

EFFORTS TO ESTABLISH A SUPPLY ROUTE TO CHINA
THROUGH TIBET; ATTITUDE OF THE UNITED STATES
TOWARD STATUS OF TIBET

103.91802/687

*The Director of the Office of Strategic Services (Donovan) to the
Secretary of State*

WASHINGTON, July 2, 1942.

MY DEAR MR. SECRETARY: Two of our men, Captain Ilia Tolstoy and Lieutenant Brooke Dolan, are being sent on a mission via India and Tibet to General Stilwell¹ in China.

This office, therefore, requests that the State Department should instruct the head of its diplomatic mission in New Delhi, India, to expedite the obtaining of a permit from the British authorities in India for Ilia Tolstoy and Brooke Dolan to enter Tibet, by way of India, and to be allowed freedom of travel in Tibet in so far as the British are able to grant it without the necessity of returning to India.

Our military authorities in India will verify and confirm this mission to the State Department representatives in New Delhi in order that negotiations with the British authorities, civil and military, may be facilitated.

This mission is of strategic importance and we hope will prove of long term value in the furtherance of the war effort in the Asiatic theatre.

We are keeping this project *most secret* and we feel it desirable to avoid any mention of the military status of these two men in any negotiations. When they personally contact American State Department and Military authorities in India, the matter can be discussed and arranged in fullest confidence with the British. Certain British authorities in India are already informed as to the nature of their mission.

Respectfully,

WILLIAM J. DONOVAN

¹ Lt. Gen. Joseph W. Stilwell, Commanding General, U. S. Army Forces in China, Burma, and India.

103.91802/687

The Secretary of State to President Roosevelt

WASHINGTON, July 3, 1942.

Colonel William J. Donovan, Director of the Office of Strategic Services, is sending two members of his organization on a special and confidential mission to China via India and Tibet. It is believed that the work of the mission in Tibet would be greatly facilitated if you were to provide it with a letter of introduction to the Dalai Lama of Tibet. A draft of such letter is attached.² The letter is addressed to the Dalai Lama in his capacity of religious leader of Tibet, rather than in his capacity of secular leader of Tibet, thus avoiding giving any possible offense to the Chinese Government which includes Tibet in the territory of the Republic of China. It is understood that Colonel Donovan is getting in touch with your office with regard to the form of delivery of the letter, if approved by you.

[HULL]

103.91802/687

President Roosevelt to the Dalai Lama of Tibet

WASHINGTON, July 3, 1942.

YOUR HOLINESS: Two of my fellow countrymen, Ilia Tolstoy and Brooke Dolan, hope to visit your Pontificate and the historic and widely famed city of Lhasa. There are in the United States of America many persons, among them myself, who, long and greatly interested in your land and people, would highly value such an opportunity.

As you know, the people of the United States, in association with those of twenty-seven other countries, are now engaged in a war which has been thrust upon the world by nations bent on conquest who are intent upon destroying freedom of thought, of religion, and of action everywhere. The United Nations are fighting today in defense of and for preservation of freedom, confident that we shall be victorious because our cause is just, our capacity is adequate, and our determination is unshakable.

I am asking Ilia Tolstoy and Brooke Dolan to convey to you a little gift in token of my friendly sentiment toward you.

With cordial greetings [etc.]

FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT

² *Infra*, as signed.

893.24/1377½ : Telegram

The Secretary of State to the Ambassador in China (Gauss)

WASHINGTON, July 3, 1942—10 p. m.

592. The British Embassy has informally supplied the Department with a copy of a telegram from the British Foreign Office³ in which it is stated that, in reply to further representations by the Government of India, Tibet has definitely refused permit for passage of supplies to China on the ground of desire to stay out of the war; that if necessary the British Government is prepared, in association with the Chinese, to speak plainly to Tibet and to threaten economic sanctions in order to change the Tibetan attitude, but feels that prior thereto the Chinese Government should do its part to facilitate Tibetan acquiescence, as Tibetan reluctance is believed to be largely due to fear of Chinese penetration; that the British Government asked Ambassador Seymour⁴ to suggest to the Chinese Government that it give definite and public undertaking of intention to respect Tibetan autonomy and to refrain from interfering in Tibet's internal administration; that, if the Chinese would do this, Great Britain would be ready to cooperate with them in exercising joint pressure; that it was pointed out that the British Government was asking no more of the Chinese in relation to Tibet than the Chinese had already strongly recommended to the British in relation to India, namely, free and willing cooperation in the joint struggle against aggression; and that subsequently Seymour reported that he had approached the Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs,⁵ who had seemed at first sight to see nothing contrary to Chinese policy in the proposed declaration and who said that he would consider the matter and communicate again. For your information, it may be added that the telegram refers in two instances to Tibetan "independence" and in another instance to Tibetan "autonomy". It is not clear whether these words are used interchangeably or not.

We should appreciate receiving such information as you may have or be in position discreetly to obtain with regard to the difficulties of supply via Tibet referred to by the British and such comments and suggestions as may occur to you. We of course desire that a practical solution be found of any existing difficulties. As you are aware, the Chinese Government has long claimed suzerainty over Tibet, the Chinese constitution lists Tibet among areas constituting the territory of the Republic of China, and this Government has at no time raised question regarding either of these claims.

HULL

³ Not printed.⁴ Sir Horace James Seymour, British Ambassador in China.⁵ Foo Ping-sheung.

893.24/1386 : Telegram

The Ambassador in China (Gauss) to the Secretary of State

CHUNGKING, July 13, 1942—11 a. m.

[Received 2:42 p. m.]

835. Department's 592, July 3, 10 p. m. Inquiry by Embassy discloses that the Tibetan authorities have agreed to the passage through Tibet of non-military supplies for China. The term "non-military" will not be strictly interpreted. Technical details have not yet been worked out. Transit through Tibet is practicable by pack animal trains making one trip a year but the amount that can be transported (maximum estimates place it at 3000 tons annually) renders the project of minor importance as a supply route to China. The round trip requires 6 months and about half of the year travel is impracticable.

The Chinese have abandoned whatever plans they may have had for constructing a motor road and for stationing troops in Tibet, the former because the road would have no early value to the war effort due to the time required for construction and the latter because Tibetan opposition would certainly be encountered.

The Chinese plan to station technicians along the route to facilitate transportation. The Tibetan authorities are being assured that these technicians will not engage in any political activities; that they will be instructed to confine themselves to the matter of supervising transport. The Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs states that this is as far as the Chinese Government is prepared to go in response the British suggestion mentioned in the reference telegram. The Vice Minister said there was no occasion for giving assurances regarding "autonomy"; that Tibet was considered a part of the Republic of China; but that China had no intention of altering the situation whereby internal administration in Tibet is in fact autonomous.

GAUSS

893.24/1386

*Memorandum by the Chief of the Division of Far Eastern Affairs
(Hamilton)*

[WASHINGTON,] July 18, 1942.

Reference Chungking's 835, July 13, 11 a. m. and attached file in regard to questions relating to Tibet.

It would appear from Chungking's reference telegram that the Tibetan authorities have agreed to the transit of non-military supplies for China through Tibet, and that a strict interpretation will not be made of the term "non-military". It is believed that this informa-

tion should be brought informally and orally to the attention of the British Embassy through Mr. Hayter of that Embassy by the Division of Far Eastern Affairs.

It is further believed that we might orally and in strict confidence communicate to Mr. Hayter the information contained in and the views of the Chinese Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs expressed in the last paragraph of the reference telegram. We might at the same time mention that suzerainty over Tibet has long been claimed by the Chinese Government, and that Tibet is listed in the Chinese constitution among areas constituting the territory of the Republic of China, adding that this Government has at no time raised question concerning either of these claims.⁶

M[AXWELL] M. H[AMILTON]

103.91802/687 : Telegram

The Secretary of State to the Chargé in India (Merrell)

WASHINGTON, July 22, 1942—10 p. m.

371. The Office of Strategic Services of this Government is sending Iliia Tolstoy and Brooke Dolan on a mission to General Stilwell via India and Tibet. It is expected that these two men will depart from the United States for India by air in the immediate future. Please render them both all appropriate assistance in arranging for their journey through Tibet.

The Department understands that American military authorities in India will furnish you further details in regard to the matter and that some British authorities in India have already been informed.

HULL

893.24/1423

*Memorandum by the Counselor of Embassy in China (Vincent) to the Ambassador in China (Gauss)*⁷

[CHUNGKING,] July 30, 1942.

In my recent conversation with Dr. T. F. Tsiang, Director of the Political Affairs Department of the Executive Yuan, the question of transportation of materials for China via Tibet was briefly touched upon.

⁶ Marginal note by the Assistant Chief of the Division of Far Eastern Affairs (Smyth): "Mr. Hayter called at the Department on July 21, 1942, and was informed along the lines of the above memorandum."

⁷ Copy transmitted to the Department by the Ambassador in his despatch No. 555, July 30; received September 1.

Dr. Tsiang told me in confidence that the matter had been discussed that morning at the weekly meeting of the Executive Yuan. He said that there seemed to be general agreement to eliminate from the transport project political considerations and factors. With this idea in mind it had apparently been decided to accede to the Tibetan request that no materials of war (munitions et cetera) be shipped in transit through Tibet from India to China. Dr. Tsiang said that, considering the annual capacity of the route, which he placed at 1,000 tons, the amount of direct war materials that could be brought in would be unimportant and that it would be just as well to utilize this route to transport medical supplies, gasoline, and other materials essential to the prosecution of the war. He explained that his figure of 1,000 tons a year was lower than the original estimate of 3,000 tons but that investigation had revealed that the previous figure had been much too high. (In a conversation with Mr. Richardson, an Englishman attached to the Indian Agent-General in Chungking, who is familiar with transport conditions in India, I was told that maximum annual capacity for transit materials would probably not exceed 700 tons.)

Dr. Tsiang recommended that, in order to overcome Tibetan fears that the transit of materials would be used as an excuse for Chinese political penetration, a commercial company be organized to handle transport and that Tibetans and Indians as well as Chinese participate in the company. He indicated that his recommendation was favorably received by the Executive Yuan. It was preferable, he thought, to the British proposal that a joint Anglo-Chinese-Tibetan commission be organized to handle transport.

Dr. Tsiang was interested in telling me of remarks Dr. Kung⁸ had made at the Executive Yuan meeting in regard to Tibet. Tsiang said that, at a recent committee meeting in regard to transit of supplies through Tibet, he had made the remark, in regard to Tibetan political status, that it was about time that Chinese relations with Tibet were put on a realistic footing and that Tibet be recognized for what it was—a "self-governing dominion". At the Executive Yuan meeting, Dr. Kung had taken up the same theme. He had gone back into the classic period of Chinese history and ended with reference to the teachings of Dr. Sun Yat-sen to support his recommendation (identical with that of Dr. Tsiang) that Tibet be considered and treated in the Chinese political system as a self-governing dominion.

JOHN CARTER VINCENT

⁸ H. H. Kung, Chinese Minister of Finance.

893.24/1428

The British Embassy to the Department of State^oCOPY OF A TELEGRAM FROM THE FOREIGN OFFICE DATED THE 15TH
AUGUST, 1942

Government of India have been informed by the Chinese Commissioner there that the Chinese Government have accepted Tibetan stipulations in regard to the despatch of "non-military supplies" (which would include petroleum, but not arms, ammunition and explosives); that they have selected the Gyalam as the supply route with Batang as delivery point; and that they appeared to think that contract with Tibetan transport firm must be negotiated by special representative of the Ministry of Communications.

2. The above, taken along with the Chinese attitude towards the suggested formal declaration of Tibetan autonomy, which His Majesty's Ambassador at Chungking has been informed "would present numerous difficulties", and their proposal to station Ministry of Communications experts to organise the service along the Tibetan section of the route, would seem to indicate that the Chinese are more anxious to extend their influence in Eastern Tibet than to obtain supplies which in any event they do not estimate at more than a maximum of 3,000 tons a year. Nevertheless we are pursuing organisation of the route and have decided not to press for the declaration suggested. Our attitude of support for Tibetan autonomy still stands and we propose to continue to consult the Tibetan Government as and when necessary regarding detailed arrangements necessary in respect of the Tibetan section. In particular the Chinese proposal to appoint supervisors appears unnecessary, apart from the political objections involved, and it has been suggested to the Chinese Commissioner that any difficulties which might arise could be solved by joint intervention by the British and Chinese representatives at Lhasa.

3. The present position is that the Tibetan Government have now agreed *during the current year only* to the despatch from India for China of non-military supplies, preferably via the Changlam to Jyekundo, avoiding Lhasa, and as they cannot undertake to handle transport themselves they suggest that a contract should be made with a Tibetan firm for this year only. As regards the appointment of Chinese technicians or experts, no such request has, they state, been received from the Chinese representative at Lhasa and if made will be refused, since in the Tibetan Government's view neither British nor Chinese supervisors should travel up and down the supply route in Tibetan territory.

^o Handed to the Assistant Chief of the Division of Far Eastern Affairs (Smyth) by the Second Secretary of the British Embassy (Barclay) on August 27.

4. The time limit need not perhaps be taken too seriously. The main thing is to get supplies moving along this route and it should be possible to stipulate for the contract made with the Tibetan transport firm to run for one year with the option of renewal. The Chinese Government have now been asked to agree (*a*) to the selection of the Changlam as the main route and of Jyekundo as the delivery point, and to the stationing of a British representative at the latter place; (*b*) to dispense with liaison officers or supervisors; and (*c*) to delegation of authority to the British and Chinese representatives at Lhasa to negotiate a contract with Tibetan carriers.

[In a memorandum dated September 15, 1942, the Chief of the Division of Far Eastern Affairs (Hamilton) made the following comment: "It will be recalled that on July 21, 1942, Mr. Hayter of the British Embassy was informed orally and in strict confidence by Mr. Smyth of FE that suzerainty over Tibet has long been claimed by the Chinese Government, that Tibet is listed in the Chinese constitution among areas constituting the territory of the Republic of China, and that this Government has at no time raised question concerning either of these claims. (See endorsement on attached FE memorandum of July 18, 1942.) It is accordingly believed that we need make no comment to the British Embassy at the present time with regard to the attitude of the British Foreign Office on the subject of Tibetan autonomy." 893.24/1445a]