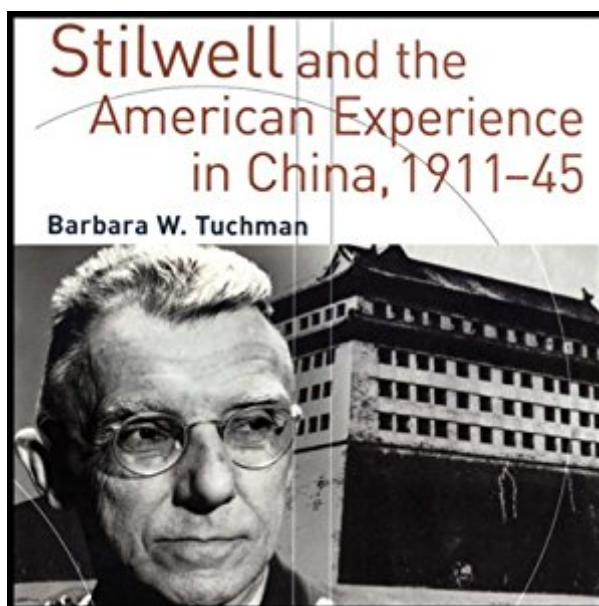


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Stilwell And The American Experience In China, 1911-45



Synopsis

[Read by Pam Ward] In this Pulitzer Prize-winning biography, Barbara Tuchman explores American relations with China through the experiences of one of our men on the ground. In the cantankerous but level-headed "Vinegar Joe," Tuchman found a subject who allowed her to perform, in the words of the National Review, "one of the historian's most envied magic acts: conjoining a fine biography of a man with a fascinating epic story." -- Joseph Stilwell was the military attaché to China in 1935 to 1939, commander of United States forces, and allied chief of staff to Chiang Kai-shek in 1942-44. His story unfolds against the background of China's history, from the revolution of 1911 to the turmoil of World War II, when China's Nationalist government faced attack from Japanese invaders and Communist insurgents. --This text refers to the Audio CD edition.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This will not be for everyone (unfortunately), but if you're interested in learning about China before it became modern China, and gain some insight into their people and how their nation (so to speak) developed since the dynasties, this is a great read, with some excellent photos and maps included. Plus it provides an unusual perspective on the lead up to WWII that you don't get from most accounts of the war in Europe and against Japan. I would recommend it to anyone who lacks a good knowledge of China. The view into Stillwell's life and perspectives on things are very interesting too. I enjoyed learning that he was an early trainer of Third Army in the United States, and how our military evolved into our modern military.

With "Stilwell and the American Experience in China:1911-1945",Dr Tuchman not only equals her initial Master work "The Guns of August" in detail and nuance; she provides a most colorful yet tragic biography of General Stilwell. A must read for anyone interested in American relations with China.

In the superb tradition of her other books, Tuchman juxtaposes the career of Joseph Stillwell against the backdrop of the momentous events of pre-Communist China. A sobering reminder of the brutality of the Japanese occupation and why the Chinese still hold a grudge against them for it to this day. Japan looked at China in almost the same way as the Nazis regarded Russia - as their own personal fiefdom where they could treat the "subhumans" with impunity.

I had difficulty getting into this book as the early chapters were as much, if not more, about China than about 'Vinegar Joe'. But by the middle of the book I was enthralled by what the General achieved, and obviously at such a price. Should he have been a Corps Commander with General Eisenhower? By the story told here I would have thought so. He had so many nightmares to overcome and always stuck to his guns. His march back into India is a classic tale that should be used as essential reading for all aspiring officers. Dealing with General Chang Kai-shek alone would have been enough for most people, but to cope with the added weight of the British Raj as well deserves high praise. English historical books containing comments about him are less than favourable. This is one reason that I bought the book - to find out more about him from a US perspective. I have ended up full of admiration for what the General achieved. He is my type of General - one who I would have enjoyed working with. I would definitely use this book as study material for all military history courses. A jolly good read.

"Vinegar Joe" Stillwell was much maligned during his tenure in the Far East. I read Tuchman's book when it was first published and have reread it after reading The Soong Dynasty, about China, Chiang Kai-Shek, Sun Yat-Sen and the Soong family's power from WWI to WWII. Madame Chiang Kai-Shek wooed and won the American government and people, with the help of many of her family members, and to the detriment of General Stillwell. Fascinating reading for any of you who are history buffs.

Well written and a wealth of knowledge about China's history. A bit tedious which is the nature of such a detailed history.

Mrs. Tuchman has placed a tremendous amount of information in this book. As the title suggests, "Stilwell and the American Experience in China" there are two distinct issues discussed in a well-detailed manner. The first, Gen. Joe (Uncle Joe, Vinegar Joe) Stilwell's biography is a highly sympathetic view of one of America's forgotten heroes of World War II. Gen Stilwell's background in training and tactics is emphasized as is his extensive linguistic ability and tremendous level of experience in China. This level of experience was gained by several tours in China and by his own courage and initiative (read the book for details). In short, Gen Stilwell is portrayed as being uniquely qualified for his mission in China to train the Chinese military, specifically the Army and Air Force, to fight the Japanese (short term goal) and to transform China into a World Power to counterbalance Russian and Japanese ambitions in Asia (long term goal). Moreover, a strong, democratic China would deter the European powers from reacquiring their former colonies (for example, France and Indo China), a key component of Roosevelt's view of Asia's future. The second theme of the book is the American experience in China from 1911 - 1949. As you might imagine, that given Stilwell's tasking in World War II, the two themes are sufficiently linked to keep the book readable. The Chinese (both Nationalist and Communist) are portrayed as being completely unable to compromise and as willing to say and do whatever was needed to maintain political power and position themselves for success after the defeat of the Japanese. The perception by most observers was that the Communists were more willing to fight the Japanese than the Nationalists, but that topic must wait for another day. In short, the great tragedy of Stilwell's experience in China was not that he believed that he could achieve all of his goals, but rather that he knew the colossal obstacles in his path, yet continued to drive himself to the breaking point. In both Stilwell's drive and in the political and cultural motivation of the Chinese leadership, there are important lessons for the current period. Indeed, this book should be required reading for any Foreign Service officer who works with or in China. However, it would be an interesting read for anyone interested in China or in the U S military. In short, Mrs. Tuchman has done what she is famous for: Transforming a highly complex issue into a form that can be read and enjoyed by the layman.

Absolutely brilliant. You must read this book covering China from 1911-1945, a pivotal time that lives on today. General Stilwell was brilliant observer as well as key player in some ways. This fills in a gap in Chinese history that changed thousands of years of feudalism and dynasties.

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