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Contents

1. The Paper Brigade of Vilna

Maeghan O'Conner 1

2. Interservice Rivalry: Examining the Relationships Between the Intelligence Organizations of the Navy, the Army, and the OSS in China 1939-1943 14

Samuel G. Peterson

Author Biographies 48

The Paper Brigade of Vilna

Maeghan O'Conner

"Di verter veln vern, di verter veln gehern, dem folk in zayn eybikn gang"

The words will nourish, the words will belong, to the people on its eternal path.

- A. Sutzkever, *Grains of Wheat*, Vilna Ghetto, 1943

If asked about the impactful moments of courage displayed in Nazi-occupied Europe, would the preservation of Jewish literature and cultural documentation be the first subject to come to mind? Compared to the tragedies between the years of 1940 to 1945, saving pieces of paper would seem like the work of madmen. However, one must also imagine the perspective of a group of people, seeing their community wiped out one-by-one, taking their memories with them.

For the Jewish community in Europe, threats to their life, culture, and community had become a real burden, even before Nazi-occupation. An ever marginalized and terrorized lot, efforts to collect Yiddish history and literature had not been particularly successful. That is why the presence of the Libraries and Archives in the "Jerusalem of Lithuania," or Vilna, which had made efforts to preserve and research Yiddish culture, was so important and why their fall in 1940 was so devastating. However, the measures taken by a group in Lithuania—The Paper Brigade—changed what might have been a catastrophic result for Jewish remembrance after the war. The courageous actions of the Paper Brigade to smuggle the contents of YIVO (*Yidisher Visnshaftlekher Institut*) and Strashun Library in Vilna saved the culture of a community that would have otherwise been forgotten.

YIVO, originally founded in 1925, worked to preserve the breadth of Jewish culture, language, and literature before World War II. It was composed of founders from both Berlin and Vilna, with the majority of its contents being held in Lithuania prior to 1940. Modern-day YIVO resides in New York City, having been moved during the war.

A second archive heavily tied to YIVO was the infamous "National Library" of Jews in Vilna: The Strashun Library. It was considered the first modern Jewish library and housed an epic collection of books and documents related to the heritage, ethics, religion, music, literature, and politics of the Jewish people dating back to the 15th century. Almost all of the contents that would be saved date

before 1940, with a large majority being from the interwar period in which preservation became a pressing concern.¹

Prior to the creation of YIVO, most Yiddish repositories of scholarship were small efforts by individuals or a few persons that were often temporary or lacked investment. However, war-torn Europe, beginning in World War I and the destruction that followed, served as a motivation for more fleshed-out and much-needed preservation movements.² Vilna was a natural candidate for a place of preservation due to the Strashun Library and the thriving Jewish community that was invested in and passionate about preserving written Yiddish works.

According to Lucy Dawidowicz Vilna (Vilnius in modern Lithuanian), was less the Paris or Rome of the north, but rather an Old World lacking in hustle and bustle. It had only 200,000 inhabitants during her stay from 1938 to 1939. As a leading American-Jewish historian, Dawidowicz studied in Vilna up until the German Invasion and her work *From That Place and Time: A Memoir, 1938-1947* gives a critical glimpse into the Jewish Community of Vilna prior to World War II.³

In Vilna, about 60,000 or 30 percent of the population were Jews, with Catholic Lithuanians and Poles comprising roughly 60 percent. According to Dawidowicz, the Jewish presence and sounds of Yiddish were as prominent and central to the city as any Christian Cathedral. One could live comfortably only knowing Yiddish at this time, as it was spoken widely in the markets and other public places. -- many streets and landmarks being given unique Yiddish names within the community.⁴

Native Vilna resident and author Abraham Karpinowitz, when remembering his pre-war home stated: "In Vilna, we lived a full-bodied Jewish life. Despite the alien surroundings, despite our poverty, despite the pressure from all sides, we contributed with creativity and enthusiasm to Jewish culture and Jewish continuity." He speaks of the magic that Vilna possessed, with winding streets and a simpleness that he longed for in faraway places. With lament, he accepts it as the town he remembered, not what it had become. Nothing remains of the Vilna that he knew and he will never be able to share that town with his children; a "Vilna without Vilna."⁵

During its time as a lively Jewish haven in Europe, Vilna was extremely valued and considered a bastion of knowledge and culture. In Vilna, it was believed that they would be spared persecution as

¹ Cecile Kuznitz, *YIVO and the Making of Modern Jewish Culture: Scholarship for the Yiddish Nation*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 44-60.

² Kuznitz, *YIVO*, 17-44.

³ Lucy Dawidowicz, *From that Place and Time: A Memoir, 1938-1947*, (Rutgers: Rutgers University Press, 2008), 28-50.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 28-50.

⁵ Abraham Karpinowitz and Helen Mintz, *Vilna My Vilna: Stories by Abraham Karpinowitz*, (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2016), 22-23, 151.

the "Jerusalem of Lithuania," in which the Jewish heroes Vilna Gaon and Ger-Tsedek were buried. In retrospect, one might believe this made them a target.⁶

Why was Nazi Germany obsessed with confiscating Jewish books and documents during World War II? This can be answered from both an idealistic and practical viewpoint.

Idealistically, this movement stemmed from the attack on all things "un-German." As shown in the "Twelve Theses against the Un-German Spirit," a manifesto distributed in 1933 by the German Student Union, a purification of literature and the German language was called for as it was tainted by the "Dangerous Enemy." The tenets of the German spirit, expressed through the pillars of the National Socialist Party of Germany, included Romanticism, nationalism, racism, social Darwinism, and anti-modernism. Early twentieth-century conservative Romanticism that was common in Germany at the time discarded the cosmopolitan and egalitarian ideals of the Enlightenment—and by extension the inspired Jewish Enlightenment—and was more focused on the *Geist* (spirit or genius) of the German language, literature, and customs. This culminated in the desire to sterilize Europe of the intellectual influences of the Jews which they believed to be incapable of purification or assimilation.⁷

From a practical standpoint, Nazi Germany planned to assemble much of the intellectual wealth of Europe for their own uses and gains. The most prominent way that this affected Jewish libraries and repositories were the *Einsatzstab Reichsleiter Rosenberg* (ERR), or Reich Leader Rosenberg Taskforce, a specialized task force headed by Alfred Rosenberg. The main purpose of the ERR was to confiscate library and depository documents, specifically of Jewish origin, across Europe. Its mother project was created to gather materials for an envisioned National Socialist Party university that would not come to exist; however, it was to consist of the following branches: Judaism and Free-masonry, communism, racial biology, theology, Indo-Germanic intellectual history, overseas and colonial ideological studies, German folklore, Eastern Europe, early Germanic Studies, racial hygiene, art, Germany and France, and Celtic Studies. Due to wartime constraints of funds and manpower, the

⁶ Herman Kruk, *The Last Days of the Jerusalem of Lithuania: Chronicles from the Vilna Ghetto and the Camps, 1939-1944*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 53.

⁷ Jonathan Rose and Leonidas Hill, "The Nazi Attack on "Un-German" Literature, 1933-1945," in Jonathan Rose, ed. *The Holocaust and the Book: Destruction and Preservation*, (Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001), 10-12.

project was postponed but Rosenberg was permitted to begin the preparatory work and his task force of collecting materials and setting up a library.⁸

Rosenberg could be called an ideal poster child for Nazi anti-Semitism, as he was obsessed with the "Jewish Question" and proving the Jews were harmful to Germany and the purity of the world. Rosenberg's plan included establishing twelve research institutes which would each cover a different area of Nazi ideology and would hasten the goals of a central institution once the war was over. Only three of the institutes ever got off the ground before the cessation of most non-essential activities, with the *Institut der NSDAP zur Erforschung der Judenfrage* (Institute of the NSDAP for the Investigation of the Jewish Question) being the only institute left operational. This institute was incredibly important to Rosenberg, as it aimed to gather the research on Jewish issues scattered throughout Germany, as well as to gather Jewish materials across Europe to be studied by anti-Semitic scholars. They sought to collect all Jewish literature in both Hebrew and Yiddish, not just religious texts; it was a question of Jewish culture in general. Their research would not be "hindered" by Jewish influence and viewpoints with this approach.⁹

At first, a representative of the ERR named Dr. Gotthardt arrived in Vilna in June 1941 and visited various museums, libraries, and synagogues to collect information and ask about the state of Jewish collections and prominent scholars. As a result, he had three scholars arrested: Noyekh Prilutski (Yiddish folklorist, linguist, and former YIVO director), Eliyohu Yankev Goldschmidt (Yiddish journalist and director of the Ansky Jewish Ethnographic Museum), and Chaikl Lunski (Head of Strashun Library). They were put to the task of compiling lists of the antique and rare books, being transported from their cells to the Strashun Library daily. Although Lunski would be released, Prilutski and Goldschmidt were murdered by the Gestapo, according to Abraham Sutzkever.¹⁰

In August 1941, a short two months later, the ERR task force arrived in Vilna to immediately begin occupying the Strashun Library and YIVO for confiscation. Twelve workers from the *Judenrat* (which will be discussed later), at least five of which were specialists in Jewish culture, were conscripted by the ERR to begin sorting the books and documents. They were to select books of importance or value to be shipped to Germany. Documents and items considered unworthy were sold for scrap and

⁸ Donald Collins, "The Einsatzstab Reichsleiter Rosenberg and the Looting of Jewish and Masonic Libraries during World War II," *The Journal of Library History (1974-1987)* 18, no.1 (1983): 22-23.

⁹ Collins, "The Einsatzstab," 23-25.

¹⁰ Jonathan Rose and David Fishman, "Embers Plucked from the Fire: The Rescue of Jewish Cultural Treasures in Vilna," in *The Holocaust and the Book*, 68.

burned for heating.¹¹ Additionally, a quota was set by Rosenberg that no more than thirty percent of the materials could be considered valuable and seventy percent had to be destroyed.¹²

According to an ERR report from March 1944, "There are numbers of Torah rolls lying here, in which the Frankfurter Institute no longer has any interest. Perhaps, however, the leather can still have some use for bookbinding." For the most part, religious texts, in Hebrew or especially German, were considered of no value to the Nazis and were reserved for repurposing or burning. Only texts that could provide insight into the culture, history, and "nature" of Judaism were considered valuable.¹³

This is particularly discomfoting due to the nature of Jewish tradition towards the disposal of texts relating to God. Several Jewish codes of law forbid burning, believing that documents used for holy purposes acquire holiness themselves. The common practice involves burying of holy texts or any documents which refer to God, often separate spaces called Genizahs serve as an archive. As has been seen through several sources in Nazi-occupied Europe, this practice was often directly used against Jewish people as a form of punishment or humiliation. For example, during testimony from Menachem Finkelsztajn, sourced from *Neighbors* by Jan T. Gross:¹⁴

"Soldiers order the Jews to bring out all of the holy books and Torahs from the synagogue and the prayer house and burn them. When the Jews refused, Germans ordered them to unroll the Torahs and to douse them in kerosene, and they set them alight. They ordered the Jews to sing and dance around the huge burning pile."

Although this would be a cruel act to most persons against their religious faith, it was in direct opposition to known Jewish customs. This is but one example of barbarity and viciousness displayed towards Jews in Nazi-occupied Europe, and subjectively could be compared to the more horrific actions against human life during the war. However, it served as an important catalyst to the actions of what would be called the Paper Brigade in Vilna.

The Paper Brigade, or *Di papir-brigade*, a name presumably given by the Ghetto police, was born from the work being done by the members of the Judenrat. A Judenrat, or Jewish council, was

¹¹ Dawidowicz, *From That Place and Time*, 249-276.

¹² David Fishman, "The Last Zmlers: Avrom Sutzkever and Shmerke Kaczerginski in Vilna, 1944-1945," in *Going to the People: Jews and the Ethnographic Impulse*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2016), 165.

¹³ Jacqueline Borin, "Embers of the Soul: The Destruction of Jewish Books and Libraries in Poland during World War II," *Libraries & Culture* 28, no. 4 (1993): 445-60.

¹⁴ Jan T. Gross, *Neighbors: The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Poland*. (New York: Penguin Books, 2002), 32-34.

created in Jewish communities across Europe during Nazi-occupation and served as an administrative agency to work directly with Germany.

With regards to Vilna and their Judenrat, it was composed of individuals selected by the community. The meeting to decide who would serve was attended by fifty seven people and it was agreed that it was the duty of the Jewish community to effectively run the Judenrat, despite the risks to the chosen members. In the beginning, ten members were chosen to represent each individual "faction": Zionists, artisans, merchants, intelligentsia, industrialists, teachers, and doctors. It was increased to twenty-four in July 1941, and would fluctuate, either because of death, escape from Vilna, or removal, and had a revolving door of members due to the dangerous nature of their work.¹⁵

Workers that were chosen from the Judenrat to cooperate with the ERR in confiscating and sorting the Strashun Library and YIVO were dismayed by the harsh treatment of beloved and important documents of Jewish culture, to put it mildly. According to one of the workers, Zelig Kalmanovich on August 26, 1943: "All week I sorted books; several thousands I cast with my own hands on the rubbish pile. Heaps of books lie on the floor of the YIVO's reading room - a graveyard of books, a mass burial plot, casualties of the war of Gog and Magog, just like their owners."¹⁶

Being the antithesis of Jewish tradition, the salvaging of their libraries and archives led the workers to take action. The true heroes in this situation were the workers, led by Herman Kruk and the poets Abraham Sutzkever and Shmerke Kaczerginski, who began smuggling of whatever important books and manuscripts they could rescue to be concealed in the ghetto for safekeeping. The members of the Brigade included Kruk, Sutzkever, Kaczerginski, Zelig Kalmanovich, Dr. Daniel Feinshteyn, Dr. Yankev Gordon, Naomi Markeles, Uma Olkenicki, Ruzhka Korczak, and Rokhl (Rachel) Pupko-Krinsky.¹⁷

One tactic used at the start by Judenrat workers, and specifically the members of the Paper Brigade, was to stall and "drag out" their work as much as possible. Often, when duty was switched from German to Polish officers during the day, the workers would be more daring and turn to other activities such as reading or writing. Some of the workers would teach the soldiers physics or mathematics rather than sort. Much of Sutzkever's and Kaczerginski's poetry from this time was written in the YIVO building.¹⁸

¹⁵ Herman Kruk, *The Last Days of the Jerusalem of Lithuania: Chronicles from the Vilna Ghetto and the Camps, 1939-1944*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 52-71.

¹⁶ Borin, "Embers of the Soul," 451.

¹⁷ Rose and Fishman, "Plucked from the Fire," 68-72. Kruk, *Last Days*, 212.

¹⁸ Rose and Fishman, "Plucked from the Fire," 70.

From the beginning, the workers looked for ways to get books destined for destruction back into the "safe hands" of the ghetto. This could be done legally, by having them re-consigned to the Ghetto Library. However, it seems that illegal smuggling became the most efficient method. It began by workers smuggling what they could, including books, manuscripts, artwork, and ritual objects, from the YIVO headquarters into the Vilna Ghetto to keep in their homes. Later, a variety of hiding spots were used, notably the attic of the YIVO building, non-Jewish libraries outside of the ghetto, hidden bunkers, and underground. Unfortunately, with the destruction of the YIVO building during the liquidation of the Vilna ghetto in September 1943, the contents that were saved were lost.¹⁹

For Kruk, an important location for storing books was the Ghetto Library, which was operating before the war. Prior to 1939, its collection had approximately forty-five thousand books. As of 1941, nine thousand had gone missing, not including the fifteen hundred taken by ghetto residents. It served as an important place for Kruk and the community, being a place for entertainment, escape, and comfort. Often people would ask to work for the Library, aware of the fact that they would not receive pay; having a reason to leave the house and better considerations for a pass from the Germans was enough. Kruk mentions that the more the population declined during the Aktions—even as much as thirty to forty percent in November of 1942—the number of books borrowed had a massive increase. He postulates through several of his writings that the citizens of the ghetto relied more on books the worse the situation became, to distract themselves and cope with isolation.²⁰

Other significant and more specific outcomes for the smuggled materials were quite practical: schools and the *Fareynikte Partizaner Organizatsye* (FPO), a resistance organization. Schools in the ghetto would frequently receive instructional and children's books that had been smuggled, specifically those that were available in multiple quantities. Kruk was often allowed by the Germans to take desks and tables from YIVO into the ghetto to be given to schools, the Ghetto Library, or the Judenrat; according to his journals, he often used this legitimized delivery to hide books for the schools.²¹ In terms of materials given to the FPO, munitions manuals that contained information on how to make Molotov cocktails and land mines are one example.²²

¹⁹ Ibid., 69. Kuznitz, *YIVO*, 182-185.

²⁰ Kruk, *Last Days*, 116, 283, 355, 408. Jonathan Rose and Herman Kruk, "Library and Reading Room in the Vilna Ghetto, Strashun Street 6," in *The Holocaust and the Book*, 192-193.

²³ Kruk, *Last Days*, 322.

²³ Kruk, *Last Days*, 322.

In terms of how the items were smuggled, many different approaches were taken. The most common was to hide materials in their clothing, such as coats or pants pockets. It wasn't much of a worry if the gates into the ghetto were manned by the Jewish ghetto police, as they didn't see paper as a threat. However, when manned by German SS or Gestapo forces, the risk was significantly higher. If word could reach the Paper Brigade members in time that it was a risk that day, they would often take a different route and leave their collections for the day with a trusted person outside the ghetto. However, sometimes the members of the brigade would try going through the gate anyway. If Jewish materials were found on their person, they would be beaten, but let off with a warning and a threat.²³

More creative ways were also implemented. For example, Sutzkever, reportedly the most active and risk-taking of the members, obtained a permit from the Germans to take some of the documents to be discarded as oven kindling in the ghetto. However, with this permit, he was able to save documents by Tolstoy, Sholem Aleichem, and a one-of-a-kind manuscript from the Vilna Gaon. Sutzkever was also able to use connections with friends of influence to get large items such as sculptures and paintings smuggled into the ghetto, although the details are vague on these accomplishments.²⁴

This incredibly risky action was juxtaposed with the task the workers were given of selecting and preparing for shipment of books and documents to be sent to Germany, which they admittedly performed. Many of the workers believed that the most valuable works would in fact be better off sent with the ERR to the Frankfurt Institute and that they had a better chance of surviving the war than in the Ghetto.²⁵

In an entry from his often-damaged journals during the war on January 19, 1942, Kruk ponders: "Kalman[owicz] and I don't know if we are gravediggers or saviors. If we succeed in keep[ing the treasure] in Vilna, it could be our [great ser]vice to some extent, but if they take the library away, we [will have] had a hand in it. But I am trying to insure myself for [all cases]." Further, he mentions the following "insurances":²⁶

1. So far, we have already, as noted above, taken some 3,000 books out [of the Strashun Libr]ary;
2. The janitor of the Synagogue Yard is hiding a few thousand [...] holy books in his house;
3. Today we got the decision from Dr. Müller that we will receive duplicates;

²³ Kruk, *Last Days*, 322.

²⁴ Rose and Fishman, "Plucked from the Fire," 70-71.

²⁵ Dawidowicz, *From that Place and Time*, 249-276. Kuznitz, *YIVO*, 182-185.

²⁶ Kruk, *Last Days*, 212-213.

4. We also take out books little by little we [...]thus, in case we go away [are deported]. But if [we succeed in preserving the library], we will remain victorious because the library remains in the building of the university library, in safe hands!

The first impactful thing to note about Kruk's entry this day are the feelings of conflict and duty for the workers. At this point, it seems as though Kruk does not believe any of the contents will actually leave Vilna. He was wrong, however, as many shipments were slowly made to the Frankfurt Institute, but not at the rate in which Germany expected. After the ghetto liquidation in 1943, another fifty-thousand volumes were awaiting transportation out of Vilna, but their fate was undetermined.²⁷

Kruk's entry also mentions receiving duplicates, presumably to go to Ghetto libraries. Dr. Müller, mentioned in this note, was actually a member of the ERR Task Force and a "Jewish Specialist." His permit to the workers to keep duplicate works was a refreshingly human detail to discover, showing a level of rare but welcome empathy. In his position of power, he could have easily refused, claiming that they were needed for salvage to serve Germany. To allow any sort of concession in a program discussed earlier as purification of un-German influence was remarkable.²⁸

Despite this bright spot in an otherwise sunless time, Kruk speaks of several uncomfortable and distressing times working with the ERR. He refers to "wolf" and "sheep" many times, pointing to the predatory nature of the arrangement between the Germans and the Jewish workers, as well as the nature of their collection program. When tensions were existed between Germans and Vilna citizens, or even when Germany appeared to be at a low point during the war, the retaliation seemed to be mass destruction of documents that had either been unsorted or deemed worthy of keeping. These occurrences became more frequent as the war progressed.²⁹

As the liquidation of the Vilna Ghetto approached in 1943, the members of the Brigade knew that their window to act was becoming smaller. Larger quantities were being cast aside for salvage, including nearly all Jewish books at this point. At this point, the members were stashing as much as they could, believing they would return to retrieve it as "free human beings," according to Kalmanovich. The unfortunate but predictable outcome that befalls most stories from Jewish movements in World War II did befall the Paper Brigade. The majority were murdered at *Ponar*, the site of the mass-murders outside Vilna, or as workers in Estonia after the liquidation, including Kruk who buried his diaries in the camp. The surviving members were those who belonged to the FPO

²⁷ Borin, "Embers of the Soul," 451.

²⁸ Kruk, *Last Days*, 212.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 340, 369-367, 535.

resistance and fled to join partisan groups right before the liquidation; those members were Sutzkever, Kaczerginski, Rokhl Pupko-Krinsky, and Ruzhka Korczak.

One must ask, having seen the risks of life and security that the Paper Brigade endured, why go through this trouble for pieces of paper? Kaczerginski remarks on being asked this exact question: "Jews looked at us as if we were lunatics. *They* were smuggling foodstuffs into the ghetto, in their clothing and boots—and *we* were smuggling books, pieces of paper, occasionally a *Sefer Torah* or mezuzahs." Kalmanovich would also reply satirically: "books don't grow on trees."³⁰ However, the significant motive that stood unanimous through the Paper Brigade and the creators of YIVO, as well as other cultural preservation movements in Jewish communities during this time such as Oyneg Shabes, was the need to preserve Jewish memory during a time of such frailty and uncertainty. In the specific case of Oyneg Shabes, it was to assure that the Jewish narrative during the war would be remembered; for the actions which took place in Vilna, it was to guarantee that the cultural fabric of Jewishness and its legacy would not vanish as many of their kinsmen had.

As a whole, it was estimated that approximately thirty to forty percent of the Jewish materials in Vilna—from YIVO, Strashun, various synagogues, and smaller libraries—were saved to a great extent by the Paper Brigade's smuggling.³¹ In terms of what was found in Germany, an estimated seventy-nine thousand were able to be traced back to YIVO. In Hungen there were approximately one-hundred thousand volumes, mostly in Hebrew, which were unceremoniously deposited by the Germans with no protection from the elements. They were moved there due to threats posed by air attacks on Frankfurt, with a large portion of the collection being destroyed in November 1943. Another large portion of the collection in Frankfurt equaling around one-hundred and thirty thousand volumes changed into American hands in 1945.³²

After finding these collections, the first course of action was to return as much as possible to the rightful owners. Library markings were the most common indicator, with whole library collections often being kept together. However, when an owner could not be found, the documents were distributed to Jewish libraries and institutions across the globe. Their distribution was decided by the Committee on European Cultural Reconstruction in New York, along with a commission from the

³⁰ Rose and Fishman, "Plucked from the Fire," 71.

³¹ Dawidowicz, *From that Place and Time*, 249-276.

³² Borin, "Embers of the Soul," 455-456.

Conference on Jewish Relations whose goal was reestablishing Jewish cultural institutions across Europe.³³

In Vilna, Sutzkever and Kacerginski had safely ridden out the rest of the war with the FPO and were able to return to Vilna. According to Sutzkever, when he heard that Vilna had been liberated: "If not for the hidden cultural treasures, I don't know I would have had enough strength to return to my home city. I knew that I wouldn't find any of my loved ones." They started work immediately on finding their hiding spots and retrieving what had survived. They confirmed that the YIVO building and all contents hidden inside it were destroyed, having been hit by several artillery shells. Additionally, the hiding place most often used by Kruk inside the Ghetto Library was discovered just before the liberation and the Germans had incinerated all of its contents in the courtyard of the library. However, many underground bunkers and burial spots were unharmed. Gentiles that the brigade had trusted with materials also began to deliver them as word spread. Ironically, often Poles and Lithuanians thought that the Jews looking for hidden materials were looting or digging for gold, sometimes calling Soviet police or officials on them.

As Sutzkever and Kacerginski began salvaging these materials, they also established the "Museum of Jewish Art and Culture," meant to house their findings. It became the most prominent Jewish location in the city, where survivors would gather, send and receive letters from dispersed family members, and was the site of the first post-war Jewish school.³⁴

Over time, despite the survivors' attempts to create a museum to memorialize the lives and culture of a dead community, they realized it had no place in Soviet Lithuania, despite the support received from Moscow Jewish intelligentsia. Funding and salaries were non-existent, vehicles to transport the massive number of materials were denied, and the building eventually assigned to the museum was the burnt remnant of the Ghetto Library. The Soviets reportedly questioned whether separate Jewish spaces and museums were necessary; if they were all Soviet citizens, why should this be a priority? Additionally, Kacerginski who acted as the head of the museum would receive frequent visits from the KGB, stating that the public could not access books without prior Soviet approval. The documents that were sent for review were usually not returned to the museum.³⁵

At this turning point, Kacerginski declared:³⁶

³³ Borin, "Embers of the Soul," 455-456.

³⁴ Rose and Fishman, "Plucked from the Fire," 73. Fishman, 165-166.

³⁵ Fishman, "Last Zamlers," 169-172.

³⁶ Rose and Fishman, "Plucked from the Fire," 73-75.

"That is when we, the group of museum activists, had a bizarre realization—we must save our treasures *again*, and get them out of here. Otherwise, they will perish. In the best of cases, they will survive but will never see the light of day in the Jewish world."

Sutzkever had already emigrated, first to Poland through connections, with materials in his bags and a package to be sent to YIVO. According to Dawidowicz, during her visit with him in Paris in 1947, he had several suitcases filled with:³⁷

"a collection of documents about life and death in the Vilna Ghetto. In the months to come, Sutzkever mailed these materials, envelope by envelope, to the YIVO in New York. They became the Sutzkever-Kacerginski Collection of the Vilna Ghetto in YIVO's archives."

Other museum activists began to leave little-by-little, taking whatever they could smuggle with them, ending with Kacerginski giving his resignation and arranging connections for one last smuggling to YIVO in New York.³⁸

Everyone involved had reportedly hoped for a better fate and eventual acquisition of the documents left behind in Vilna. Unfortunately, as with most narratives from the Jewish Ghettos and Soviet Europe, this favorable ending never happened. In 1948, the news of a KGB raid on the museum reached the activists in the west. The museum had been liquidated, was rounded up on Soviet trucks, and dumped in an old church to be called the *Bikeber-palate*, or book chamber. While some documents were actually stored properly, the Jewish and Hebrew materials were thrown into the basement.

They would remain in this state for the next forty years until their existence was finally rediscovered in 1988. Years were spent cataloging and a second batch was even found in 1993. To much rejoicing, the collections that survived the moratorium were sent to YIVO in 1995 and 1996. This monumental moment was celebrated by YIVO and the Jewish community, using the poem by Sutzkever, *Grains of Wheat* or *Kerndlekh Veyts*, as motivation for healing and remembrance.³⁹

As recently as October 24, 2017, lost collections were still being found in Vilna. The "Vilna Discovery," contains approximately one hundred and seventy thousand documents, adding to the roughly one million items to the YIVO Vilna Collections. It was found in the *Bikeber-palate*, in a room completely sealed and hidden by the librarian Antanas Ulpis, which would have been a remarkable

³⁷ Dawidowicz, *From that Place and Time*, 299-326.

³⁸ Fishman, "Last Zamlers," 169-172. Rose and Fishman, "Plucked from the Fire," 73-75.

³⁹ Rose and Fishman, 74-76.

risk in Soviet Lithuania. It contained unseen poems from Sutzkever and Kaczerginski and letters from Sholem Aleichem, to name a few.

This continued discovery shows the lengths to which The Paper Brigade, but also the Jewish community of Vilna, went to to see their culture preserved. Only through the strength of will and utmost courage could a feat such as the preservation that took place in Vilna occur. The actions of everyone involved, from the fearless smuggling of the Paper Brigade to efforts to collectivize and preserve what has survived, should serve as an inspiration to future generations and a reminder of the strength of community and perseverance.

Interservice Rivalry: Examining the Relationships Between the Intelligence Organizations of the Navy, the Army and the OSS in China 1939-1943

Samuel G. Peterson

Intelligence gathering had a profound impact on WWII. Because of this, scholars have investigated the intelligence networks and organizations that blossomed during this war in earnest. Allied engagement and actions in China are a particular area of scholarly intrigue in the role of intelligence in WWII. Although research with the aim of telling and retelling the story of US operations in China during WWII has been widely published, the interservice rivalry — more specifically, bureaucratic battles between the three major intelligence organizations of the time: the Navy, the Army, and the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), a new agency of Roosevelt's creation— has only been considered a secondary theme in many works rather than the focus of study.¹ In war-torn China, the US Navy, the Army, and the fledgling OSS contested with each other during the Chinese Nationalists' fight against the Japanese Empire.

The stories of the OSS, the Navy and the Army in China have all, until now, been told from three distinct but interrelated points of view. With each study solely based on a particular organization, bias toward others is inevitable. By synthesizing the sources together and weaving the different interpretations of events simultaneously, a clearer picture of the interdepartmental struggles can be seen. The primary goal of such a study is not to find fault in or blame a singular organization for the failure of a larger historical event, but rather to fill in the gaps left by the existing historiography. The purpose of this article is to provide a holistic perspective based on the existing secondary and primary source material for each of the three competing intelligence organizations in China. And by doing so, I attempt to provide new interpretations for the reasons motivating such rivalries which can contribute to a fuller understanding of the US experience in China in WWII.

The Situation in China

By the later 1930s, the Chinese Nationalists (KMT), led by Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek, had succeeded in unifying almost all of China under a democratic banner, with only the Chinese Communists still in opposition. Chiang was committed to unifying all of China, and so the KMT military focused their forces against the Chinese Communists. Concurrently, the Japanese Empire threatened to invade further into Chinese territory from occupied Manchuria (Map 1). The

¹ Maochun Yu, *OSS in China: Prelude to Cold War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 265, EBSCOhost eBook Collection.

Generalissimo hoped that he could continue to fight off the Communists while deterring the Imperial Japanese through diplomacy. Soon, he realized that Japanese imperialism could not be stalled and that a united front between the Chinese Communists and the Nationalists was necessary. According to Charles Romanus and Riley Sutherland's *Stilwell's Mission to China*, the official military history of the US Army's experience in China, in December 1936, the KMT and Chinese Communists entered into a shaky alliance to expel the Japanese Empire, which formally invaded in 1937.² The alliance between the KMT and the Chinese Communists lasted until 1941. This alliance was short-lived and contentious, because at the root of it all, Chiang Kai-shek did whatever he thought was in the best interests of persevering the Republic of China. Despite the ongoing fight against the Japanese Empire, the greatest threat to the KMT, in his eyes, was the Chinese Communists. By 1938, the Japanese Imperial army forced the Chinese Nationalists to retreat to Chungking which became the seat of Chiang Kai-shek's wartime government. Under these complex political circumstances, the Chinese Nationalists drew closer to the United States and the Japanese Empire strengthened ties to Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy.³

The United States, unlike Great Britain, accepted the Republic of China as a great power and sought to equip the Chinese Nationalist Army and Air Force.⁴ Under the Lend-Lease Act (1941), President Franklin Roosevelt agreed to send aid to the Chinese Nationalists. Chiang Kai-shek and his representative in Washington, T.V. Soong, were certain that the KMT could prevail against the Japanese Imperial forces if adequate supplies were provided.⁵ Above all, President Roosevelt believed that supporting the Chinese Nationalists was essential to halt the Imperial Japanese conquest of the Pacific. Part of this aid to China included US Army and Navy missions tasked with supporting the KMT in requesting lend-lease aid as well as gathering useful intelligence for the war.

Historiographical Commentary

Past study of this subject has suggested that the rivalries which developed between the Army, Navy, and OSS in China were motivated by a desire to assert control over the region.⁶ I will demonstrate that, in addition to a desire for power, these rivalries were influenced by opposing ideological principles which were embodied by the leaders of the three organizations. By adding a new

² Charles Romanus and Riley Sunderland, *CMH Pub 9-1 Stilwell's Mission to China* (Washington DC: Office of the Chief of Military History, 1953), 6, <https://archive.org/details/CMHPub9-1/mode/1up>.

³ Romanus and Sunderland, *Stilwell's Mission to China*, 7.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 50.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 14.

⁶ Yu, *OSS in China*, 265.

layer of complexity to these rivalries, we glean a new perspective of America's experience in China during WWII.

The US Navy's Office of Naval Intelligence (ONI) is known for the pursuits of "Ultra" codebreakers who decoded impenetrable Japanese codes.⁷ Although codebreaking was vital to Allied success on the seas, other intelligence missions also had an impact on the war against the Japanese Empire, particularly the naval operations on the ground in China. The earliest attempts to tell the Navy's story in China in WWII are primarily based upon the memories of the Americans and Chinese soldiers who served.

One of these stories, published in 1967, was written by Vice Admiral Milton Miles who headed the ONI's Sino-American intelligence organization on mainland China.⁸ The book centers around a Naval mission to mainland China where Miles was ordered to gather intelligence and to "harass" the Japanese Imperial Army on the mainland.⁹ To accomplish this, Miles cooperated with Dai Li, the leader of the Chinese secret police, and together they organized the Sino-American Cooperative Organization (SACO). Under the leadership of Dai Li and Miles, SACO grew to become a major force for intelligence gathering and guerilla warfare throughout the war in China. Admiral Miles and the Chinese Nationalists distrusted the OSS and the Army. In his view, this distrust stemmed from "white supremacist" and "pro-British imperialist" sentiments.¹⁰ Miles impresses upon the reader a perception of himself and SACO as seeking to help the Chinese on their terms, a goal opposite of the OSS and the Army, which both sought to control "their" piece of China. Bias aside, Miles's narrative is useful because it sheds light on the Navy's side of the rivalry that is otherwise unsung.

In the early 1970s, new material was published regarding the conflict in China from the perspective of the Army. Barbara Tuchman's *Stilwell and the American Experience in China* draws primarily from *The Stilwell Papers* which were published in 1948 by General Joseph Stilwell's family. General Stilwell was sent to China to be a US military representative to Chiang Kai-Shek and to aid Chinese Nationalists forces in their fight against the Japanese invaders. Tuchman paints General Stilwell as a surly, headstrong man, but also as the victim of an overbearing Chiang Kai-Shek, incompetent Chinese generals, and intense Anglophobia. Tuchman does not provide useful information on Stilwell's conflict with Miles, and instead showcases the animosity between Stilwell and Chiang. To Tuchman,

⁷ Wilfred Holmes, *Double-Edged Secrets: US Naval Intelligence Operations in the Pacific during WWII* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1979), ix.

⁸ Milton Miles, *A Different Kind of War: The Little-Known Story of the Combined Guerrilla Forces Created in China by the U.S. Navy and the Chinese During World War II* (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1967).

⁹ *Ibid.*, 12-15.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 117.

Stilwell was the symbol of traditional American leadership—a servant leader, sacrificial, and no nonsense—who was caught in the middle of a tumultuous domestic political climate and at the mercy of an “amateurish” and dogmatic leader.¹¹ To further complicate matters for Stilwell, his relations with the Navy and the Chinese Nationalist Army were tense from the beginning.¹² The Chinese Nationalist generals did not follow General Stilwell’s orders while he was supposedly the Commander in Chief of Chinese operations. Stilwell felt at odds with Washington, and believed that President Roosevelt considered the Navy as “the apple of his eye and the Army is the stepchild.”¹³

Some historians find fault with Tuchman’s analysis. Ching-tung Liang, for instance, contradicts Tuchman in *General Stilwell in China 1942-1944: The Full Story*. Liang revises her “one-sided” thesis and asserts that it relies too heavily upon documents from Stilwell’s family.¹⁴ Liang makes the claim as a Taiwanese author, citing documentation from both Chinese and English sources. His argument states Stilwell’s shortcomings in two parts. Firstly, the conflict between Stilwell and the Generalissimo was a result of misunderstanding about the extent of Stilwell’s command over KMT forces.¹⁵ Secondly, Liang points out how Stilwell used his relationship with Gen. George Marshall, the chief of staff of the Army, to have the president put pressure on Chiang in at least five instances of “insubordination.”¹⁶ Overall, Liang’s study leaves the reader with the impression that Stilwell sought to impress his own military doctrine upon the Generalissimo rather than aid him. Regardless of their contrasting opinions of Stilwell, Tuchman and Liang effectively depict the Army’s experience in China from both Stilwell’s perspective and the KMT’s perspective.

In addition to telling the stories of the Navy and the Army’s presence in China, historians looked to the third and previously obscured role of the Office of Strategic Services, the precursor organization to the CIA. Former CIA employee, Richard Smith attempted to break through the, “time-worn curtain of government secrecy,” in *OSS: The Secret History of America’s First Central Intelligence Agency* in 1973.¹⁷ Yet, only one chapter is devoted to the Office of Strategic Services’ forays into China. In “The Chinese Puzzle,” Smith explains the situation in China as, “a different war in an alien world.”¹⁸

¹¹ Barbara Tuchman, *Stilwell and the American Experience in China, 1911-45* (New York: Bantam Books, 1971), 341, <https://archive.org/details/stilwellamerican00bant>.

¹² *Ibid.*, 1.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 309.

¹⁴ Chin-tung Liang, *General Stilwell in China, 1942-1944: The Full Story* (St. John’s University Press, 1972), xvii-xviii.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, xii.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, xiii.

¹⁷ Richard Harris Smith, *OSS: The Secret History of America’s First Central Intelligence Agency* (New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1972), xi.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 242.

OSS operations in China were met with hostility from both the KMT and the Army. Smith writes that due to fears of unaccountable spy networks and British meddling, “neither Stilwell nor the Chinese government wanted the OSS’s secret services.”¹⁹ The British were active in China from the outset of the war, hoping to protect their colonial interests in the country. Throughout the book’s chapter on the OSS in China, Smith defends the OSS and its commander, Colonel William Donovan. The OSS chief was often involved in hostile dealings with Captain Miles, which Smith asserts were the result of Miles’s phobia of bureaucrats.²⁰ Although Smith’s work was the first definitive history on the secretive OSS, most of the research was based on interviews with former OSS officers and personal letters, because the main body of archives had yet to be declassified. While other research after the declassification of OSS records includes more reliable documentation, Smith’s work is relevant for its role as the first history of the organization.

Little has been done to revise the particular arguments since these first works appeared. In 1975, Michael Schaller wrote *SACO! The United States Navy’s Secret War in China* which reinforced the ideas about the Navy’s goals in China which Miles stated in 1967.²¹ Schaller used the distance and detachment of his position as a historian to analyze the moving parts within military politics which were not fully analyzed in Miles’s work. Schaller claims that, in addition to direct confrontations between the OSS, SACO, and Stilwell, there was a great deal of indirect scheming to use one organization to prod another.²² He says that Colonel Donovan made Miles the director of the OSS in China for two reasons: to gain access to the China theater after Stilwell made it clear the OSS was not welcome and to exploit Miles’ relationship with Dai Li who was wary of the close relationship between the OSS and the British Special Operations Executive (SOE).²³ In addition to his original analysis of SACO’s activity in China, Schaller offers new scholarship and documentation of correspondence from the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Navy, the Army, and the OSS. Although still largely sympathetic to the Navy’s intelligence pursuits in the Far East, Schaller is not without his critiques of the Navy. He says that, while Miles perceived himself to be in China for solely strategic reasons, “the naval bureaucracy was eager to expand naval influence in the China theater, which the United States Army so clearly dominated.”²⁴ He argues that a main motivation for the Navy’s desire to gain access to the China

¹⁹ Smith, *The Secret History*, 243.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 253; 245.

²¹ Michael Schaller, “SACO! The United States Navy’s Secret War in China,” *Pacific Historical Review* 44, no. 4 (1975): 552-554, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3638069>.

²² *Ibid.*, 535.

²³ *Ibid.*, 535.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 531.

theater was to challenge the authority of the Army. Schaller also pays attention to the political advantages that the Chinese Nationalists gained through the SACO agreement, particularly important in this arrangement was that the official alignment with Miles allowed increased influence in Washington.²⁵ Schaller opened up more aspects of conflict within the unfolding map of interdepartmental rivalries, yet remained one-sided in his defense of the Navy and SACO.

Another important player in the tangled web of departmental bureaucracy was the creator of the OSS, President Franklin Roosevelt. In 1995, Christopher Andrew tackled the close relationship between the Commander in Chief and intelligence in *For the President's Eyes Only: Secret Intelligence and the American Presidency from Washington to Bush*. Roosevelt, Andrew explains, had a particular affinity for intelligence-gathering that went beyond its practicality in wartime. For example, early in his career while working for the Office of Naval Intelligence as assistant secretary, FDR's commanding officer, Captain James Oliver, complained that Roosevelt "was recruiting his own espionage network and interfering in intelligence operations."²⁶ Roosevelt's knack for working beyond the fray with regards to intelligence gathering became apparent when, "[i]nstead of relying on an orderly system or assessment, he preferred to base his judgements of impression drawn from a wide range of official and unofficial sources."²⁷ In his book, Andrew clearly establishes the importance of Roosevelt's connection to William Donovan, and Roosevelt claimed they became friends at Columbia Law School when they connected at FDR's fifty-first birthday in 1933.²⁸

Besides discussing Roosevelt's affinity for extra-departmental intelligence gathering and friendship with the future OSS director, Andrew also explains the extent to which British military officials influenced the president in intelligence matters. He states that the most significant British intelligence objective in the United States during the early years of the war was to cooperate with American intelligence and for Donovan to be the intelligence coordinator.²⁹ The British Director of Naval Intelligence, Admiral Godfrey, along with the future creator of James Bond, Commander Ian Fleming, helped Roosevelt with these joint endeavors.³⁰ After being in Washington for two weeks, Godfrey told Roosevelt that the United States needed a centralized intelligence organization because collaboration between the Office of Naval Intelligence, the Military Intelligence Division (MID), and

²⁵ Ibid., 530.

²⁶ Christopher Andrew, *For the President's Eyes Only: Secret Intelligence and the American Presidency from Washington to Bush* (New York: HarperPerennial, 1995), 77, <https://archive.org/details/forpresidentseye0000andr>.

²⁷ Ibid., 87.

²⁸ Ibid., 85.

²⁹ Ibid., 98.

³⁰ Ibid., 98.

the Federal Bureau of Intelligence “hardly existed.”³¹ Andrew explains that British inclusion in the creation of the OSS can be summed up as follows: “Never before had one power had so much influence on the development of the intelligence community of another independent state.”³² Although not directly a part of the trio of feuding organizations, President Roosevelt was a significant force in the development of the American intelligence community and the ongoing feuds between the organizations on the Chinese mainland.

Currently, the most updated and influential account of OSS activities in China is Yu Maochun’s *OSS in China: Prelude to Cold War*. Published in 1996, the book is based on OSS archives from Record Group 226 and newly de-classified Chinese material. Yu acknowledges the work of his predecessors, Richard Smith, Michael Schaller, and Stilwell biographers, for their attempts to cover the complex history of the OSS in China, but criticizes the lack of detail in their works and the exclusive reliance on US primary source accounts and English-language memoirs.³³

From the outset, Yu explicitly states that these rivalries existed in China, because “the creation of Donovan’s new agency crystallized and intensified a three-way struggle between the Army, the Navy and the COI (OSS).”³⁴ What makes Yu’s book significant is the inclusion of the difficulties the OSS encountered with the Army as well as the Navy. Writing from the perspective of the OSS, Yu provides a helpful analysis of the issues within the hierarchy of the OSS in China, and he tackles the details of the interdepartmental battles. In the epilogue, Yu reflects on the bigger picture of the “murkiness” of the China theater which he believes has been wrongly attributed by many historians to the feud between the KMT and the Chinese Communists. Instead, he understands the enigmatic situation to be a direct ramification of a “lack of unity in the China theater.”³⁵ For Yu, the interservice rivalries are the direct result of “turf-wars.” He argues that Donovan clashed with Dai Li and Miles because they were all “empire-builder[s].”³⁶ The ideological motivations driving these organizations’ leaders were “irrelevant.”³⁷ As a result of the disunity among US and Chinese forces in China, Yu claims that the ultimate winner of the war in China was the Chinese Communists.³⁸ Some reviewers have criticized Yu’s book as merely being about the “organizational problems” of the OSS in China

³¹ Ibid., 99.

³² Ibid., 102.

³³ Yu, *OSS in China*, xv.

³⁴ Ibid., 7.

³⁵ Ibid., 265.

³⁶ Ibid., 268.

³⁷ Ibid., 266-267.

³⁸ Ibid., 267.

rather than offering a substantive overview of the impact of the organization on the region.³⁹ However, his overview of these organizational problems of the OSS in China is what makes his work so illuminating when studying the conflicts between the other intelligence organizations.

Richard Aldrich's *Intelligence and the War Against Japan: Britain, America and the Politics of Secret Service* makes further contributions to this field of study. Although the book is not entirely concerned with the specific intelligence operations in China, one chapter covers the broader picture of the intelligence struggles between the OSS and the Navy in China unlike any previous work.⁴⁰ Aldrich does not reveal any new sources; however, his analysis of the events is the most balanced of any of the studies. His explanation of the conflict between the two organizations brings forth new ideas about the motivations of the rivalry.⁴¹ He does not believe that the contest between the OSS and the Navy was isolated to the time and place but rather, "extend[ed] beyond the politics of secret service into the wider currents of international history."⁴² It is important to remember that, while I am solely focused on the war in China, the Army, Navy, and OSS were engaged in many theaters, and Aldrich includes this point to show that interservice rivalry cannot only be attributed to China alone. Aldrich joined Schaller in concluding that, in addition to a desire for control over political and military influence in China, the interdepartmental rivalries had deeper motivations. He addresses the two organizations from a foundational standpoint, paying close attention to ideological differences between Miles and Donovan. Here, the two men could not have been more different, because, according to Aldrich, "Donovan was convinced that nothing could be achieved while working under the Chinese, [and] Miles was convinced of the exact reverse."⁴³ Unlike other researchers of the subject who focused entirely on the OSS perspective of events in China, Aldrich attempts to "conjure up a balanced appreciation" for SACO but admits that this is a "difficult" task.⁴⁴ Towards the end, he paints SACO Deputy Director Miles as someone who achieved success through demanding amicable relations with the Nationalists, but admits that the "price of this special relationship with the KMT was high," acknowledging that Miles made a lot of enemies in Washington because of his devotion to Chinese

³⁹ William Leary, "Book Reviews: OSS in China: Prelude to Cold War," review of *OSS in China: Prelude to Cold War*, by Maochun Yu, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2952705>.

⁴⁰ Richard Aldrich, "American Struggles in China: OSS and Naval Group," in *Intelligence and the War Against Japan: Britain, America and the Politics of Secret Service* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 261. <https://archive.org/details/intelligencewara00rich>.

⁴¹ Aldrich, *Intelligence and the War Against Japan*, 262.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 262.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 268.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 276.

Nationalist commanders.⁴⁵ He concludes that despite the awkwardness of being forced to operate under cover in an American-dominated theater, the OSS operated more freely in China than in other American commands.⁴⁶ Therefore he saw both organizations as successes in their respective roles despite their stark organizational and ideological differences.

In 1939, the United States was on the brink of entering the war in Europe, and the Military Intelligence Division (MID) and the Office of Naval Intelligence (ONI) were eager to display their worth to the war effort. In order to manage the growing amount of possible foreign espionage penetrating the US, President Roosevelt issued a confidential directive on June 26, 1939 which stipulated that the heads of the ONI, MID, and FBI were to serve on a committee to coordinate their activities.⁴⁷ From this directive, the Interdepartmental Intelligence Committee (IIC) was established; however, it was little more than a space where the directors could volunteer information for mutual discussion.⁴⁸ The information that the foreign intelligence services, ONI and MID, were able to obtain during the interwar period was lacking the quality necessary to successfully fight a war.

At that time, the MID was staffed by fewer than seventy personnel, and foreign intelligence-gathering missions were secondary tasks for military attachés. The ONI boasted a better situation than their counterparts in the Army, but ONI's policy of using attachés as intelligence officers had changed little between 1919 and 1939. In addition to attending state dinners and military parades, these naval officers were supposed to supply the War Plans Division with extra information about foreign technological developments and international economic relations.⁴⁹ However, most of that information was already willingly provided by the foreign governments, and more extensive clandestine coverage was deemed essential.⁵⁰ Rear Admiral Walter Anderson, the Director of Naval Intelligence, admitted that "the lack of a real undercover intelligence service, in the foreign field, is

⁴⁵ Aldrich, *Intelligence and the War Against Japan*, 277.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Thomas Troy, *Donovan and the CIA: A History of the Establishment of the Central Intelligence Agency* (Central Intelligence Agency's Center for the Study of Intelligence, 1981), 33, <https://archive.org/details/DonovanAndTheCIAHistoryOfTheEstablishmentOfTheCentralIntelligenceAgency>.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 33.

⁴⁹ Jeffery Dorwart, *Conflict of Duty: The U.S. Navy's Intelligence Dilemma, 1919-1945* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1983), ix.

⁵⁰ Chief of Naval Operations, "History of Office of Naval Intelligence in World War II" (Unpublished Manuscript, 1946), 31, <https://www.ibiblio.org/hyperwar/NHC/NewPDFs/USN/ONI%20Recognition%20Manuals%20and%20other%20material/USN%20Hist.of.ONI.WWII.pdf>.

considered a serious defect that should be remedied.”⁵¹ Neither the ONI nor the MID were ready to take on the task of fighting the Axis powers. President Roosevelt had ideas about improving the quality of the foreign intelligence that reached his desk, but he was most interested in working outside the existing intelligence bureaucracy.

Astor and Donovan: Roosevelt's Secret Agents

Before FDR was elected president, he befriended multi-millionaire and property developer, Vincent Astor, who founded “the Room,” a group of wealthy New Yorkers whose ranks included both Kermit Roosevelt and Theodore Roosevelt Jr.⁵² Established in 1927, the Room met monthly to discuss international and domestic matters and to share gossip. Roosevelt himself was not directly involved with the Room; however, he was known to be close to all of the members and often joined Astor on his yacht for vacation voyages where they most likely discussed the Room’s activities.⁵³ Astor remained close with Roosevelt during the presidency and was asked by FDR to go on unofficial intelligence-gathering trips. Astor once used his yacht to investigate the Pacific and Atlantic coasts of South America for Imperial Japanese activities.⁵⁴ In a letter to the president on January 13, 1938, Astor alluded to a meeting with the ONI where he discussed plans about a voyage to the Marshall Islands, which he thought would “prove interesting.”⁵⁵ As the threat of war loomed, Roosevelt took advantage of Astor’s willingness and knack for intelligence-gathering to obtain information that was otherwise unavailable.

The outbreak of war brought with it increased responsibility for Astor and the Room, although by then the name had been changed to “the Club.” The unofficial activities of the Club allowed Roosevelt opportunities which were officially inappropriate for his office to engage in. For example, as director of the Western Union Telegraph Company, Astor intercepted transmissions in hopes of catching radio messages leaving New York from foreign embassies.⁵⁶ Through another member, Winthrop Aldrich, who was the chairman of the board of Chase National Bank, the Club was able to monitor accounts such as the Soviet Amtorg Corporation, which funneled money for Soviet

⁵¹ Memo, Rear Adm. Walter Anderson to Secretary of the Navy, Aug. 31, 1939, on “Are We Ready?” quoted in “History of Office of Naval Intelligence in World War II,” 31.

⁵² Christopher Andrew, *For the President's Eyes Only*, 83.

⁵³ Dorwart, *Conflict of Duty*, 164.

⁵⁴ Andrew, *For the President's Eyes Only*, 84.

⁵⁵ Vincent Astor to Franklin Roosevelt, January 13, 1938 [Electronic Record]; Franklin D. Roosevelt’s Papers as President; The President’s Secretary’s File (PSF), 1933-1945; Series 5: Subject File; Box 92; Astor, Vincent, 1933-1940; Franklin D. Roosevelt Library (FDRL).

⁵⁶ Vincent Astor to Franklin Roosevelt, October 30, 1939 [Electronic Record]; Franklin D. Roosevelt’s Papers as President; PSF; Series 5; Box 92; Astor, Vincent, 1941-1944; FDRL.

intelligence operations in the US.⁵⁷ Astor also unofficially met with Sir James Paget, the head of the New York office of the British Secret Intelligence Service (SIS or MI6). Astor reported to Roosevelt that he, “asked [Paget] for unofficial British [intelligence] cooperation” to which the SIS gladly agreed.⁵⁸ In 1940, Paget was replaced by William Stephenson, who was a close friend of several members of the Club and a strong supporter of a centralized US intelligence organization.

Included in this close circle of espionage-minded gentlemen was William Donovan, a lawyer from Buffalo and WWI hero, who was linked to, but not formally a member of, the Club.⁵⁹ Donovan believed that the existing intelligence units in the Army and the Navy were incapable of providing the intelligence necessary to strategically fight a war. In the “Memorandum of Establishment of Secret Service of Strategic Information” sent to the president on June 10, 1941, Donovan wrote that the current intelligence-gathering apparatus was “inadequate” and that these services could not equip “accurate, comprehensive, long-range information” from which a strategy for the future might be planned.⁶⁰ Donovan envisioned his new organization, the Coordinator of Information (COI), to answer only to the president and merely to be “assisted” by a panel consisting of the directors of the FBI, MID, and ONI. He also included a chart laying out the organizational structure for the COI in which he said that the proposed unit, “will neither displace nor encroach upon the FBI, Army and Navy Intelligence.”⁶¹ The COI’s basic responsibility was to provide the president and his strategic board with intelligence reports capable of informing military strategy.⁶² For the Army and the Navy, mention that the COI would not interfere in their operations was hardly reassuring. The COI and its function was unfamiliar to the American government, and so there were no set boundaries for what Donovan could and could not do in his new position.

Very early on, it was clear that Donovan and the president did not intend the COI to simply be a glorified compiler of intelligence from the Army and the Navy as was originally stated in the memorandum. The White House announced on July 11, 1941 that the COI had the authority to carry out “supplementary activities” in order to procure critical information to national security otherwise not available to the government.⁶³ The formal announcement of the COI clearly stated that the

⁵⁷ Andrew, *For the President’s Eyes Only*, 93.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 85.

⁶⁰ William Donovan to President Franklin Roosevelt, June 10, 1941 [Electronic Record]; Franklin D. Roosevelt’s Papers as President; PSF; Series 5; Box 128; Coordinator of Information, 1941; FDRL.

⁶¹ Donovan to Roosevelt; Roosevelt’s Papers; PSF; Series 5; Box 128; Coordinator of Information, 1941; FDRL.

⁶² Donovan to Roosevelt; Roosevelt’s Papers; PSF; Series 5; Box 128; Coordinator of Information, 1941; FDRL.

⁶³ Franklin Roosevelt, “Designating a Coordinator of Information,” *Studies in Intelligence* (1995), v. 37 no. 5, 112-114, <https://www.cia.gov/static/3307866547bef80f1b1a849d2d503e3e/COI-to-CIG.pdf>.

position was to be accountable to the president only, and Donovan was assured that his position was out of the grasp of the MID by avoiding any military designation or rank.⁶⁴ According to White House press secretary, Steve Early, the original statement said that Donovan, upon request from the president, may engage in “activities helpful in the securing of defense information not available to the government through existing departments and agencies.”⁶⁵ The change in wording was important because it indicated that Donovan and Roosevelt believed, but refrained from publicly admitting, that COI interference in the operations of both the Army and the Navy was inevitable. Donovan told an OSS historian after the war that he specifically added the phrase “supplementary activities” in order to “cover situations that might arise.”⁶⁶ From the beginning, Donovan envisioned the COI to be a larger operation than the Army and the Navy were expecting.

As much as the Coordinator of Information was a solution to the disjointed US intelligence-gathering network, it was also a continuation of the way FDR thought about intelligence from the beginning of his term as president and during his time as the assistant secretary of the Navy. Roosevelt’s appetite for informal intelligence sources was arguably foresighted and progressive when compared to some previous ideas about intelligence gathering. In 1929, Henry Stimson, Secretary of War, ended the secret codebreaking operation called the “Black Chamber” because, “[g]entlemen do not read other gentlemen’s mail.”⁶⁷ Whether Donovan’s new role was an attempt to streamline the intelligence community or an attempt on Roosevelt’s part to create an officially-sanctioned international private investigator, the MID and the ONI were immediate opponents of the COI.

The Army and the Navy Go to China

In the months leading up to the appointment of Donovan as COI, the Army and the Navy felt threatened. On April 8, 1941, Brig. Gen. Sherman Miles, Acting Assistant Chief of Staff and head of MID (or G-2), passed word to General Marshall, Army Chief of Staff, that the ONI had “considerable reason to believe” that Donovan was attempting to create a “super agency” for gathering foreign intelligence. General Miles was convinced that Donovan’s proposal would be “calamitous” to the War Department.⁶⁸ Hours after the COI was announced by the White House, Gen. Miles ordered “the immediate establishment of an American Military Mission in China.”⁶⁹ A

⁶⁴ Richard Dunlop, *Donovan: America’s Master Spy* (New York: Rand McNally & Company, 1982), 288.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 290.

⁶⁶ Yu, *OSS in China*, 12.

⁶⁷ Henry Stimson and McGeorge Bundy, *On Active Service* (Hippocrene Books, 1971), 188, quoted in Dorwart, *Conflict of Duty*, 47n1.

⁶⁸ Dunlop, *Donovan*, 277.

⁶⁹ Yu, *OSS in China*, 7.

mission to China was critical for the US and the Chinese Nationalists, because, in the 1930s, the KMT had turned to Germany, Italy, and Russia for military advice, all of whose armies were more impressive than the US at the time.⁷⁰ However, toward the end the decade as Nazi Germany and the Japanese Empire grew closer, the KMT was eager to align itself more closely with Great Britain, France, the Soviet Union, and the United States. The Army must have understood that maintaining a military presence in China was conducive to the goals of the MID and Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek, because it promised increased aid to the disorganized and underequipped Nationalist Army.⁷¹

Reforms to the current flow of aid into China were necessary if the Generalissimo was to mount an effective defense of the country. As far as the Joint Board (JB) was concerned, the Chinese had no “competent” advice in requesting aid and had often asked for more equipment than could be feasibly transported or used. Not to mention that, according the JB, “China’s history provided many instances of the waste of foreign loans and gifts.”⁷² Preparations for a mission were soon underway in 1941 as the Army rushed to get a man in China to serve a number of functions, the most important responsibility regarded overseeing Lend-Lease aid to China. The American Military Mission to China (AMMISCA) was led by Brig. Gen. John Magruder who had previously served as an attaché in China. Sherman Miles explained to Magruder that his mission would be responsible for coordinating with the Chinese in all matters of Lend-Lease, but that, when the US was actively involved in the war, the AMMISCA would be “the liaison for strategic planning and cooperation with our ally, China.”⁷³ The letter implied that the mission was an urgent matter, because Donovan was beginning to set up his own intelligence mission to China and was trying to attach a COI operative on to Magruder’s unit.⁷⁴ Around the same time, the ONI was also trying to send men with AMMISCA to establish an intelligence network in China. The Army rejected both the ONI and the COI’s requests to join the mission. Donovan was frustrated, but there was little he could do except complain to the president. So when Magruder landed in China in October 1941, the theater was completely under the Army’s control.

After the Navy was unable to include an officer in AMMISCA, they were eager for any chance to influence the theater, but the proposal to launch into China was sidelined by Navy leadership.⁷⁵ The attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941 changed everything for the naval mission to China.

⁷⁰ Sunderland and Romanus, *Stilwell’s Mission to China*, 27.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid., 28.

⁷³ Ibid., 29.

⁷⁴ Yu, *OSS in China*, 8.

⁷⁵ Schaller, “SACO!,” 531.

Almost immediately after the Hawaiian base was attacked, Real Admiral Willis Lee convinced Admiral Ernest King to revive the rejected mission to the Far East. With urgency, Lieutenant-Commander Milton Miles was chosen to lead the mission, and Admiral King gave Miles verbal orders to prepare the coast for US landings in the next three or four years. Miles was also ordered to carry out any necessary means of “heckling” the Japanese.⁷⁶ Although his official title was “Naval Observer” to the US embassy in Chungking, his orders were only nominally similar to traditional attachés.⁷⁷ Miles was supposed to fly to China and work with Dai Li, a man that Miles had no knowledge of when he was given the orders. Miles found the information on Dai Li from the State Department and the Military and Naval Intelligence to be “discouraging.”⁷⁸ Miles was told that Dai Li was the leader of a Gestapo-like organization and ran a concentration camp for his political rivals.⁷⁹ From the view of an outsider, Dai Li was an extreme and dangerous character to those he mistrusted, which included all Chinese communists. From these reports, Miles was anxious about his ability to work in China, however, he soon realized that he had been prepared for different circumstances than the ones he encountered.

Among Miles’s first realizations when he arrived in China was that the attitude towards foreigners had changed from what it had been prior to the outbreak of war. Previously, he thought that the Chinese people, impressed by Western technological development during the late nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth, “had humbly accepted the white race as, in many ways, superior to their own.”⁸⁰ But recent defeats of Western powers by the Japanese Empire at Pearl Harbor, Manila, Philippines, and Dutch East Indies, caused the Chinese people to see their place alongside the Western powers differently. The Chinese had been fighting the Japanese Empire for five years and the invaders were “far from anything approaching final victory.”⁸¹ T.V. Soong once told Donovan that, “we have proved that we can fight longer than any other people who are fighting on the democratic side,” and that if only given the weapons, they could “finish the job.”⁸² This belief that the KMT merely lacked the equipment to properly fight the Japanese Empire was strongly opposed by both the Germans who trained the Chinese divisions and Col. Joseph Stilwell, the American military attaché before the war.⁸³ Miles’s understanding of how the Chinese now saw their place in the world

⁷⁶ Miles, *A Different Kind of War*, 18.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 19.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 22.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 22.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 37.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 38.

⁸² Dunlop, *Donovan*, 322.

⁸³ Sunderland and Romanus, *Stilwell's Mission to China*, 6.

was an important cornerstone in his belief that the other American commanders should respect the Chinese Nationalists. As the war progressed, Miles was increasingly under the impression that the men with decades of experience living and working in China before the war were unable to adapt to this new wave of Chinese nationalism.

The Magruder mission to China in 1941 was Donovan's initial attempt to spread OSS influence into China. It failed and was the first example of the Army's efforts to expel the OSS from the theater. Magruder's experience with the AMMISCA was wrought with what General Joseph Stilwell referred to as "[t]rouble with unified command in the Far East," when journaling on January 1, 1942 about a conversation with General George Marshall.⁸⁴ General Marshall explained to Stilwell that the JCS were looking to send another experienced officer to mediate the quarrelling between the British and the Chinese because Gen. Magruder was "too tired and disillusioned about the Chinese" to be suited for the position.⁸⁵ After initially rejecting the offer, Stilwell travelled to Chungking in February to take over for Magruder.

COI Enters the Fray

After his dream of a COI attachment on the Magruder Mission failed, Donovan needed another route into China. He was also keen to establish what he called Secret Intelligence (SI) and Special Operations (SO) combat units. He was enamored by the idea of small, versatile combat units, and sent the president a nineteen-page overview of the British "Commando" units.⁸⁶ Donovan wanted to begin SO in China and despite the Army's attempts to exclude the COI from engaging in military endeavors, SO and SI fell under the umbrella of justification provided by COI's permission to carry out supplementary activities. With some luck, Donovan was able to bypass George Marshall and Sherman Miles by using their own men against them. In April 1942, Col. M. Preston Goodfellow was ordered to be a liaison officer between G-2 and the COI.⁸⁷ Goodfellow was immediately smitten by Donovan's vision for SO and offered Donovan use of one of his men, Warren J. Clear, who was on a mission to the South Pacific for Sherman Miles.⁸⁸ The COI "took over" Clear's mission from the

⁸⁴ Joseph Stilwell, *The Stilwell Papers* (New York: W. Sloane Associates, 1948), 18, <https://archive.org/details/stilwellpapers0000stil>.

⁸⁵ Barbara Tuchman, *Stilwell and the American Experience in China*, 308.

⁸⁶ Memo, Donovan to Roosevelt, "Commandos," October 12, 1941 [Electronic Record], Franklin D. Roosevelt's Papers as President; PSF; Series 5; Box 128; Coordinator of Information, 1941; FDRL.

⁸⁷ Yu, *OSS in China*, 12.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 12.

Army in order to “make a survey for our SI and SO operations in the Far East.”⁸⁹ Clear’s objective was not to engage in setting up an intelligence apparatus, but to simply survey the landscape of opportunity in the theater.

The Clear mission was condemned by the Army when General Douglas MacArthur learned of criticism for his campaign in the Philippines in communications to the president from a direct line between Donovan and Clear. Clear was in the Philippines during the Battle of Bataan (January–April, 1942) and made note of the disorganization of MacArthur’s forces and the “superb” coordination of the Japanese Imperial infantry and air forces.⁹⁰ These reports enraged MacArthur because he considered the COI’s presence in his theater of command an inappropriate infringement of his power. Because Clear’s appointment did not include China, it was not the answer to Donovan’s plans for SO; however, MacArthur’s wrath fanned the flames of Donovan’s desire to establish himself in the CBI theater.⁹¹

During his arduous campaign to solidify Special Operations in China, Donovan sent several missions to the theater and each one experienced varied success. The first real mission to China was led by Dr. Esson Gale, but it failed to live up to Donovan’s expectations. Dr. Esson Gale was a university professor and expert in Far Eastern studies. Gale’s mission exemplifies two innate errors in Donovan’s methods for conducting clandestine intelligence-gathering and military operations. The first mistake was that the COI was tied too closely to the SOE, a connection which was regarded unfavorably by the KMT. Before the US entered the war, Donovan was an open anglophile, and throughout his time as COI and later director of the OSS, he established ties to many influential Britons. He adopted many of the tactics used by the SOE, and liberally employed “British models” when conducting his own SO missions.⁹² The second mistake was an overreliance on “experts” who were deemed qualified to represent Chinese interests in Washington because they had lived in China before the war

The first mission led by Gale was modelled after the SOE strategy of delegating intelligence-gathering to “surrogate” operatives.⁹³ Donovan’s plan was to use “Koreans to operate against the Japanese,” and the reasoning behind this idea was that Koreans, unlike Americans or Chinese, would

⁸⁹ Memorandum for the President, William Donovan to Franklin D. Roosevelt, April 20, 1942 [Electronic Record] Franklin D. Roosevelt’s Papers as President; PSF; Series 5; Box 148; FDRL.

⁹⁰ Memo, Donovan to Roosevelt; Roosevelt’s Papers; PSF; Series 5; Box 148; Office of Strategic Services - Reports, April 13, 1942-April 28, 1942; FDRL.

⁹¹ Yu, *OSS in China*, 13.

⁹² Dunlop, *Donovan*, 213.

⁹³ Yu, *OSS in China*, 14.

be able to secretly maneuver through occupied territory.⁹⁴ The main issue with this policy was that it was a bad copy of the SOE's system of using non-British Europeans as operatives, relying on Chinese Americans and Chinese Canadians.⁹⁵ To make matters more complex, Koreans occupied a strange political existence within the Chinese Nationalist's governmental circles. After the Korean government-in-exile split, two rival Korean factions had emerged. The result of Gale's mission was that the COI backed one Korean faction, while Chiang Kai-shek and Dai Li backed the other.⁹⁶

The idea to use Koreans to conduct the secret operations was suggested to Donovan by his Research and Analysis Branch (R&A), a collection of academics tasked entirely with the study of foreign affairs. Coerced out of their Ivory Tower and from work at over a dozen federal agencies, the men in R&A were the "foremost historians, economists, political scientists, geographers, and psychologists in the country."⁹⁷ This group represented the second flaw in Donovan's system.. These men were referred to as "Old China Hands" because they were said to belong to a "past era" of prewar China.⁹⁸ These men worked in coastal cities, and since the fall of Hong Kong, Singapore, the Philippines, Malaya, and the Dutch East Indies to the Japanese Empire, China was no longer a place that they recognized. Old China hands were not kept cooped up in the COI offices in Washington either, and much to the dismay of Milton Miles, Esson Gale was one such Chinese expert sent to China and many more followed.

COI Gets a Cooler Name

At this moment of crisis, Donovan's role in US intelligence-gathering operations went through an important evolution. In addition to the secret intelligence activities that Donovan attended to, his agency was responsible for monitoring and responding to foreign propaganda, which was managed by another arm of the COI, the Foreign Information Service (FIS). In March 1942, Richard Sherwood, Roosevelt's speech writer and head of the FIS, wrote a personal memo to the president which proposed to split up the COI. The memo explained that the COI would be divided with R&A going under the JCS, with FIS becoming its own entity, and all secret operations (SO and SIS) were to be

⁹⁴ Memorandum, William Donovan to President Roosevelt, January 24, 1942 [Electronic Record]; Roosevelt's Papers as President; PSF; Series 5; Box 147; Office of Strategic Services – Reports, January 15, 1942-January 24, 1942; FDRL.

⁹⁵ Yu, *OSS in China*, 15-16.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁹⁷ Letter, Donovan to Roosevelt, "Report on Research and Analysis Branch," October 23, 1941 [Electronic Record]; Franklin Roosevelt's Papers as President; PSF; Series 5; Box; 128; Coordinator of Information, 1941; FDRL.

⁹⁸ Miles, *A Different Kind of War*, 90-91.

absorbed by the MID or the ONI.⁹⁹ Naturally, Donovan was opposed to his beloved SO falling into the hands of the Army or Navy; however, seeing as how Roosevelt was likely to split up the COI, Donovan believed that since the JCS were going to be the ones to win the war, that was where he should be.¹⁰⁰

On June 13, 1942, Roosevelt issued an executive order establishing the Office of War Information (OWI) as the new home for the FIS and the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) as the new name of the COI's secret intelligence divisions. Much like the COI before it, the purpose of the OSS was to collect strategic information and "plan and operate such special services as may be directed by the United States Joint Chiefs of Staff."¹⁰¹ William Donovan was appointed director of the OSS and was given the rank of general; this decision flew in the face of the West Pointers. Existing in a gray area between a civilian organization and a military one, the R&A continued to be staffed by college professors and career bureaucrats, but as a military operation, the SO shipped agents around to perform what Roosevelt called, "general miscellaneous strategic services abroad."¹⁰² Donovan viewed this new military status as a step forward in his plans to conduct subversive warfare across the globe, however, his new bosses in the JCS quickly asserted their power over the newly-appointed general.

OSS Launches a Dragon and the Navy Makes a New Friend

Despite being provided with the necessary military jurisdiction to conduct special intelligence operations under the JCS, the OSS operations in China stalled, and Donovan was increasingly frustrated by what he considered to be Esson Gale's underachievement in the field. Having been sent to Chunking to establish an underground intelligence organization, Gale relied mostly on his friends within the Chinese Nationalist military. His reports back to Washington were filled with inflated stories about the glorious victories of the KMT.¹⁰³ To fix the situation, the OSS, Far East Division and R&A cooked up an ambitious plan for an independent intelligence-gathering network in China with Donovan at the helm. It became known as the Dragon Plan. When the Dragon Plan was proposed to the JCS, it was immediately shot down by General George Strong, head of G-2, on the grounds that

⁹⁹ Robert Sherwood to President Roosevelt, "Memorandum to the President," March 19, 1942 [Electronic Record]; Franklin D. Roosevelt's Papers as President; PSF; Series 5; Box 148; Office of Strategic Services - Reports, March 1, 1942- March 26, 1942; FDRL.

¹⁰⁰ Dunlop, *Donovan*, 352.

¹⁰¹ Franklin Roosevelt, "Military Order of June 13, 1942," *Studies in Intelligence* (1995), v. 37 no. 5, 114. <https://www.cia.gov/static/3307866547bef80f1b1a849d2d503e3e/COI-to-CIG.pdf>

¹⁰² Stephen Early, "White House Press Release on June 13, 1942," *Studies in Intelligence*, 115.

¹⁰³ Smith, *The Secret History*, 244.

the question of command was too vague and that the plan implied that General Stilwell would not be in control. Indeed, the Dragon Plan was not designed to include the Army or the Navy but rather had very strong British ties.¹⁰⁴ In response, Strong suggested that if there was going to be an American intelligence operation in China, it should be staffed by ONI and G-2 men under the direction of Stilwell.¹⁰⁵

While the OSS was attempting to replace the Gale Mission with the Dragon Plan, the Navy wasted no time setting up their own intelligence-gathering apparatus in China. Lieutenant Commander Milton Miles was fervently working with Dai Li to set up an organization that satisfied each of their goals. The “Friendship Project” unofficially started on the morning of June 9 when Miles and Dai Li were in Pucheng during a tour of Dai’s intelligence networks that operated behind Japanese lines. While hiding from strafing fire from Japanese planes, the two men outlined the preliminary trade-offs of Sino-American intelligence cooperation.¹⁰⁶ Miles wanted a network of weather stations and intelligence officers as well as a system of coast watchers to prepare for an US invasion of the occupied mainland. For his part, Dai Li wanted to train fifty-thousand guerilla soldiers and set up a school for his agents to learn detective and policing methods.¹⁰⁷ Not waiting for permission, Miles considered the proposal to be covered by his orders from Admiral King, and he verbally okayed the proposal, shaking hands with the Chinese spymaster.¹⁰⁸ A witness to this encounter was Al Lusey, whom Miles befriended on the plane to Chungking and invited to come along on the tour because of his experience with radio equipment. After the trip to Pucheng, Lusey returned to Washington to hand Miles’s initial draft of the cooperation agreement to the ONI, but primarily to report back to his bosses in the OSS, Far East Division.

One day after the Friendship Project was well underway, Dai Li grilled Miles about the identity of a group of Americans led by “Major I Flew.” Supposedly, the group was preparing to lead Chinese guerillas into combat under a plan called “Dragon.” Miles and Stilwell had agreed that Miles could train Chinese guerillas, but Stilwell did not want anything to do with commandos or other irregular operations.¹⁰⁹ Miles had never heard of these men. In response to the inquiry, he asked Stilwell if he had some competition arriving over the Hump from India.¹¹⁰ Stilwell informed Miles that before the

¹⁰⁴ Yu, *OSS in China*, 63.

¹⁰⁵ Yu, *OSS in China*, 64.

¹⁰⁶ Miles, *A Different Kind of War*, 52.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 53.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 86.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 86.

two had made their agreement, Preston Goodfellow asked if the OSS could conduct guerilla operations, but Stilwell initially refused, believing that irregular warfare would not work in China.¹¹¹ Regardless of Stilwell's answer, Goodfellow persisted and asked if Stilwell would let Major Carl Eifler conduct guerilla operations under his command. Stilwell agreed this time because he knew Eifler to be a "hard-hitting soldier" from their time together on the Mexican border.¹¹² Major Eifler's connection with Stilwell was the only reason he was brought into the OSS and it promised to be a useful way to get the SO into China.¹¹³

After agreeing to the guerilla operation, however, Stilwell did not hear from Major Eifler until an OSS group called Detachment 101 landed in India in July 1942. It was at this moment that Miles went to ask Stilwell about Major Eifler and his group. Surprised and embarrassed by Eifler's sudden appearance, Stilwell showed why he earned the nickname "Vinegar Joe." He refused to admit the OSS men into China, leaving them to stew in New Delhi while he figured out how to balance Eifler and Miles. Detachment 101 blamed Dai Li for being stranded in India because they believed he was exploiting Stilwell's hatred of the British after British forces sabotaged the Allied defense of Burma in 1942 (Map 2).¹¹⁴ According to Stilwell, the British "defeatist attitude" caused them to retreat to India.¹¹⁵ This retreat deliberately undermined Stilwell's attempts to save Burma, which led to catastrophic Allied losses that haunted Stilwell. Detachment 101's claim that Stilwell was so aggravated against the British was false, but when Dai Li informed Stilwell that the British-backed OSS mission was attempting to enter China, he immediately refused them.¹¹⁶ Although Dai Li was first informed about Detachment 101's arrival in China and predisposed against the OSS because of their British connections, it was Milton Miles who was concerned about the possible encroachment on his guerilla operations, and took up the matter with Stilwell. Shifting the blame to Dai Li exacerbates the false claim that the Chinese general was selfishly opposed to all American encroachment on his intelligence operations. By falsely accusing Dai Li for the Dragon Plan's failure in China, Detachment 101 displays firsthand that distrust of the KMT pervaded the OSS.

¹¹¹ Smith, *The Secret History*, 244.

¹¹² Miles, *A Different Kind of War*, 86.

¹¹³ Smith, *The Secret History*, 243.

¹¹⁴ Richard Dunlop, *Behind Enemy Lines, with the OSS in Burma* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1979), 108, <https://archive.org/details/behindjapaneseli00dunl>. Richard Dunlop was a member of Detachment 101 with Major Eifler.

¹¹⁵ Liang, *General Stilwell in China*, 50.

¹¹⁶ Dunlop, *Behind Enemy Lines*, 108.

By August 1942, OSS operations remained stalled under Stilwell's boycott of OSS guerilla activities. Frustrated, Donovan promptly sent Dr. Joseph Hayden, former vice-governor of the Philippines, to convince Stilwell to save the floundering Dragon Plan.¹¹⁷ Hayden's first meetings with Stilwell did not go well. By then, Stilwell's mind seemed made up that the OSS would not conduct intelligence operations in China.¹¹⁸ Hayden then attempted to join forces with General Claire Chennault who was enthusiastic about the program, but Donovan was unwilling to incur increased wrath from Stilwell by colluding with his rival.¹¹⁹ Chennault's theories about the supremacy of air power over land forces was contrary to accepted Army dogma and often brought him into bitter conflict with Stilwell and the JCS.¹²⁰ The situation seemed hopeless for the OSS, because they could not get past the Army and they could not risk angering the Army even more by siding with Chennault. However, thanks to Al Lusey, Donovan was now aware of a new alternative way into China.

In light of the recent disappointments by OSS in China, Donovan was delighted to hear from Lusey that the friendship between Miles and Dai Li might be the only way to effectively gather intelligence in China, because the BIS was the only "real" intelligence organization in the country.¹²¹ Lusey took the initiative to ask the Chinese general if he would consider an exchange agreement; the OSS needed intelligence reports from China and the BIS desperately needed updated radio equipment and arms for guerillas. Upon hearing back from Dai Li, Lusey passed the memo on to Donovan who instantly admired the Chinese general's respect for subversive, irregular fighting. At this moment, Donovan realized that the British were not completely forthcoming when they had warned him not to deal directly with the Nationalists.¹²² Truly, it was the OSS that the BIS had the most in common with—not the Navy—and yet, the Navy was already far ahead of him at his own game. He decided to ignore the British warning, and talked with newly-appointed head of the Readiness Section of ONI, Rear Admiral W.R. Purnell.¹²³ Purnell was easily convinced by the charismatic Donovan, and agreed to include the OSS in the Friendship Project by appointing Commander Miles as Coordinator of US Secret Services in China.¹²⁴ At the time, no one knew what sort of interservice rivalry the appointment would cause by placing the organizational responsibilities of two intelligence agencies on one man.

¹¹⁷ Smith, *The Secret History*, 246.

¹¹⁸ Yu, *OSS in China*, 65.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 66.

¹²⁰ Romanus and Sunderland, *Stilwell's Mission in China*, 261.

¹²¹ Yu, *OSS in China*, 72.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 73.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 75.

¹²⁴ Purnell and Donovan, "Mutual Understanding Regarding U.S. Strategic Services in China," September 19, 1942, quoted in Yu, *OSS in China*, 75.

When Donovan and Purnell hastily agreed to merge their organizations in September 1942, neither of them foresaw the ensuing friction between Miles and the rest of the OSS. Although Donovan had found a way to organize operations in China free of Stilwell's oversight by working with Miles and Dai Li, he had always planned to work within the ambiguous parameters stipulated in the Purnell agreement to conduct operations without Miles knowing. According to the agreement, Miles was given control of all of the OSS Special Operations branch.¹²⁵ The SO branch organized a variety of operations including: sabotage, working directly with resistance groups, and operations not given to other agencies or already under the supervision of the theater commander.¹²⁶ Miles was initially enthusiastic about SO because its functions were similar to the work he was already doing, but this time with more money and less bureaucratic red tape, or so he thought. However, giving Miles control over the SO was not Donovan's end goal. The plan for the OSS was to ultimately build their own organization in China. However, until OSS was able to fully penetrate the Friendship Project with their own personnel, they had to rely on the BIS intelligence network.¹²⁷

The OSS Double Agents

In order to begin subverting the Navy out of their own organization, the OSS began transferring operatives into China to nominally work with Miles. One of these operatives was Al Lusey. Donovan ordered Lusey to "generally" work with Miles, but to carry out other duties independently.¹²⁸ These independent duties were Secret Intelligence operations which oversaw clandestine counter-intelligence activities. Because Lusey had earned the trust of Miles and Dai Li on their trip through occupied China, Donovan saw him as the ideal man to build up the OSS inside of Friendship. As soon as the Donovan-Purnell agreement was signed, the OSS began sending men into China who were officially SO operatives but were also undercover SI agents under Lusey's control.

When Donovan shared his SO/SI plans for the China theater with his department heads, Ernest Price, SI China chief of OSS, was concerned about the effectiveness of such operations. He and Xiao Bo, a Chinese attaché and trusted agent of Dai Li's, were adamant that Dai Li would prefer the OSS China to be headed by a single commander, not the two-part command of Miles over SO and Lusey over SI.¹²⁹ Despite the warnings from Price and Xiao, the dogmatic Donovan was

¹²⁵ Yu, *OSS in China*, 77.

¹²⁶ Office of Strategic Services, *Special Operations Field Manual*, no. 4 (1944), ii, <https://www.soc.mil/OSS/assets/special-operations-fm.pdf>.

¹²⁷ Yu, *OSS in China*, 77.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 78.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 79.

convinced of the necessity to work outside Dai Li's sphere of influence. In fact, Price's aversion to his tactics in China enraged Donovan so seriously that Price was charged with "opposing the policies of Colonel Donovan in China," and was asked for his resignation.¹³⁰ In a letter to the president after he resigned his post, Price warned FDR of Donovan's actions which seemed to him as contrary to the US national interest. He went on to say that, in his opinion, not only the Chinese Nationalists but also the Chinese people were past the time of willingly allowing any "special interests enjoyed by Western peoples" to operate within their country.¹³¹ Price was adamant that if any subversive intelligence operations were to succeed in China, they would have to be carried out with the authorization and cooperation of the "corresponding Chinese agencies."¹³² Price's specific mention of corresponding Chinese agencies clearly indicated his belief in the necessity of cooperating with Dai Li's organization because he knew that the only way to gather intelligence in China was to work with the Nationalists and not around them.

After FDR received Price's letter, the president asked Lauchlin Currie, an aid who was called upon for affairs in China, to investigate the issue. Currie went to Donovan and asked him about Price's accusations. In Currie's report on the investigation back to FDR, he wrote that Donovan assured him that they were not considering carrying out "military intelligence or espionage activities," in China without the knowledge of Chiang or Dai Li.¹³³ Currie's inclusion of both military and espionage activities outright indicates Donovan's disingenuousness because the OSS head was encouraging the exact opposite behavior. To end the report, Currie added that the OSS was disgruntled by their present arrangement in China under Stilwell.¹³⁴ This is further evidence that while actively working against the Navy, Donovan, somewhat prophetically, was looking to create more opportunities in Stilwell's command.

The OSS was well aware that the survival of their operations in China was at stake if their secret plans for SI were discovered by Miles, Dai Li or Stilwell. Donovan's skepticism of Miles's willingness to play along with their secret plans bore truth because of Miles's close connection to Dai Li. The Navy commander expressed that he was not thrilled about his new appointment, writing in a

¹³⁰ Letter, Ernest Price to Franklin D. Roosevelt, 8 October 1942 [Electronic Record]; Franklin D. Roosevelt's Papers as President; PSF; Series 2: Confidential File; Box 8; Office of Strategic Services; FDRL.

¹³¹ Letter, Price to FDR, 8 October 1942; Roosevelt's Papers as President; PSF; Series 2; Box; 8; OSS; FDRL.

¹³² Letter, Price to FDR, 8 October 1942; Roosevelt's Papers as President; PSF; Series 2; Box; 8; OSS; FDRL.

¹³³ Memorandum, Lauchlin Currie to Franklin D. Roosevelt, 29 October, 1942 [Electronic Record]; Franklin D. Roosevelt's Papers as President; PSF; Series 2: Confidential File; Box 4; Office of Strategic Services; FDRL.

¹³⁴ Memo, Currie to FDR, 29 October, 1942; Roosevelt's Papers as President; PSF; Series 2; Box 4; OSS; FDRL.

letter to Dr. Hayden that he was “100 percent Navy and 00 percent OSS.”¹³⁵ In a secret memo to Donovan, Lusey explained that “the whole show would blow up if the Chinese found out we were doing anything like this.”¹³⁶ Commander Miles was included in Lusey’s use of the term “Chinese” because he was not loyal to OSS and would “return to the Navy.”¹³⁷ Regardless of the great effort expended to keep Lusey’s SI role a secret to Miles and Dai Li, cracks began to appear when Miles learned of Lusey’s use of a secret communications channel from Chungking to Washington.¹³⁸ Later, concrete evidence of Lusey’s SI activities was discovered by Miles when, in November 1942, he became aware of Lusey’s actions to conduct SI missions and bring in OSS operatives into China without Miles’s permission. From here, Miles asked Jeff Metzger, a Navy representative for Miles in Washington, to investigate Lusey’s role in the OSS, which Metzger discovered by looking at SI payroll forms.¹³⁹ Subsequently, the Navy requested that Donovan change Lusey’s status, which he did, fearing their operations in China would be jeopardized if they did not comply.

Dai Li and Miles Sense Danger

The effort to keep the SI plans out of Dai Li’s reach was the only way that the OSS would not suffer the same fate as the British SOE earlier in 1942. A group of British Commandos, led by John Keswick was ejected from China by Chiang and Dai Li after they attempted to work independently with provincial militias against the wishes of the KMT.¹⁴⁰ Dai Li was initially enthusiastic about working with the OSS, but became convinced that the British sought to influence China through the OSS after hearing that John Keswick had been appointed SOE liaison in the spring of 1942. Donovan and Lusey also insisted on using European residents of Shanghai as operatives, invoking again the despised British “surrogate” strategy.¹⁴¹ This strategy and others seem to be the direct result of advice given to Donovan by the SOE. While advising Donovan, Keswick reported to him that the Chinese did not want to cooperate with foreign powers but only saw them as a way to acquire military equipment. Even more accusatory was Keswick’s belief that there was a “virtually undeclared peace” between the KMT and the Japanese Empire, and provoking the Chinese to action would “disturb the orientally adjusted calm.”¹⁴² Through his influence, Keswick spread the widely-believed, Old China

¹³⁵ Smith, *The Secret History*, 249.

¹³⁶ Memo, Lusey to Donovan, 14 September, 1942, quoted in *OSS in China*, 78n5.

¹³⁷ Memo, Lusey to Donovan, quoted in *OSS in China*, 78n5.

¹³⁸ Yu, *OSS in China*, 87.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 90.

¹⁴⁰ Aldrich, *Intelligence and the War Against Japan*, 283.

¹⁴¹ Yu, *OSS in China*, 91.

¹⁴² Smith, *The Secret History*, 248.

Hand prejudices about the racial and political inferiority of the Chinese.¹⁴³ With Keswick in his ear, Donovan worked on creating his own intelligence and espionage network in China under the assumption that the Chinese were not open to foreign interference while they actively avoided war with the Japanese.

Not only had the OSS aligned themselves with the SOE, but by doing so they created a connection with Petro Pavlovski, a Comintern agent whose activities as a communist agent in China were followed closely by Dai Li.¹⁴⁴ By some miracle, Pavlovski became Keswick's assistant while the British were still operating the Commando Group in China. When Keswick was sent to Washington, he vouched to Donovan for Pavlovski, and the undercover communist began working for the OSS in Washington.¹⁴⁵ Although the Chinese Nationalists eventually demanded Pavlovski's resignation, Dai Li was horrified by the connection between the OSS, the British, and Pavlovski, which solidified his distrust for the OSS association with Miles.¹⁴⁶

A major part of Miles's growing dislike of the OSS was his belief that the Far East division in Washington was run entirely by Old China Hands. While he had yet to receive orders from his new OSS commanders in Washington, Miles sent Donovan a letter concerning the kind of men that should be selected to work in China.¹⁴⁷ Miles was sure that the Chinese would no longer tolerate the "white supremacy" that these men often displayed.¹⁴⁸ He was also convinced that men like Gale, Hayden, Lusey, and others working in China were "gunning" for him because, to them, Miles had "gone native."¹⁴⁹ As it turned out, as soon as he began working with the OSS, Miles had good reason to feel as though he was under attack from the Old China Hands.

Miles and Stilwell

Early in November, Dr. Hayden sent a report back to Washington which circulated questions about whether Stilwell was certain of Miles's close relationship with the Nationalists. This report was damaging to the faith of some in Washington about the relationship between Miles and Stilwell. The report stated that Stilwell did not think that the Friendship Project was "worth a damn," and that Miles said, "the General dare not 'interfere' with anything he [Miles] may do."¹⁵⁰ These rumors reached

¹⁴³ Robert Bickers, "Shanghaianders: The Formation and Identity of the British Settler Community in Shanghai 1843-1937," *Past & Present*, no. 159 (May, 1998): 184, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/651233>.

¹⁴⁴ Yu, *OSS in China*, 92.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 93.

¹⁴⁶ Smith, *The Secret History*, 248.

¹⁴⁷ Miles, *A Different Kind of War*, 90.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 91.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 91.

¹⁵⁰ Smith, *The Secret History*, 249-250.

the Navy department, which notified Miles of Hayden's message, and suggested that a conference between Dai Li, Stilwell, and himself might ease tensions.¹⁵¹ The only problem with the Navy's suggestion was that Miles was completely unaware of any mistrust on the side of the Army. Upon receiving word from Washington about Hayden's message, Miles went immediately to Stilwell who, in return, gave Miles an emphatic endorsement. After this detrimental episode in their already shaky relationship, Miles lost complete trust in Hayden and wrote to Captain Metzger that he did not want any more enemies than what the Axis could throw at him and that if, "Donovan doesn't yank him (Hayden) pretty soon, I will ask for his recall and ask them (OSS) to take over my job."¹⁵² In this instance, Miles felt deliberately stabbed in the back by Hayden and OSS, solidifying his opinion that the OSS connection was only slowing down his work in China.¹⁵³

Although Stilwell endorsed Miles, their relationship was as shaky as Hayden had reported. Stilwell disapproved of Miles's guerilla activities in China when he first arrived, however, Miles was under the impression that the general understood that something had to be done in China if he was to recover the territory he lost in Burma. Miles's assumption about the general's motives were partly true, but Stilwell also knew that he was in no position to deny Dai Li. Stilwell knew that Chiang Kai-shek trusted Dai Li and that the spymaster had a reputation for refusing to be dominated, and so Stilwell gave Miles permission to operate with Dai Li in a "detached" capacity as long as Stilwell was kept informed.¹⁵⁴ In a memo to George Marshall, Stilwell voiced concerns that the relationship between Miles and Dai Li was being exploited by the Chinese to bypass his own authority and expand Dai Li's influence.¹⁵⁵ It appears that Stilwell agreed to help Miles primarily because he knew that, in China, he was in no position to oppose Miles when his relationship with the Generalissimo (Chiang Kai-shek) was on thin ice.

Even before he arrived in China, Miles had made up his mind about his new theater commander. Miles's first impression of Stilwell was of his retreat from Burma, where, as Miles recalled, he had had his "pants licked off him."¹⁵⁶ This retreat convinced Miles that General Claire Chennault, Stilwell's main rival in the China theater, was the only man who could properly force the Japanese Empire out of China if he was "given control and some planes."¹⁵⁷ Miles's negative feelings towards

¹⁵¹ Yu, *OSS in China*, 85.

¹⁵² Roy Stratton, *The Army-Navy Game* (Massachusetts: Volta Company, 1977), 67.

¹⁵³ Miles, *A Different Kind of War*, 92.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 76.

¹⁵⁵ Schaller, "SACO!," 533.

¹⁵⁶ Miles, *A Different Kind of War*, 75.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 75.

Stilwell intensified as he began his work in the summer of 1942. Miles became frustrated that the additional supplies, which were to be added to the Army's shipments over the "Hump" for the Friendship Project, were not being delivered as promised.¹⁵⁸ Allocation of supplies after the closing of the Burma Road in May 1942 became a point of contention on several fronts that further divided the US military organizations in China.

The Stilwell Experience in China

The loss of Burma was highly detrimental to Stilwell's reputation among the KMT. When the Japanese Empire thwarted the Allied defense and Stilwell fled into India, the Generalissimo was furious, saying that "Stilwell deserted our troops and left for India without my permission."¹⁵⁹ From this moment on, Chiang lost trust in Stilwell and instead backed Chennault, who was also very critical of Stilwell's "walkout."¹⁶⁰ The closure of supply lines into China along the Burma Road prompted the Allies to move their operation to the air, organizing a supply chain which sent cargo planes over the treacherous Himalayas, which colloquially became known as "flying the hump." After taking over for Gen. Magruder, Stilwell was directly responsible for coordinating these lend-lease shipments. His work was cut out for him after President Roosevelt assured Chiang that the supply routes could be maintained by air.¹⁶¹ Stilwell found himself in the middle of a situation made worse by the theater's great needs and the Allied focus on the European Theater over the Pacific.

The root of Chiang Kai-shek's frustration with Stilwell was his own overestimation of US shipping capabilities and Stilwell's apparent unwillingness to cooperate. Stilwell was given 75 aircraft, which were erroneously claimed to be able to transport 5,000 tons of material a month to China.¹⁶² Stilwell attempted to explain to Washington that "not more than 5 to 10 percent," of the proposed lend-lease material would reach China with his airlift's current situation, but to no avail.¹⁶³ Stilwell could not force the War Department to consider the needs of the China theater, and in return, he bore the brunt of the frustration from the Nationalists when their supplies were not arriving as promised.

The situation for Stilwell worsened when, on June 26, 1942 during a conversation with Chiang, Stilwell was blamed for telling the War Department that he did not need additional planes.¹⁶⁴ Because

¹⁵⁸ Miles, *A Different Kind of War*, 76.

¹⁵⁹ Liang, *General Stilwell in China*, 41.

¹⁶⁰ Liang, *General Stilwell in China*, 42.

¹⁶¹ Barbara Tuchman, *Stilwell and the American Experience in China*, 316.

¹⁶² Romanus and Sunderland, *Stilwell's Mission in China*, 164.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 165.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 169; Liang, *General Stilwell in China*, 55.

of this, the Generalissimo requested that Stilwell let him use two of the lend-lease transports. Stilwell, whether owing up to his characteristic stubbornness or simply trying to carry out his duties, refused to comply with the Generalissimo. Stilwell reminded him that he controlled when and where the supplies were to be delivered.¹⁶⁵ Henry Stimson and T.V. Soong, Chiang Kai-shek's brother-in-law and KMT representative in Washington, discussed Stilwell's function over a series of letters in early 1942. None of the letters indicate that Stilwell controlled the time or the place of lend-lease supply deliveries.¹⁶⁶ As a result, Chiang Kai-shek complained to the president that Stilwell was forcing him to "beg" for supplies.¹⁶⁷ From these encounters in the summer 1942, Chiang feared that Stilwell wanted to extend his control over the KMT armed forces by exerting pressure on the Chinese Nationalists' desperate need for lend-lease supplies. Because the Friendship Project was also the generous recipient of lend-lease shipments, Stilwell's apparent grip over the transports also worried Miles and Dai Li.

Dai Li and Miles Make it Official

Stilwell's control over supply lines coupled with fear of potentially dangerous SOE and communist influences in the OSS, prompted Dai Li to strengthen his unofficial agreement with Miles in late November 1942. He went to Miles and proposed that a binding legal agreement be drafted to maintain the Navy-BIS operation as it was. Miles agreed, understanding that the Navy and the OSS were seeking different means to reach nonidentical ends. In his memoir, Miles wrote that he did not recognize "from the beginning that the OSS was trying to bypass the Chinese," and to do so, "they had to get rid of me."¹⁶⁸ While Miles was eager to put the terms of the Friendship Project in writing, he was wary of the bureaucratic labyrinth that the agreement would need to traverse and initially he tried to avoid the hassle of going to Washington. Dai Li eventually convinced Miles of the necessity of procuring this document.¹⁶⁹ Miles's first draft was unsatisfactory for Dai Li because the terms were too broad. Miles and Dai Li spent hours translating and drafting the document until they finally agreed upon a final version of the Sino-American Cooperative Organization (SACO) agreement on Dec 31, 1942.¹⁷⁰

When the SACO agreement reached Washington, Roosevelt was in Casablanca meeting with the British. Purnell and Metzger read over the document when it arrived, and they agreed that the most obvious critics of the agreement would be the Army. As drafted, the head of SACO was to be Chinese

¹⁶⁵ Romanus and Sunderland, *Stilwell's Mission in China*, 174; Liang, *General Stilwell in China*, 63.

¹⁶⁶ Liang, *Stilwell in China*, 63.

¹⁶⁷ Romanus and Sunderland, *Stilwell's Mission in China*, 174.

¹⁶⁸ Miles, *A Different Kind of War*, 159.

¹⁶⁹ Yu, *OSS in China*, 94.

¹⁷⁰ Stratton, *The Army-Navy Game*, 50.

and the deputy was to be American. When Xiao Bo informed Dai Li of possible revisions to the SACO agreement, Dai Li responded with a list of nonnegotiable items and bid Xiao to show them to Purnell. Dai Li was adamant that no “essential revision” from the US would be accepted, that the British should not be involved in any capacity, and that SACO would retain command of all OSS SI activities.¹⁷¹ Dai Li’s conviction to his original agreement was noted by Purnell and Xiao, however, before the agreement could be signed, it had to go to the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

When the JCS returned to the US and reviewed the agreement in January 1943, critiques arose from George Marshall, who was committed to keeping the Army in control of the theater. Under SACO, Miles would answer to Dai Li—not Stilwell—and that simply was not possible for Marshall. In defense of Miles, Admiral King resisted Marshall’s attempts to revise the document to put SACO under the direct control of the theater commander. Donovan also disliked the SACO agreement as it stood because he was unwilling to have his organization placed under Dai Li.¹⁷² Unfortunately, the OSS chief did not have much of a choice but to keep his operations in China regardless of who the agreement put in command because MacArthur had already made sure that the OSS would not be allowed in the South Pacific.¹⁷³ For now, OSS’s survival in China meant cooperation with SACO. By mid-February, the deadlock between King and Marshall was broken when a deal was cut between them which looked to be far more favorable for the Army—Stilwell’s opinion on the matter would arbitrate the final decision.

Marshall was unaware, however, that Stilwell and Miles agreed that supporting the SACO agreement meant regulating OSS activities in China. On February 21, 1943, Stilwell sent a cable to Marshall confirming his support for the SACO agreement, saying that he believed that the Nationalists would be unwilling to sign if “any agency comes between them and Miles.”¹⁷⁴ Then on April 15, the SACO agreement was signed in Washington with Xiao Bo representing the Nationalists. Two months later, Dai Li officially signed the SACO agreement.

The signing of the SACO agreement did not mean the end of interservice rivalries in China. In many ways, the events leading up to the agreement’s signing were simply precursors for the continued disagreements between Miles, Donovan, and Stilwell. For Miles, the SACO agreement meant that he would no longer be worried about regulating the activities of the OSS, and he could focus on his own, rapidly-expanding organization. Although Donovan was originally against the

¹⁷¹ Yu, *OSS in China*, 95.

¹⁷² Aldrich, *Intelligence and the War against the Japanese*, 266; Miles, *A Different Kind of War*, 160.

¹⁷³ Smith, *The Secret History*, 251.

¹⁷⁴ Yu, *OSS in China*, 97.

agreement, the terms of the agreement allowed him to use the auspices of both the Navy and the Army depending on which allowed him the most room to expand his operations.¹⁷⁵ The Army's position to the creation of SACO varied between Marshall and Stilwell, however, both men disapproved of a Nationalist general overseeing American operations. However, unlike Marshall, Stilwell understood that his relationship with the KMT was a weak one, and he could not afford to jeopardize his position by opposing Dai Li and Chiang. The SACO agreement seemed to signal a new dawn of cooperation in the theater, but in actuality, it did little to remedy the interservice conflict.

The evaluation that a desire for territorial control motivated rivalries between the OSS, Navy, and the Army overlooks a variety of important and influential factors. The policies of these organizations were influenced by opposing opinions of the Chinese Nationalists and Chinese Communists and opinions of how to conduct irregular warfare. Furthermore, these factors were not isolated to the years of 1939 to the beginning of 1943, but they continued to incite conflict between the US intelligence agencies in China throughout the duration of the war.

The most well-documented conflict between the intelligence agencies existed between the OSS and the Navy. The friction between the two organizations was due, in part, to loyalty of one's own native organization; it was only natural that Miles saw himself as a Navy officer before he was an OSS operative. In the same way, General Donovan never saw himself as being in anyway attached to the Navy. Because the two ambitious leaders were so closely linked, rivalries inevitably arose as they each sought to work independently in the China theater. Yet, the desire for autonomy does not alone explain why these two men clashed so frequently. Additionally, these men fundamentally disagreed on whether or not to cooperate with the Chinese Nationalists.

The OSS

In the case of the OSS, the influence of the British and the Old China Hands along with Donovan's own prejudices about the inability of the Army and the Navy's intelligence gathering networks contributed to ineffective operational policies in China. As a result, the R&A branch often planned for different circumstances than the field agents found themselves working in. Donovan and the experts in R&A regularly instructed their operatives to engage in activities that were opposed to the wishes of the Chinese Nationalists. These OSS operatives went to China expecting to be able to work between the lines of Navy, Army, and KMT oversight, but were met with fierce opposition as

¹⁷⁵ Yu, *OSS in China*, 98.

soon as they arrived. Dr. Esson Gale's mission to Chungking in 1942, for instance, attempted to use Koreans as surrogate operatives, but this strategy failed because the OSS had overshot the political usefulness of Koreans-in-exile. It was not Gale's obtuseness which sent his mission awry, but the fact that his mission was planned without considering the complex political environment of Chungking. In the case of Major Eifler and the Dragon Plan, the OSS issued orders that specifically circumvented the Army's control and completely ignored the Navy's presence on the mainland. Although cleared by the JCS, the only mention of Eifler's coming to China was during Preston Goodfellow's conversation with Stilwell months earlier, when he asked permission to connect intelligence operations in Stilwell's command. Once Stilwell assumed his post, however, the situation changed dramatically, and he saw no place for the OSS inside the complex Army-Navy relationship in China.

The OSS missions in China were met with open hostility from the Army and the Navy, because the tactics Donovan had encouraged since the inception of COI/OSS were designed to subvert the preexisting command structures. Instead of altering these tactics and cooperating to work within the framework of the Army and the Navy, Donovan persisted to pursue policies that sought to undermine them. Donovan saw no use for SACO or Stilwell other than being the necessary bureaucratic cover from which to build his own organization.

From my research into the prewar state of the Navy and Army's intelligence-gathering capabilities, Donovan's negative opinion about these organizations was merited and shared by others in Washington. However, by the time Donovan reached the China theater in February 1942, Miles was already building his organization to provide useful weather intelligence and reports on Japanese ship movements off the coast to the Allies in the Pacific. Miles accomplished this by cooperating with the Chinese Nationalists, who, according to the British-influenced OSS, could not be trusted. Donovan acknowledged the usefulness of working with ONI, but only because the organization allowed him to send his own SI men into China. From the moment Donovan and Purnell made Miles the OSS chief in the Far East in 1942, the OSS never considered him a "regular OSS officer."¹⁷⁶ From that initial agreement to the eventual unofficial split of the OSS and SACO in 1943, Donovan continuously attempted to replace SACO personnel with SI agents. When Miles and Dai Li tried to restrict OSS intrusion into SACO by signing the SACO agreement, Donovan encouraged his OSS Far East division to operate in such a way that evaded cooperation with the Army, the Navy, and the Chinese Nationalists. Donovan used the loopholes in the SACO agreement to maneuver between the

¹⁷⁶ Miles, *A Different Kind of War*, 173,

Navy and Army's bureaucratic umbrellas for the rest of the war. The most notable example of this maneuvering was attaching OSS men to an Army mission to establish contact with the Chinese Communists in 1944.¹⁷⁷ The dubious actions of the OSS are clear, but Donovan was not the sole catalyst for the interservice rivalry.

The Navy

From the beginning of his appointment to the end of the war, Miles was uncooperative with the OSS. Before he knew anything about the way the OSS operated, he unapologetically assumed that all OSS men actively sought to oppress the Chinese Nationalists. He had not yet received any orders or assignments from his new OSS superiors before he "took the initiative," and chastised OSS personnel in a letter.¹⁷⁸ Later, Miles even admitted that there were a few Old China Hands who had supported SACO.¹⁷⁹ Dai Li's apprehensions to these men aside, Miles was openly insubordinate to a command given to him by his superiors in Washington. In the end, Miles should not have supported Donovan's efforts to contradict the Chinese Nationalists; however, some middle ground between SACO and the OSS could have potentially been found to allow the agencies to work together.

Critics of Miles, such as Donovan and Stilwell, considered him simply a "procurement officer" for the Chinese Nationalists. His critics' debasements were not without truth. Miles even admitted that the OSS appointment was a way for him to cut red tape and avoid Stilwell's stranglehold on lend-lease shipments.¹⁸⁰ It also appears that Miles valued his close relationship with Dai Li more than establishing any kind of working relationship with Donovan or Stilwell. After all, Dai Li was the only reason that SACO existed in the first place. Miles had a monopoly on friendship with the Chinese Nationalists, and perhaps he thought that being close with either OSS or the Army might jeopardize KMT support of his organization. Whatever the reason for his hostility, Miles's intolerance for the OSS and Stilwell contributed to the contentious disorganization of the US operations in China.

The Army

Stilwell's role in the rivalries has gone relatively undocumented. Mentions of his relationship with Miles is omitted almost entirely in biographies.¹⁸¹ However, his track record of cooperating with his Allies in the war provides a clue about his role in the rivalries. "Vinegar Joe" Stilwell was outspoken about his dislike for Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek, who he nicknamed "Peanut."¹⁸² Stilwell thought

¹⁷⁷ Yu, *OSS in China*, 159.

¹⁷⁸ Miles, *A Different Kind of War*, 90; Smith, *The Secret History*, 252.

¹⁷⁹ Miles, *A Different Kind of War*, 118; Smith, *The Secret History*, 253.

¹⁸⁰ Miles, *A Different Kind of War*, 91.

¹⁸¹ Yu, *OSS in China*, 266n12.

¹⁸² Tuchman, *Stilwell and the American Experience in China*, 363.

the Generalissimo contributed to his defeat in Burma by micromanaging KMT generals from Chungking instead of allowing Stilwell to be in command. Stilwell and Chiang also clashed over the managing of lend-lease shipments. Chiang was indignant that Stilwell refused to provide the equipment the KMT needed. From Stilwell's perspective, the closing of the Burma Road meant that promised supplies were not available; consequently, it was not his fault if the shipments arriving overland did not contain the provisions Chiang was promised by the State Department.

Apart from the seemingly amicable relationship between Stilwell and Miles established at the beginning of their missions, the two men repeatedly butted heads in several key areas. Firstly, as a close friend of Dai Li, Miles was trusted by the Generalissimo, who considered Stilwell to be unfairly withholding supplies from the Nationalists as a bargaining chip.¹⁸³ Secondly, Miles considered Stilwell to be an ineffectual commander after he fled to India after his defeat in Burma. Along with Chiang, Miles was outspoken in his support of General Chennault as commander of the CBI.

Stilwell's dislike of the OSS was the result of a universal belief among Army generals in the Pacific that civilian-led guerilla warfare operations, such as those being proposed by the OSS, were not welcome in war. A clear indication of the Army's prejudice against the OSS was MacArthur's expulsion of Warren Clear, the undercover OSS agent, from the South Pacific. Donovan also backed General Chennault, joining their two organizations in 1943. Donovan's motives for aligning himself with Stilwell's rival was to operate separately from Stilwell and SACO.¹⁸⁴ Although scholarship scarcely concerns Stilwell's conflict with SACO and the OSS, piecing together how these three organizations disagreed with each other is not a difficult task.

Final Thoughts

Donovan, Miles, and Stilwell vied for control in China, and the conflict which arose between them was the result of clashing ideologies. Miles was the first to establish an intelligence-gathering network in China, believing that cooperation with the Chinese Nationalists was paramount to success. In contrast, the OSS, under British influence, worked with the assumptions that the Chinese Nationalists passively engaged the enemy, refused foreign control, and greedily demanded aid. Similarly, Stilwell believed that US operations, including lend-lease aid, should be safeguarded from Chinese Nationalist control. SACO and the OSS gathered intelligence and waged guerilla warfare

¹⁸³ Liang, *General Stilwell in China*, 9.

¹⁸⁴ Yu, *OSS in China*, 153.

against the Japanese Empire. On the contrary, the Army considered these actions “illegal” and only begrudgingly accepted their presence in China because of Dai Li’s influence.¹⁸⁵

The commanders of SACO, OSS, and the Army battled each other for control of “their” part of China. However, the reasons they clashed went beyond ambition for territorial control and was rooted in contrasting beliefs about the character of the Chinese Nationalists and the role of guerilla tactics in war. Regardless of how the OSS, the Army, and the Navy felt about the Chinese Nationalists, Chiang Kai-shek and Dai Li worked with China’s best interests in mind. After all, the reason the US sent Donovan, Miles, and Stilwell to China was to help the Chinese Nationalists repel the Japanese Empire. China did not belong to the OSS, Army, or even the Navy, and the fact that some of these men and their organizations did not understand this was also a reason for the disunity in the theater.

¹⁸⁵ Smith, *The Secret History*, 244.

Author Biographies

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