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A Puzzling Report by I. F. Stone.

# A Puzzling Report

By I. F. Stone



As a whodunit, the spy report from MacArthur headquarters is recommended. Politically it is puzzling; MacArthur seems to be refigthing the last war from the other side.

The villains of the story, Dr. Richard Sorge and Ozaki Hosumi, were villains only from the standpoint of the Axis.

If the story is true then Dr. Sorge, posing as a Nazi, and Hosumi, posing as a Japanese super-patriot, obtained for the Russians information which (the report says) "had a profound effect on the Soviet deployment of troops, and hence on the stopping of the Germans at the most critical phase of the war."

The Japanese tried and beheaded Sorge and Osumi after Pearl Harbor. These two men saved American as well as Russian lives by helping the Russians (if the story is true) to stop the Hitler blitz.

This MacArthur thriller appears to be based on the records of their secret trials and of the Japanese secret police. One of the questions I put to the War Dept. yesterday was whether any independent check had been made of these records. The answer which came back later was that officials here didn't know.

"Presumably," they say, the report was prepared by American personnel in Tokyo. But much of it reads as if written by right-wing Japanese themselves.

The report admits by implication, for example, that Japanese excesses in China turned many Japanese anti-militarist and pro-Soviet. But the phrasing is curious. The report speaks of "the exaggerated claims of Japanese militarists as to their benign conduct in China." That's the ultimate in tact.

Compare that with the report's sneer at those Japanese who "try to develop a legend of Ozaki the patriot, murdered by militarists and Fascists."

What is the effect of this amazing document? Its effect is to intensify hysteria in this country, to hurt the anti-Kuomintang position of the State Dept., and to smear as Soviet agents two distinguished writers, Agnes Smedley and Guenther Stein, who have been friendly to the Chinese Reds. This last is done by pure assertion, without presentation of evidence.

To analyze the veracity of this 25,000-word document is a difficult task. I want to report today on one simple text.

On pages 11 and 12 the report says that in August, 1929, the American Vice-Consul in Harbin allowed the chief of Soviet agents there to use two rooms in the Vice Consul's residence and set up an illegal radio. The report says, "There is some reason to believe that (Tycho L.) Lilliestrom (the Vice-Consul) also supplied information to his guest."

That is all. But the assertion and the surmise are enough to ruin a man's reputation. Lilliestrom had an honorable record in the Foreign Service and died in February 1943, while stationed at Ciudad Trujillo. Perhaps he was untrue to his trust. But the least the War Dept. could have done was to check with the State Dept. before doing a dead official's honor so grave a hurt.

The War Dept. admits that no such check was made. This seems to me indicative of the reckless spirit in which this report was released.

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