Stimson about Chiang's request for a large new loan and increased supplies and indicated that he was leaning toward providing some additional assistance.¹⁸ Musing on their conversation in his diary, Stimson wondered how high a price the president might be willing to pay to compensate Chiang for his disappointment.¹⁹

Stimson had good reason to be concerned about Roosevelt's willingness to stroke Chiang Kai-shek's ego. In the past, Stimson had found the president to be too supportive of the generalissimo, but in this instance, Roosevelt reacted quite differently. Replying to Chiang's cable of December 9th, Roosevelt politely but firmly informed Chiang that doubling the supplies flown into China over the hump was a virtual impossibility. He also made no promises on the matter of a new loan except to suggest that he would take the matter up with the Treasury Department.²⁰

Roosevelt's cable also urged Chiang not to withdraw his forces from operations in Burma, intimating that to do so would weaken the generalissimo's support in the United States and make it difficult for him to lobby the Congress for the increased aid Chiang was requesting.²¹ Although this suggestion was couched in polite language, the implication of the president's comment was clear. He now expected a quid pro quo for going to bat for the generalissimo.

Roosevelt's message upset Chiang. Replying to the president's cable of December

20th, the generalissimo stated that while he still had "confidence" in Roosevelt's judgment, the president's relegation of the CBI theater to the back burner was giving rise to "serious misgivings" in Chungking.²² Chiang also balked at Roosevelt's advice on Chinese operations in Burma :

I have nothing to say if the Combined Chiefs of Staff wants to divert all materials for an assault on Germany because I have not been consulted...But the Burma operations are a life or death problem to China and without a large scale amphibious operation in South Burma, the Yunnan Force would be committing suicide if they moved into North Burma...I could not agree to this plan.²³

Before the Cairo conference, Chiang Kai-shek had usually been able to manipulate Roosevelt by hinting at the problems American policy was causing in Chungking, but the president did not respond to Chiang's message of December 23rd in this manner. To the contrary, he warned the generalissimo about the repercussions that might follow if he chose to totally suspend offensive operations in Burma:

Considerable critical materials...for the Yunnan divisions are currently scheduled to be moved by air to China. The rate of this buildup to my mind depends to a large degree upon the use to be made of these divisions in the near future.²⁴

Chiang Kai-shek was laboring under the impression that Roosevelt would capitulate to his demands as a payoff for the decision of the allies to renew on commitments made to him in Cairo. With the receipt of Roosevelt's message of December 27th, it was clear that this would not be the case and the generalissimo began to panic. The president had not only refused to be rushed into approving the billion dollar loan Chiang had requested, he was now insisting that the Chinese participate in some kind of offensive in Burma as a prerequisite for receiving additional military aid.

In light of this frightening turn of events, T.V. Soong was ordered to return to

Washington immediately to plead China's case with Hopkins and Roosevelt. While Soong was en route to the United States, Chiang attempted to maintain a calm facade, stressing his accomplishments in Cairo and praising Roosevelt's support of China. In his first public address on the Cairo conference, delivered before a large crowd in Chungking on January 1st, 1944, the generalissimo lavished compliments on the president:

I may tell you that the deepest impressions I have of President Roosevelt are of his unflinching faith, his firm determination to emancipate all the worlds oppressed peoples and his sincere desire to help China become a truly free and independent nation...²⁵

If Chiang's public statements were filled with praise of Roosevelt and the results of the Cairo conference, his private comments were hardly as laudatory. In a memorandum submitted to Stanley Hornbeck at the State Department on December 27th, 1943, Clarence Gauss, the United States Ambassador to China, informed Hornbeck that Chungking gossip mongers were clicking their tongues over the generalissimo's snide comments about Roosevelt and Churchill, although no one wanted to speak "on the record" to confirm these remarks.²⁶

Hornbeck shared Gauss' memo with Secretary of State Cordell Hull, who suggested that Roosevelt was now reaping the harvest of his propensity to circumvent the State Department by allowing Chiang to communicate through private channels. Had the Department of State been permitted to deal with China "exclusively," as Hull thought advisable, the Chinese would have been forced to pursue a stable and resolute course instead of bullying the United States for aid.²⁷ Now, it might be too late to teach Chiang new tricks.

Neither Hornbeck nor Hull could appreciate just how unnerved Chiang was becoming over Roosevelt's seeming change of heart about aid to China because they were

out of the loop of Chinese lobbying in Washington. Soong and his subordinates in the Chinese diplomatic corps wasted few of their efforts on outsiders in Roosevelt's administration. They preferred to concentrate on the president's intimates such as Harry Hopkins. Thus, when T.V. Soong arrived back in the United States in January 1944, it was to his door that he went not to the State Department.

Normally, Soong had easy access to Hopkins' office, but this time things were somewhat different. Hopkins had taken ill in Cairo and had to be hospitalized upon his return to Washington. Hopkins was too sick to receive visitors and was on doctor's orders to refrain from conducting business from his hospital bed. This did not stop Soong from trying to see Hopkins in the hospital to talk about the Cairo conference. Denied access to him by hospital authorities, Soong sent the following note to Hopkins:

Several years ago when you were in the hospital, I recall that against the injunction of your doctor you hurried from the hospital back to the White House when a vital international principle was at stake. Today a fateful decision is again being made and you must be a part of the process.²⁸

No one had ever accused Soong of being shy in conducting China's foreign policy, but, in this instance, he went too far, prompting an angry response from Hopkins. "I can't do this sort of thing from out here," Hopkins told one of his aides, "tell them I'm sick."²⁹ Soong was not to see Hopkins until several weeks after his release from the hospital and after this incident their relationship would never be quite the same. Hopkins had seen enough of the Chinese at Cairo to cause him to reconsider his support of the China lobby. It was too late for Soong to salvage the situation.

As Soong made the rounds in Washington, it soon became clear to him that the Cairo conference had been a public relations disaster in terms of the negative impressions that Generalissimo and Madame Chiang had made on the members of the American

delegation, including Hopkins and Roosevelt. The ineffectiveness of the Chinese delegates and Chiang's seemingly constant change of mind and mood had a sobering effect on the president and his aides. As Soong noted in a memorandum to Victor Hu, his assistant at the Foreign Ministry, "my absence from the deliberations at Cairo proved more costly than I could have imagined."³⁰

While Soong was hardly a humble man, his comment to Hu was not an exaggeration. Had he accompanied the generalissimo to Cairo, he could have orchestrated things so as to present Chiang and his entourage in a more positive light. No one in the Kuomintang leadership was more familiar with American manners and mores than Soong. No one had a better working relationship with Roosevelt's intimates than Soong. Surely, he would have been more effective at the summit than Dr. Wang Chung-hui who had no clout with Churchill, Roosevelt, or any of the Combined Chiefs of Staff.

T.V. Soong was savvy about public relations and what he did not know about the art of manipulating public or private opinion, he relied on Hollington Tong to find out. As Soong indicated to Hu, it was bad enough that he had been forced to remain in Chungking while Chiang went off to Cairo, but it was mind boggling that Tong had been taken to Cairo but relegated to the role of an occasional interpreter because of his association with Soong.³¹ After Tong's success in arranging the itineraries for Madame Chiang's triumphant tour of the United States earlier in 1943, it was folly not to allow him to manage the generalissimo's itinerary in Cairo.³²

What Chiang needed at Cairo was a good stage manager and a competent script supervisor. He had had neither of these services at his disposal during his stay in Cairo. Madame Chiang was forced to play these roles at the summit, but she was neither up to

the job nor able to orchestrate the Chinese players. Madame Chiang had arrived in Cairo suffering from influenza and dysentery. Given the fact that she was quite ill, Madame Chiang was barely able to keep up with the round of appointments and social obligations that filled her husband's days in Egypt; she was certainly not able to provide the kind of support services that could have turned the conference into a public relations triumph for the generalissimo.

Without Soong or Tong to shield the generalissimo from his peers and orchestrate the activities of his subordinates, the performance of the Chinese delegation at Cairo was a poor one and even Chiang seems to have realized that things had not gone well at the conference, although he could not pinpoint the problem. Writing in his diary immediately after his return to China, Chiang expressed continued misgivings about Churchill and, perhaps for the first time, fear that Roosevelt might be falling under the influence of the prime minister.³³ It was for this reason that he ended T.V. Soong's exile in Chungking and sent him off to Washington.

Better stage management of Chiang's activities in Cairo might not have altered the ultimate outcome of the conference, given the overwhelming importance of launching Operation Overlord in Europe, but it would have gone a long way to insure that Roosevelt continued to think of the generalissimo as an asset. Continued American support was critical for the Kuomintang regime. If, as Chiang now feared, the president viewed him as a liability, this would have serious implications for his future political fortunes in China.

By the time T.V. Soong arrived in the United States to survey the damage caused by Chiang's performance in Cairo, it was too late to salvage much for the generalissimo.

In less than one week, he and Madame Chiang had undone much of Soong's previous efforts to cultivate a favorable image of the Kuomintang regime and its leaders. For two years, Soong had fine-tuned a propaganda apparatus in the United States second to none in attracting a good press for his government's cause. Now, in the aftermath of Chiang's dismal performance in Cairo, even friends of China were beginning to wonder about the discrepancies between Chinese propaganda and Chinese realities.

Hopkins refusal to see Soong and intervene with the president on behalf of Chiang Kai-shek was a clear sign to him that the situation in Washington had changed dramatically since he was last in that city. He counted Hopkins as one of his most trustworthy allies among Roosevelt's intimates and a much better friend to China than others in the White House. With Hopkins sidelined in the hospital and unwilling to leave his sick bed to intercede on behalf of the Chiang, Soong feared that Roosevelt would fall under the influence of Marshall, Morgenthau, Stimson, and others less friendly to the Chinese.

Soong's fears were not unfounded. There seems little doubt that Roosevelt was taking a new and harder line with Chiang and nowhere is this more clearly illustrated than in his response to the generalissimo's request for a new billion-dollar loan. Prior to the Cairo conference, Roosevelt had ignored the advice of the Treasury Department and lavished money on China as a gesture of good faith. After Cairo, he was less inclined to buy the generalissimo's good will with additional cash grants or loans.

When Roosevelt received Chiang's request for a huge new loan, he immediately shared the generalissimo's cable with Morgenthau and solicited his advice. As Soong knew only too well, Morgenthau was no friend of the China lobby. When the Chinese had

requested a \$500,000,000 loan in 1942, Morgenthau had warned the president against extending such a credit to the Kuomintang regime without extracting a quid pro quo. Roosevelt ignored this advice and the loan was advanced. Now, Morgenthau was even more adamant in urging Roosevelt to deny Chiang's request for an even larger loan.³⁴ This time, the president heeded Morgenthau's advice.

Morgenthau told Roosevelt that the Chinese had spent less than half of the loan provided by the United States in 1942 and that this money "made no significant contribution to the control of inflation and had little effect except to give additional profit to insiders."³⁵ While there was no suggestion that Chiang had personally profited from this money, it was clear, according to Morgenthau, that some of his associates had diverted funds to their own bank accounts and that little of the money was being used to further the war effort.³⁶

After his experiences at Cairo, Roosevelt was not shocked by Morgenthau's analysis of the situation in Chungking and was ready to get tough with Chiang. Sensing this, Morgenthau and Stimson joined forces in urging him to refuse the generalissimo's latest demands. This would not be easy because the Chinese had been pushing Roosevelt very hard. Still, if the president could be persuaded to discount Chiang's threats to drop out of the war and negotiate a separate peace with Japan, he might initiate a new course of action vis-a-vis the Kuomintang regime.

Roosevelt had no illusions about the capacity or the willingness of the Kuomintang regime to wage an aggressive war against Japan nor was he much interested in this. As long as the Chinese were even nominally at war with Japan, the Japanese would be forced to maintain forces well in excess of one million men in China and

Manchuria and could not divert these units to the Pacific battlefields. This was more important to the president than whipping the Chinese armies into fighting shape to engage the Japanese on a massive scale in China proper.

At first, Roosevelt took Chiang's threats to drop out of the war quite seriously. American intelligence was well aware of the efforts of Wang Ching-wei's puppet regime in Nanking to negotiate an alliance with Chiang. While such a possibility was discounted, it was not dismissed entirely. With Anglo-American forces retreating all over Asia, Roosevelt could not afford to alienate the generalissimo and risk the loss of his Chinese ally. As Allied fortunes brightened in 1943, the president could afford to take a more realistic view of the situation in China and his meetings with the generalissimo in Cairo convinced him that Chiang was less likely to drop out of the war than he had previously believed. Still, Roosevelt did not feel confident enough to dismiss Chiang's threats entirely.

Churchill had already softened the president up on the question of Chinese threats to drop out of the war during the second Cairo conference. Although Roosevelt still continued to cling to the notion that China was a nation which would count in the world of tomorrow and was less given to overt racism than Churchill, he was not blind and his first-hand experiences with Chiang and his entourage at the first Cairo conference had given him pause for thought that the generalissimo was really ready to lead China into the modern age without American tutelage and pressure or that any other Chinese leader could do so.³⁷

The efforts of Morgenthau and Stimson bore fruit. Roosevelt refused to support the extension of an additional one billion dollar credit to China. On January 5th, 1943, as

Soong was still en route to the United States, the president informed Chiang that he could not support his request for additional funds because the Chinese had not been able to curb inflation and stop currency speculation with the proceeds of the 1942 loan.³⁸ Adding insult to injury, Roosevelt also suggested that his refusal to support a new loan to China was influenced by Chiang's unwillingness to make a clear commitment to action in Burma.³⁹

As might have been expected, Chiang reacted angrily to Roosevelt's message, castigating him for treating Sino-American relations as if they were a "commercial transaction" and warning of the very real possibility that China might have to drop out of the war if he did not reconsider his decision.⁴⁰ Before the Cairo conference, such threats would have been taken very seriously by Roosevelt. After Cairo, he tended to discount them because he had come to understand that the very existence of the Chiang's regime depended upon continued participation in the war. The growing rift between Roosevelt and Chiang was kept from the general public in China and the United States thanks to the effectiveness of the propaganda machines in Chungking and Washington which seemed to be governed by the lyrics of a popular wartime tune which urged people "to accentuate the positive, eliminate the negative, and don't mess with Mister In-between." For wartime propagandists concerned with maintaining the facade of Sino-American unity, ignorance was bliss, but beneath the veneer of business as usual, major changes were in the offing.

One of the first changes in American policy in China to follow in the wake of Roosevelt's return from Cairo was the effort to establish direct diplomatic and military liaison with the communist regime in Yen-an. Prior to the president's journey to Cairo, efforts had been made to send American emissaries to Yen-an, but Chiang and Soong had

been successful in persuading Roosevelt that such contacts would be detrimental to the Kuomintang regime and its conduct of the war effort. After Cairo, such arguments carried less weight in Washington.

While in Cairo, Roosevelt had observed to his son, Elliott, that the Chinese communists were more actively engaged in the war against Japan than the Kuomintang regime and that it was time for the United States to consider funneling aid to Yen-an as well as Chungking.⁴¹ He had also observed that much of the aid that the United States had sent to China was being hoarded for a future civil war with the communists.⁴² He had pressed Chiang to allow the communists to play an role in the national government and the generalissimo had agreed to this idea in principle, but Roosevelt was not sure he would really include the communists in future deliberations.⁴³

Although the president was not given to pouring over lengthy memoranda or intelligence reports, it is clear that he read summaries of critical intelligence from the field including synopses of reports from the American embassy in Chungking and General Stilwell's command headquarters. Such reports were filled with information about the energy of the communist leaders and the activities of the Yen-an regime. While Roosevelt distrusted State Department "types" and tended to feel that Stilwell was somewhat of a crank, he could not completely discount their warnings about the political inroads being made by Mao and his colleagues and was influenced by such reports. Still, for the public record, he remained a steadfast supporter of the Kuomintang regime.⁴⁴

By the time Roosevelt returned to Washington from the Cairo conference, he seems to have concluded that, left to himself, Chiang would do little to create a genuine united front with the communists. Furthermore, in light of the fact that the generalissimo

was unwilling to engage the Japanese in Burma in any substantial campaign without the simultaneous launching of Operation Buccaneer, Roosevelt was ready to act more forcefully on establishing contacts with Mao's Yen'an government despite Chiang's wishes.

Roosevelt might well have pressed Chiang to allow an American mission to visit Yen'an immediately after his return from Cairo, but the moment was not auspicious. Stilwell had just launched a new campaign in Burma, using the Ledo forces under his command to dislodge the Japanese from northern Burma, and things were going very poorly. Unless Chiang could be persuaded to commit his Yunnan armies, Stilwell might well have to beat another humiliating retreat from Burma. Under these circumstances, it was not prudent to push the generalissimo on the Yen'an connection.

Ironically, Stilwell's problems in Burma proved to be a blessing in disguise for Roosevelt. With American and Chinese forces suffering very heavy losses in Burma, Chiang's unwillingness to commit his Yunnan armies to the fray was becoming an increasingly untenable position for the Chinese government to maintain and Roosevelt's patience with the generalissimo was wearing thin. Roosevelt warned Chiang that unless he came to Stilwell's assistance with the Y-Force, continued American aid to the Kuomintang would be jeopardized. After waiting for several weeks without receiving an appropriate reply from Chiang, a presidential ultimatum was delivered to the generalissimo by General Frank Dorn sometime between April 10-14th, 1944. Either Chiang was to commit his forces immediately or all aid to China would be suspended.⁴⁵ The generalissimo capitulated.

Still smarting from the president's ultimatum, Chiang was faced with an even

more serious problem when the Japanese launched a major military offensive in China in the spring of 1944. Code-named Operation Ichigo, this campaign threatened the very existence of the Kuomintang regime. At first, the Japanese offensive seemed to be aimed at the destruction of Chennault's forward air bases in central China, but as Japanese forces quickly steamrolled through these bases, the campaign was expanded to include a direct attack on Kuomintang strongholds in Szechwan and Yunnan provinces.

Chiang's armies proved unable to prevent the Japanese advance and he was forced to recall some of his best units from the area surrounding the communist base in Yen-an to the defense of Chungking and Kunming. Once again, Chiang's misfortune proved to be a hidden blessing for Roosevelt.

Now, more than ever, it was imperative that some accommodation be reached between the communists and the Kuomintang regime that would permit the communists to play a vital role in beating back Operation Ichigo. If this were to be done, American aid would have to be funneled to the communists so that they could launch counter-attacks against the Japanese. To facilitate this, an American mission would have to be sent to Yen-an. Even Chiang could not dispute this logic and he reluctantly gave his assent to such a mission, which finally reached Yen-an by July.

Given the location of communist bases in China and the logistical problems of moving supplies to them, American aid to Mao's guerillas never amounted to much, but symbolically, the dispatch of American observers to Yen-an, however lowly their status, marked a major change in Roosevelt's perception of the war in China and the future of the Kuomintang regime. Although he never wavered from his public praise of Chiang's government in Chungking, Roosevelt was a political realist who was prepared to deal

with more than one man in China.

Chiang was reeling from the one-two blow delivered by Roosevelt between January and April 1944. He and Soong had resorted to their usual tricks in dealing with the president, but nothing seemed to work. Roosevelt was relying more heavily on Morgenthau and Stimson and less on members of the China lobby, resulting in a growing sense of panic in Chungking. With Hopkins sidelined by illness and increasingly cool to their cause, Chiang and Soong had to get through to one of the president's other intimates or lose their access to him.

In March, Soong indicated to Hull, Stimson, and whoever else would listen to him that Chiang would welcome the visit of yet another personal emissary of the president.⁴⁶ He stressed that such a visit was urgent in light of events that had occurred since the Cairo conference.⁴⁷ When asked who Roosevelt might send as his representative, Soong suggested Vice President Henry Wallace.⁴⁸ Much to Soong's surprise, Roosevelt jumped at the chance to send Wallace to China.

Chiang's invitation came at a time when Roosevelt was preparing to announce that he would seek another term as president and encountering considerable opposition to this idea from party leaders who would not endorse his bid for a fourth term unless he dumped Henry Wallace from the ticket. Although he was quite fond of Wallace, Roosevelt understood that Wallace was a political liability because of his increasingly liberal views and was looking for some way to ease him off the ticket and the political center stage in Washington. Soong's suggestion that Wallace make a fact finding trip to Chungking provided the perfect vehicle for accomplishing both of these ends.

Chiang was pleased to hear that Wallace was coming to China. Little did he

realize Roosevelt's motives in sending the vice president to Chungking. The Chinese spared no effort in arranging Wallace's visit and orchestrating things so that he would be able to see things from the generalissimo's perspective. Soong was in charge of the planning and served as Wallace's personal escort during his visit in China from June 18-30th, 1944.

Despite all of their efforts, Chiang and Soong failed to convert Wallace to their cause. The situation in 1944 was quite different from that in 1942 when Lauchlin Currie and Wendell Willkie had visited China at Roosevelt's request. At that time, the Sino-Japanese war was quiet and it was possible to stage events so as to maximize the heroic struggle of the Kuomintang regime. By the time Wallace arrived in Chungking, the Japanese offensive was well under way and it was impossible to stage manage the war in China for Wallace's benefit. What he saw was a government under siege and on the brink of disaster.

The entreaties of Chiang and Soong were largely lost on Wallace who paid more attention to the advice he received from his principal political aides, Owen Lattimore and John Carter Vincent, than to the nostrums doled out by the generalissimo's associates. Upon his return to the United States, Wallace advised Roosevelt that continued American aid to Chiang must be seen as "a short term investment" and that in the longer term, new leaders would be thrust forward "by evolution or revolution..."⁴⁹

Wallace's assessment of the situation in China could hardly have come as a surprise to Roosevelt. He had made some of these same observations to Stilwell and John Paton Davies on December 6th, 1943, his last full day in Cairo. On that occasion, the president told them that the United States must be prepared for the possible collapse of

Chiang's regime, although he indicated that nothing should be done in Washington that would precipitate such a collapse.⁵⁰

Contrary to the views of some of his critics, Roosevelt was not totally naive in his assessment of the situation in China. He realized the vulnerability of Chiang's regime, but he also realized that there was no understudy in the wings waiting to play the generalissimo's role should he falter. The collapse of Chiang's government might well lead to political chaos and paralysis, which would hardly contribute to the war effort. Even the Chinese communists recognized this. As Chou En-lai had often told visiting Americans, including Henry Wallace, no Chinese leader, not even Mao Tse-tung, had Chiang's broad appeal and capacity to balance the various political cliques in China. Chiang's demise was not necessarily an event to be welcomed.

Chou En-lai's endorsement of Chiang must have struck Wallace as somewhat peculiar coming, as it did, from one of the generalissimo's most impressive political opponents. There was clearly no love lost between the CCP and the KMT and yet Chou and his colleagues in Yen-an were still willing to put in a good word for the generalissimo. Why should this have been the case?

The Chinese communists were increasingly aware that the burden of trying to maintain a stable government in Chungking while attempting to wage war against Japan was crippling the Kuomintang. They had no interest, for the moment, in putting themselves in this impossible situation. It was in their interest to keep Chiang in the driver's seat since it seemed inevitable that his car was going to crash at a latter point in time when the CCP would better be able to take the wheel. Mao made this point, albeit in a more Chinese fashion, in one of his wartime essays.⁵¹ There were also other reasons

why the communists found it in their immediate interest to appear supportive of the generalissimo's leadership.

As 1944 dawned, CCP leaders believed that they were on the brink of receiving direct aid from the United States. It was well known in Yenan that Roosevelt was becoming increasingly impatient with Chiang's unwillingness to commit his forces and more inclined to listen to the advice he was receiving from American diplomats and military experts in China, many of whom were encouraging him to establish closer relations with the CCP. Mindful that the president could not publically abandon the generalissimo, CCP leaders did not wish to cause Roosevelt any embarrassment, especially if such embarrassment threatened the aid they hoped to obtain from the United States. Thus, their strategy was to muffle their anger with Chiang and appear to be conciliatory.⁵²

Given the realities of the Chinese political scene in 1944, Roosevelt had to walk a tightrope in his dealings with Chiang, talking bluntly with the generalissimo when necessary, but making sure that he did nothing to cause Chiang to lose face publically. To avoid falling off this tightrope, the president often had to act in what appeared to be a somewhat inconsistent manner. His handling of Stilwell's recall is a good example of this dilemma.

For nearly two years, Chiang had urged Roosevelt to recall Stilwell and replace him with an officer more sympathetic to the Kuomintang regime. For nearly two years, Roosevelt had resisted capitulating to the generalissimo and removing Stilwell. Things changed after the Cairo conference. Having reneged on promises made to Chiang at the conference and refused his request for a billion dollar compensation package after the

conference, Roosevelt was ready to make some major concession to the generalissimo providing such a concession did not compromise the interests of the United States. Recalling Stilwell met both of these standards.

After Roosevelt had informed Chiang that the United States would not grant the loan and credits he demanded, the generalissimo concentrated his energies on trying to secure the recall of General Stilwell. By the time Wallace returned from China, the president was ready to replace the general. The question was not whether Stilwell would be recalled, but, rather, when he would be recalled. On the one hand, Roosevelt wanted to make a gesture to Chiang; on the other hand, he did not wish to appear to be caving into the generalissimo's demands.

Roosevelt postponed removing Stilwell until October 1944 by which time Chiang had toned down his calls for Stilwell's recall and the American presidential campaign was nearly over. The president's decision buoyed Chiang's morale and standing for the short term, but provided no additional aid or commitments for the long term. It was a consummate public relations gesture, accomplished at minimal political cost in Washington and providing maximum good press in Chungking.

General Albert Wedemeyer replaced Stilwell as the president's chief military representative in China, but his arrival in Chungking changed little. Except for establishing a cordial relationship with Chiang and his associates, something that Stilwell had never quite managed to accomplish, Wedemeyer was in no position to assist the Chinese in obtaining any additional aid, a fact which Chiang and Soong learned very quickly.

In the aftermath of the Cairo conference, the Kuomintang regime had to acclimate

itself to a new relationship with the Roosevelt administration, one in which they were now dealing with Washington from a distinct disadvantage. Whereas Soong and Chiang had once been effective in lobbying the president to provide massive amounts of aid to their government, they now had to settle for mere crumbs.

The post-Cairo relationship between Roosevelt and Chiang was also characterized by a toning down of the president's rhetoric in support of the generalissimo and his regime. Roosevelt spoke less and less about China's role as a great power and was increasingly sparing in his praise of Chiang's leadership abilities. To be sure, Roosevelt never publically criticized Chiang, but his endorsements of the generalissimo were less enthusiastic and less frequent than before the Cairo conference.

By the end of 1944, Soong realized that little additional American aid would be forthcoming. The climate in Washington had changed substantially since Madame Chiang had completed her triumphant tour of the United States and Roosevelt and Chiang had met in Cairo. About the most that Soong could hope to achieve was to get Roosevelt to honor some of the commitments he had made to Chiang prior to the Cairo conference, such as providing arms and funds to complete the retraining of ninety Chinese divisions, and even this would prove to be a difficult task because none of these agreements were written down and the president was in no rush to make good on his word.⁵³

Soong may have accepted the fact that the Kuomintang's glory days in Washington were now over, but Chiang K'ai-shek never quite got the message. After years of being puffed up by Roosevelt's praise and support, the generalissimo found it difficult to adjust to the new realities of Sino-American relations nor was he alone in failing to make this adjustment. The American and Chinese publics were also trapped in

this propaganda time warp.

By accentuating the positive and eliminating the negative, Chinese and American propagandists had created an image that was no more real than a Potemkin village, leaving neither side ready or able to deal with the post-war situation in China. Americans, when they thought about it at all, had come to think of the Kuomintang regime as a force for democracy and stability while the Chinese had come to think of the United States as a stalwart supporter of the generalissimo and a cash cow for his regime. Neither of these views reflected the realities of Sino-American relations.

By the time of his death in April 1945, Roosevelt had reluctantly come to agree with the view of many of the China hands at the State Department that Chiang Kai-shek might not survive the post-war struggle for power that was sure to take place in China. Unfortunately, he did not share his view with the American public which continued to labor under the impression that Chiang was some kind of savior who would lead China to her rightful place in the family of nations when the war ended. He also failed to share these views with Vice President Truman who was left to pick up the pieces of the China puzzle after Roosevelt's death and deal with the China tangle.

If Roosevelt refused to publicize his misgivings about the Kuomintang for fear of harming the war effort, Chiang Kai-shek also preferred to keep his concerns about the president's new China policy quiet for fear that his control of the Kuomintang might be jeopardized if his rivals became aware of the erosion of Roosevelt's support of his regime. Thus, even after Roosevelt had reneged on many of the promises he had made to Chiang in Cairo, the generalissimo missed no opportunity to praise Roosevelt and emphasize the president's unqualified support of his leadership. Chinese newspapers

bombarded their readers with this line on a daily basis, leaving many of them somewhat bewildered in the post-war era when American support of the Kuomintang government seemed to falter.

Since there were no specific accords signed by Chiang and Roosevelt at the Cairo conference, save for the purposefully vague Cairo Declaration, illusion was everything. Roosevelt was happy to give Chiang his moment in the center stage and the generalissimo was only too happy to bask in the glow of the stage lights. When the curtain came down on the summit, both actors returned to their real worlds, which were markedly different from the ambiance of the set at the Mena House Hotel in Cairo. The actors in this drama may have realized the illusory nature of the images that were presented to their audiences after Cairo, but their audiences did not. That was the problem.

At best, summit conferences give world leaders an opportunity to break impasses and resolve differences between friend or foe at the highest level. At worst, summit conferences are a genre of theater, carefully orchestrated to present the actors in the best possible light, but often lacking in substance. The Cairo conference of 1943 occupies a place somewhere between these two extremes.

The original purpose of the Cairo conference, as conceived by Roosevelt, was to give Chiang Kai-shek the public recognition he so desperately desired and needed. The president's mission was to stroke the generalissimo's ego so as to insure China's continued participation in the war against Japan and, also, to take the measure of the man who headed the Kuomintang regime. Roosevelt had no agenda for the talks at Cairo beyond these two goals, both of which he felt he had accomplished at the summit.

The purpose of the Cairo conference, as perceived by Chiang, was to lobby the president for increased aid and full recognition of China's place among the powers. He had no agenda beyond this. When the generalissimo left for Cairo, he had every reason to be optimistic that he would achieve his goals. When he left Cairo, he believed he had accomplished his mission. He would soon learn that this was not the case, although he never quite understood why Roosevelt had abandoned him. Chiang could not publically admit that the conference was a bitter disappointment, but he often shared this view with his intimates, chastising Roosevelt for abandoning the China lobby.⁵⁴

Although neither Chiang nor Roosevelt had any premonition that the Cairo conference would mark an important turning point in Sino-American relations, it did. Roosevelt had come to Cairo to take the measure of Chiang and found him wanting. Never again would he offer the generalissimo his unquestioning support. Chiang had come to Cairo to extract more aid and moral support from Roosevelt and found him untrustworthy and wanting as well. Never again would he be able to count on the president's unlimited largesse.

The Cairo conference marked the zenith of Chiang K'ai-shek's prestige as a world leader; after the conference, it was all downhill for the generalissimo and his regime. Chiang had managed to ride the proverbial Chinese tiger for almost two decades, but he was soon to fall off. Thanks to the effectiveness of Sino-American wartime propaganda, neither the American nor the Chinese people were prepared for Chiang's fall and this was to cause them both considerable pain and suffering after 1943.

1. Elliott Roosevelt, *As He Saw It* (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1946) p. 213.

2. Lord Louis Mountbatten, *Report to the Combined Chiefs of Staff 1943*, p. 29.
3. Ibid., pp. 29-30.
4. Ibid., p. 30.
5. The text of Chiang's cable to Roosevelt, dated December 9, 1943, Franklin Delano Roosevelt Papers (FDR)-MR/10.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.
9. *Stilwell Diaries* (SD), Hoover Institution, Stanford University, December 15, 1943.
10. Ibid.
11. SD, December 16, 1943.
12. Davies to Gauss, "Memorandum of Conversations with Dr. Wang Chung-hui and Sun Fo," *Stilwell Papers* (SP), Hoover Institution, Stanford University, December 18, 1943.
13. Ibid.
14. An undated copy of this dispatch may be found in the *T. V. Soong Papers* (TVS), Hoover Institution, Stanford University, Cable File, December 1943.
15. FDR-LOG, December 18, 1943.
16. SD, December 18, 1943.
17. Ibid.
18. Ibid.
19. Ibid.
20. FDR to CKS, December 20, 1943, FDR-MR-10.
21. Ibid.
22. CKS to FDR, December 23, 1943, FDR-MR-10.

23. Ibid.
24. FDR to CKS, December 27, 1943, FDR-MR-10.
25. A complete translation of the text of Chiang's speech may be found in the Hornbeck Papers (HP), Hoover Institution, Stanford University, in a box of newspaper clippings marked 4-5 January 1944.
26. Gauss to Hornbeck, December 27, 1943, HP.
27. Cordell Hull, The Memoirs of Cordell Hull (New York: MacMillan, 1948), Volume II, p. 1587.
28. TVS to Hopkins, January 1944[undated], TVS.
29. Robert Sherwood, *Roosevelt and Hopkins: An Intimate History* (New York: Harper and Row, 1950), p. 805.
30. TVS to Victor Hoo, January 19, 1943, TVS.
31. Ibid.
32. Ibid.
33. *Chiang Kai-shek Diaries* (CKS), Hoover Institution, Stanford University, December 2, 1943.
34. Blum, *From the Morgenthau Diaries: The War Years: 1941-45* (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1967) p. 104.
35. Ibid.
36. Ibid.
37. Churchill's racism is well documented in Christopher Thorne, *Allies of a Kind: The United States, Britain, and the War Against Japan* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), chapter 1, pp. 3-57
38. FDR to CKS, January 5, 1944, Department of State, Decimal File, China, hereafter referred to as DF, 893.51/7727A.
39. Ibid.
40. CKS to FDR, January 16, 1944, DF, 893.51/7731.
41. ER, pp. 163-165.

42. Ibid.
43. Ibid., p. 164.
44. Roosevelt's change of heart vis-à-vis Chiang and the Kuomintang regime after the Cairo conference was gradual not sudden and the president's rhetoric, albeit toned down, gave no cause for alarm to the generalissimo's most ardent supporters in the United States. There is little if any evidence that members of the China lobby understood that the Cairo conference marked a critical turning point in Sino-American relations. For a fuller account of this issue see Ross Koen, The China Lobby in American Politics (New York: Octagon Books, 1974).
45. Frank Dorn, *Walkout with Stilwell in Burma* (New York: Crowell, 1971), pp. 228-230.
46. "Memorandum of a Conversation with Cordell Hull," March 25, 1944, TVS.
47. Ibid.
48. Ibid.
49. FRUS:China:1944, p. 240.
50. SD, December 6, 1943.
51. Mao Tse-tung, "How Yu Kung Removed the Mountains," Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung: Volume VI, (Peking: Foreign Language Press, 1956), pp. 317-318.
52. Ibid.
53. At the time of the Cairo conference, thirty Chinese divisions had been supplied with new American arms and sent for special training in India under the supervision of General Stilwell. Sixty divisions had yet to be retrained and provided with new equipment.
54. After the Cairo conference, T.V. Soong was frequently treated to Chiang's tirades against Roosevelt's abandonment of the Kuomintang. Soong's papers contain numerous references to these "fusillades." Listening to Chiang berate the president must have been both amusing and painful to Soong given the fact that he had been cut out of any role at the Cairo conference at Chiang's instructions. Soong believed that his absence from the conference had cost Chiang dearly, but he could hardly blame the generalissimo for his own failure and maintain his position in the Kuomintang leadership. Such was Soong's dilemma and the dilemma of others of independent mind in Chiang's entourage.