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INTEROFFICE MEMO

TO: Colonel Buxton

DATE: 31 December 1943

FROM: Secretariat

SUBJECT: Attached Report from John Davies, "Anglo-American Cooperation in East Asia"

1. Annexed is what we believe a highly important memorandum by John Davies on the position of the American forces in East Asia. It is of particular importance since we understand that John Davies has been appointed by General Stilwell as political advisor to OWI in New Delhi to integrate its policies with that of the Commanding General.

2. This memorandum was transmitted direct by pouch from Major Hutcheson to Mr. Katz who received it about 2 weeks ago. The Secretariat saw a reference to it in a cable Mr. Katz sent to Colonel Heppner and asked that Mr. Katz send us a copy of the memorandum for the Director's information. Mr. Katz reports that he had sent a copy to General Magruder with a suggestion that it be distributed throughout the agency, and that General Magruder had asked him to make distribution to Mr. Scribner and Dr. Langer. In addition, Mr. Shepardson has seen it. The Secretariat believes that distribution should also be made to the Planning Group, FETO, X-2, SO, and MO, but in view of General Magruder's request that distribution be strictly limited, and in view of Tekhi cable No. 182 of December 20, 1943, attached, we have thought it best to secure your approval before sending copies to these offices. Particularly with reference to distribution to the Planning Group you may wish to consider whether this might be in effect the circulation to the War, Navy and State Departments which Heppner has recommended should not be made without Davies' approval. We have since checked with

*Agree
H. Buxton*

Major Hutcheson who believes that it would be better not to show the memorandum to the Planning Group until Davies has approved.

*cc. memo. re. f. 241 L.H.D. 12/14/43
182 J.W.H.D. 12/20/43*

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3. We believe this matter illustrates the necessity for routing all official communications through the Theater Officers who as staff officers for the Director can see to it that there is immediately called to the Director's attention any matter coming in by pouch about which the Director should know. This routing is, of course, provided for in the pending order covering the functions of the Theater Officers.

D. C. Lee
D. C. Lee

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6.11.1944 13318
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Dec 8, 1943

November 15, 1943

ANGLO-AMERICAN COOPERATION IN EAST ASIA

We will be able to save ourselves a good deal of trouble and misunderstanding if at the outset of our participation in and contact with the South East Asia Command we clearly distinguish where American and British interests lie.

In so far as the British are fighting the Japanese enemy and seeking to punish aggression, we are united with them. But we are not to the same extent united with the British in their attempt to regain their colonial empire -- unless American foreign policy and public sentiment have undergone a revolutionary change yet unannounced in these distant parts.

There still exist at home highly vocal and influential publishers and men in public life who will be ready to brand our collaboration with the British in Burma, Malaya, Indochina and Sumatra as snatching British, French and Dutch colonial chestnuts out of the Japanese fire. The question will be asked, "Why should American boys die to represent colonies for the British and their French and Dutch satellites?"

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For us to distinguish in this theater the precise limits of our national interests is one of the most difficult tasks confronting us. The repossession of the British Empire in Asia is merged with the war against Japan. Military and political strategy are so intermingled that the distinction between the two is easily blurred. When the British and we fight our way into Burma, we shall be not only prosecuting the war against the common enemy but also recapturing a portion of Britain's Empire. Until we are able to distinguish just how far we should involve ourselves in the plans and actions of our allies, we shall be running the risk of finding ourselves -- because of a laudable zeal to get things done -- in a dangerously false position.

As serving to clarify this confusing situation, it may be useful first to put ourselves in the British position, estimating their position in East Asia as they see it.

The British are confronted with two major tasks in East Asia. One is the reoccupation of their Southeast Asian Empire. The other is the defeat of Japan.

The British Government realizes that because of Pearl Harbor and Midway, the United States feels committed to the defeat of Japan. As the British Government has been able to depend upon the Soviet Union to bear the brunt of the war against Germany, so it may depend upon us to bear the brunt of the war against Japan.

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That being the case, the British Government is not so impulsive as to place the defeat of Japan -- no inexpensive project -- as the principal task before it.

The reacquisition and perhaps expansion of the Empire is an essential undertaking if Britain is to be fully restored to the position of a first class power. Therefore reconquest of Empire is the paramount task in British eyes. The raising of the Union Jack over Singapore is more important to the British than any victory parade through Tokyo.

This British evaluation is revealed by their remarkably deliberate time-table, their unwillingness to employ against the enemy resources which for some time have been at their command, their military inaction, present and past, rationalized by the invocation of Acts of God, and the route which they wish to follow in assuming the offensive. This interpretation does not impute heroic qualities to the British Government; it does imply that it has lost none of its political acumen.

Matters would, of course, be very much more clear cut for the British if they could confine themselves to the task of taking back the Empire and delegate to us the enterprise of defeating the enemy outside of the precincts

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of British Colonies. London and New Delhi, however, must take into consideration in their planning the complicating facts that (1) the United States, in pursuit of victory over Japan, is and will be operating from British Empire bases into other parts of the Empire held by the enemy, and (2) the British Government is committed to action against the enemy beyond Singapore and Hong Kong.

Decisions with regard to the latter can be deferred until the issue arises months or years hence. American presence in India and plans for joint action against Japan in Burma and Malaya at the earliest possible moment are, however, an immediate problem.

The British openly admit that they are embarrassed by our presence in India and our plans for going into Burma and Malaya. The presence and therefore display of American military strength in British colonies embarrasses them because, invidiously, British Prestige thereby suffers. And the British Empire, British officials in India are frank to admit, is based to a very considerable extent on a facade of prestige.

The British are further embarrassed by our attitude on the colonial question. Obvious American disinclination to engage in colonial enterprises, the American record of strengthening Asiatic states threatened by aggression and repeated American pronouncements extolling the virtues and benefits of liberty and self-determination have in the past given the United States a good reputation in Asia. Our

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standing remains relatively high among Asiatics despite the growing belief in China and India that we are now acquiescing in British colonial ambitions. While feeling some appreciation for our present silence on the colonial question, the British are, nevertheless, still acutely apprehensive lest there occur some ingenious American outburst on the subject of liberty for colonial peoples which might come to Asiatic ears.

Similarly, the British are uneasy over the presence in this theater of American civil affairs officers. Obviously, the British are not anxious for American civil administration of any part of their Empire, however transient. Yet they cannot with good grace say, "Give us fighting men and material but keep your Army's civil administrators at home." The British must therefore find a way of neutralizing the normal course of American participation in this particular military function.

American impatience to assume the offensive in Burma is venacious to the British. This is due primarily to their realization that American plans call for the use of Chinese troops. The British are frankly afraid that the Chinese will retain or claim any portion of Burma which they recapture. Political considerations dictate, therefore, that the reconquest of Burma should ideally

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be accomplished only by Empire forces in the wake of a Japanese withdrawal caused by an outflanking of Burma. The British consequently regard our insistence on prompt offensive action against Burma as scarcely better than bedevilment. But, again, because they must play the host to us and have need of what we ungrudgingly give them, they feel that they must find ways to dissuade us and the Chinese from going into Burma other than resorting to a blunt refusal.

China's potentialities in the post-war world cause the present British Government some anxiety. It recognizes that if China emerges from this war strong and unified, China will (1) endanger, as a focus of nationalist infection, Britain's Asiatic Empire; (2) attempt, paradoxically perhaps, imperialistic expansion of its own; and, (3) threaten British claims to Hongkong.

Our commitment to the creation of a strong, unified, independent China can therefore hardly be viewed by the British Government with gratification. If successful, our aid to China program will help to create what British imperialists fear. And yet, in view of the sentimental enthusiasm for China in Britain as well as in the United States, the British Government dare not openly oppose our help to China.

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It is evident from all of the foregoing, then, that the British Government and the Government of India find themselves in an awkward position with regard to their American guests in India. We embarrass them by our very presence, for the fact that it is necessary for us to be here reflects on British prestige. Our good reputation among Asiatics and our attitude toward the colonial question embarrass them. They are nervous lest we attempt independent civil administration in reoccupied British colonies. Our endeavor to make them join us in a Burma offensive disturbs and irritates them. Finally, they find themselves in opposition to our determination to make China a major power.

Yet they have to bear with us. Because they need our men and material -- and our lend-lease -- they cannot afford to put us out of India, as they would like to do.

The least unsatisfactory escape from their dilemma would seem to be: accept us (for they have no alternative), consolidate us with themselves for "efficient" cooperation and then, by dominating the integrated partnership, bring us into line with their policy and action.

So there is established the South East Asia Command, in which we, and, so far as it can be arranged, the Chinese are to cooperate with the British under a British Supreme Commander. And the Supreme Commander in person of Lord Louis Mountbatten combines all of the qualities calculated

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to appeal most to Americans -- forthrightness, vigor and glamour. But, alas, we shall never know what confidential orders His Lordship carries from Mr. Churchill designed to inhibit his natural vigor, unless events, purchases, continue to suggest them. Meanwhile, Admiral Mountbatten's British subordinates and Government of India officials emphasize their desire to integrate personnel as well as effort, not only in military affairs but also in matters which have far-reaching political implications.

The foregoing is an appreciation of the British position. What, then, of the American position?

Our mission is (1) to increase the combat effectiveness of Chinese forces in the war against Japan and (2) to defeat Japan. In so far as British plans and efforts contribute to these two ends we will and must give them full and willing cooperation.

By the same logic, we are in duty bound to oppose policies likely to retard or frustrate the accomplishment of our mission.

The resurrection of Britain's Empire in Asia may be said to lie outside the scope of our mission.

Our position, however, is not so clear-cut in fact as it is in principle. In seeking to carry out our mission to defeat Japan we shall, as has been noted, invade territories over which Britain claims colonial domination. Thereby collaterally we become involved in an enterprise outside

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the scope of our mission. And it is an enterprise full of potential misunderstanding and complications for us.

While highly sensitive to embarrassment by us, the British exhibit a distressing lack of sympathy for the discomfiture to which we are exposed because of our association with them.

If we could operate in Southeast Asia independently of the British and on our own terms, we might expect to be welcomed by and have the cooperation of the native population. But because we are to operate with and (in the case of the South East Asia Command) under the British, the people of Southeast Asia will identify us with the re-imposition of British Colonial rule. This in turn means that we may expect much the same resistance, hostility and non-cooperation from the native population which will greet the British. It means that we shall suffer casualties, sabotage, breakdown of supply and administrative obstruction which we would not encounter were we on our own.

Our collateral involvement in the British imperial enterprise will affect our relations not only with colonial Asiatics, but also with the free peoples of Asia. The Chinese, and later the Thais, will feel -- as many Chinese already do -- that we have aligned ourselves with the British in a "whiteocracy" to reimpose western imperialism on Asia. Such a feeling throughout Asia obviously

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has ominous implications for the future.

Our participation in Britain's campaign to recreate its Empire like wise places us in a false position with regard to the American public. It is obvious that more than any other American force we are vulnerable to criticism, even if unwarranted, as being dupes of British imperialism.

It is evident, then, from what has been said, that the Anglo-American partnership not only embarrasses the British, but also threatens to discredit and compromise us. However, we are scarcely more able than the British to extricate ourselves from it. To accomplish our mission, we have as much need of the British as they have of us. The partnership cannot be dissolved.

But this does not mean that we should resign ourselves unreservedly to being compromised. We are still able to exercise a considerable degree of control over our course. For example, so long as we retain CMI as an independent American mouthpiece of psychological warfare we can attempt to rationalize our policy to East Asia on our own terms -- yet without offending the British. We can hope thereby to mitigate such hostility to us as will develop among colonial peoples and can perhaps even win a larger degree of cooperation than might otherwise be forthcoming. This can be accomplished only if our psychological warfare program preserves a purely American identity.

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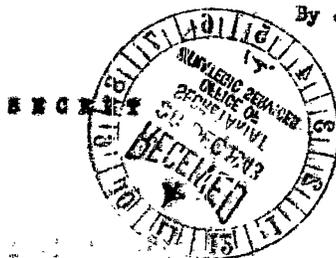
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With regard to another field, civil administration, we can still guide our destiny somewhat. The British have already made it clear that they have no intention of permitting us to exercise independent civil administrative functions in northern Burma. The same restriction will doubtless be true of other colonial areas. They will, however, be glad to accept our civil administration officers in staff positions or possibly in the field, providing they are under close British control. They will do this because, so long as we are associated, it is to their advantage to place us in a position where Americans cannot formulate policy but where we will be identified with their policy and where they can capitalize on our good reputation in Asia.

We can guide our destiny with regard to civil administration only if we remain completely aloof from it. Participation in civil administration in colonial Asia will place us in a false and compromising position. Unless, of course, the American and British Governments are prepared to implement in Asia Articles II and III of the Atlantic Charter.

By John Davies



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POLITICS OF LEADERSHIP IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

Summary: Southeast Asia is a political vacuum demanding aggressive leadership. The need cannot be met by a return to pre-war colonial paternalism nor by action of the colonial powers individually. If a common and forward policy for the development of nationalism in this area cannot be agreed and acted upon by the United Nations, control must within a few years pass to others readier to act.

Characteristics: Southeast Asia, including Burma, Thailand, Indo-China, Malaya, and the Netherlands Indies, is an area rich in population, resources, and tradition. Its people are, however, fragmented by differences of language, religion, and custom. Illiteracy is the rule rather than the exception. Few of the ethnic groups are by custom of military temperament and none have advanced modern military training or equipment. They are economically unsophisticated and have difficulty in competing either with large-scale technical industry or with the tougher, shrewder, tighter Chinese. They are untrained in the detailed operations of a modern national administration either as administrators or subjects.

These shortcomings have facilitated the survival of colonialism in Southeast Asia. Until they are overcome, neither Southeast Asia nor its component parts can defend themselves or play an autonomous role in world politics. But these people are also intelligent and ambitious and will make trouble for any regime which does not promise them such a role.

Outside Pressure: British, Dutch, and French rule have differed in various ways. The Dutch have been more efficient and honest than the French but also more paternalistic and more intolerant of native political organization. The French have shown the greatest racial tolerance but

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have been least efficient. The British have made very considerable political concessions, yet have been racially most intolerant. All three have been alike, however, in failure to push with real energy the technical, economic, and political education of the people which is necessary if they are to achieve an autonomous status. This failure can easily be judged by comparison with what Japan has accomplished with her own people since 1870, what the United States has done in the Philippines or what the USSR has accomplished in Outer Mongolia. Instead of leading their peoples to statehood, the colonial regimes have dragged along far behind local nationalist leaders.

Japan's slogan "Asia for the Asiatics" permits her a more progressive role. She is encouraging local nationalists wherever possible and within the limited means at her disposal is giving them access to political, economic, and technical experience. She has already declared the independence of Burma and will declare that of the Philippines soon. She has increased the autonomy of the states in Malaya and promised a greater role to the political groups in Java formerly suppressed by the Dutch. This is strong medicine, even if Japanese control is but ill disguised. If, following reoccupation a few months hence, the United Nations revert to the pre-war colonial system, or if Thailand and Burma are formed into a British "Commonwealth", as has recently been suggested, Japan may well retain, even in defeat, a political hold over nationalism in this area which will be very dangerous in later years.

The U.S.S.R. also, if it had an opportunity, would adopt a very positive policy here. They would cultivate the nationalists while ruthlessly encouraging education, religious reform, labor and political organization, technical training and all the other steps they believe

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necessary before a country can become a full-fledged member of the world order they envisage.

China, for a few decades at least, will lack the technical and administrative know-how to assume effective political and military leadership in this area. Under any international regime, however, it is safe to assume that her merchants would soon achieve an important economic position which would form the foundation for political control at a later date should the local populations in the meantime not achieve strength.

The Need: Under such circumstances a return to the status quo ante is far from enough. The peoples of Southeast Asia will not remain our children. They must be trained to become our allies or they will learn to become our enemies.

Both distance and the racial prejudices of our people will make it difficult for the United States, Britain, or the Netherlands to merge these peoples into our own political organization as Japan, China, or the U.S.S.R. might some day be able to do. They will eventually rebel if kept under our control without the full privileges of participation. Left alone in their present disunity, they will soon fall under the influence of larger neighbors. The alternative is to organize them into a group, possibly including the Philippines, which would be strong enough to stand alone and to count on the generosity and extent of our political help to keep them in our orbit.

Southeast Asia thus demands a leadership which will ally itself with nationalism, which will push energetically the equipping of these people for an autonomous role in world politics, and which will help them find such a role. This leadership requires both greater interference

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and greater generosity than have characterized colonialism -- greater interference with local ways and customs which are today handicaps and greater generosity in allowing the people of Southeast Asia to manage their own resources, industries, and administrations.

If the United Nations do not provide such leadership, someone else will.

Conclusion: The United States might well initiate discussions of the future of Southeast Asia prior to campaigns in that area. A convincing statement of objectives now would be useful to P.W. and would facilitate reoccupation. Failure to secure agreement before occupation will, on the other hand, play into the hands of those who are planning on return to the status quo ante and will make difficult, if not impossible, development of any sound foundation for long-term American (or British) political influence in this area.

Prepared for Quebec Conference by Dr. Robinson