



Gateway to Yen-an in 1944 where story of Dixie Mission has beginning

The Dixie Mission

The Story of a Little-Known Group of Nisei GIs

The little-known war efforts of the U.S. Army observer group, which was dubbed as the "Dixie Mission," was doomed to failure because the two China governments remained at odds during the closing days of World War II and the United States sided with the Kuomintang Regime. There were five Nisei MIS members, who were assigned to the Mis-

sion. This story is a capsule tale of the adventure as told by one member who witnessed a small segment of the history by his participation in the Mission, and who met the leaders involved, who would guide the destiny of these nations in the post-war era. The story is divided into three segments: "The Dixie Mission"; "A Christmas to Remember"; and "The Reunion."

By
Sho Nomura

Once in the dim past during World War II, George I. Nakamura and I were called into Maj. John Burden's (commanding officer of ATIS, China Theatre) office and informed that we were being assigned to the U.S. Observer Group, the Dixie Mission, in Communist China.

That was the beginning of a rare assignment experienced by only five Nisei. The others were Koji Ariyoshi, Tosh Uesato and Jack Ishii.

Being the naive GIs that we were, I remember musing with Nakamura, "Where and what is Communist China?" To us China was China and what wasn't under Japanese occupation was under the control of Chiang Kai-shek and the Kuomintang party.

We soon learned. During World War II, North and Central China were under Japanese occupation. However that was true only of the urban areas, the huge rural areas were dominated by the Chinese Communists much to the chagrin of Chiang-Kai-shek.

Chiang, in fact, had some of his crack troops stationed at Sian, in Shensi province, forming a blockade to prevent traffic in and out of Communist territory.

After numerous rejections of General "Vinegar Joe" Stilwell's requests that an American observer group be permitted in Communist China, Chiang finally relented and the first contingent of the Dixie Mission landed in Yen-an, the capital of wartime Communist China, July, 1944.

In Colonel David Barrett's (the CO of the Dixie Mission) memoirs, he relates that he had no official orders but only instructions to obtain essential-

ly the following types of information:

- Enemy Order of Battle (intelligence about the deployment and strength of Japanese units, including puppet troops)
- Strength, composition, disposition, equipment, training, and efficiency of Communist forces
- Utilization and expansion of Communist intelligence agencies in enemy and occupied territory
- Complete list of Communist officials (Who's Who)
- Enemy air fields and air defense in North China
- Weather
- Evacuation of downed American fliers in North China
- Economic intelligence
- Operations of Communist forces
- Evaluation of Communists to the war effort
- Naval intelligence
- Enemy operations
- Most effective means of assisting the Communists to increase the value of their war effort

Nakamura and I fell under the category of obtaining enemy Order of Battle intelligence. Nakamura went to Yen-an with the second contingent in August and I followed a few weeks later.

The two of us reported to Major Ray Cromley, who headed the intelligence section.

Before the war, Cromley was the Far East correspondent for the Wall Street Journal in Tokyo and was relatively fluent in Japanese. He was married to a Japanese and was imprisoned as a POW until he was repatriated on the Gripsholm.

Cromley was a workaholic perfectionist and often had Nakamura and myself working until the wee hours of the morning grinding out our reports to Chungking.

In my mind, the make-up of the original Dixie Mission included personages of very rare

talent.

Col. Barrett, a career officer, was a long time military attache in Tientsin and Peking, prior to the war, and was fluent in conversational Chinese.

John Service and John Davies, of the State Department, Capt. Paul Domke, Capt. Charles Stelle, Capt. Henry Whittlesey, and Lt. John Collinge were all born in China of missionary parents, spoke, read, and wrote fluent Mandarin Chinese.

As for the Japanese language specialists, John Emmerson and Koji Ariyoshi were tops.

What Nakamura and I were doing in this fast company, I'll never know.

The only GI interrogator worse than I, was the guy who, in explaining his Nisei status to a Japanese POW, said that he was born in the U.S., but, "Me no papa, mama wa Nihon umare desu."

It was Jack Service and John Davies' contention that from their observations the Chinese Communists were indeed fighting the war against Japan and were therefore worthy of our support.

For their honest appraisals and recommendations, they were subjected after the war to Senator Joe McCarthy's the Un-American Activities Commission hearings, branded as Communist sympathizers.

During World War II the greatest Communist country, Russia, was our ally.

A case of: "The enemy of my enemy, my friend."

But because of McCarthy's notorious witch hunt, Service and Davies were dismissed from the State Department. Their careers in ruin. Victims of tragic hysteria and utter

nonsense!

The atmosphere in Yen-an was totally relaxed and informal.

Not only amongst the officers and enlisted men but also in our relationships with the so-called Communist big-wigs.

On the night of my arrival, I was told that I was to temporarily share the cave quarters of several officers.

It must be explained that whenever the plane came in from Chungking, it was a night of celebration and drinking of the highly potent local booze. The upshot of it was, the two officers became absolutely smashed, fired pistol shots into the cave walls, and threw up all over my bedding, leaving me to wonder, "My God, does this happen every night?"

Never in my wildest dreams, did I learn that I would one day rub elbows with the likes of Mao Tse-tung, Chu Teh, Chou En-lai, Yeh Chien-ying, et al. (This is preferable, I suppose, to rubbing noses with Eskimos, like the poor guys stationed in the Aleutians.)

In the early days of the mission before negotiations went to pot, these Communist leaders were always approachable, accommodating, and cordial.

I have the fondest remembrances of General Yeh, the Chief of Staff, for his joviality and unassuming ways. A regular guy.

As I recall, it was when victory in the Saipan campaign was a reality and we were having an informal celebration in our mess hall with our Communist friends.

The Navy lieutenant raised his glass of bai-gar (a potent drink derived from millet) and toasted, "Here's to the

Japanese navy."

Yeh's face dropped with an expression as if to say, "What's going on here?"

Then the lieutenant added, "Bottoms up!"

When the anecdote was explained to General Yeh, he spent the rest of the evening toasting the Japanese navy with the added proviso until we were all in our cups.

In a way of relaxation, on Saturday evenings we would be invited to dances given outdoors in a grove of trees called "The Pear Orchard."

This was across the Yen River, near the Communist headquarters directly opposite our compound. Our dancing partners were the girl students from the English school.

We dubbed one young lady, Annie, since she was born in An Arbor when her father was a student at the University of Michigan.

Mao and the other Communist leaders always attended the dances.

He, dressed in a white shirt and dark trousers, without a jacket, would accept an invitation to dance from the first of the girls, who would ask, "Chairman, please dance with me." Equality at its best.

The manner in which the Chinese Communists handled their Japanese prisoners of war was surprising.

I had envisioned the POW camp would be surrounded by barbed wire, guard towers, armed sentries and the like. (Shades of relocation centers!) Not so.

Yenan's landmark is the nine-storied pagoda on a hill overlooking the Yen River.

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CONTINUED NOMURA

A little distance up the valley, in the side of the cliff below the pagoda were the dugout cave quarters of the so-called POWs.

So-called because of former Japanese soldiers were not subjected to any type of confinement whatsoever.

They were free to visit the village, do whatever they wanted during their spare time. No matter what, the Japanese are baseball crazy.

In the Spring, we had several softball games with them down by the river bed with the Chinese onlookers wondering what the hell was going on.

All were students of Japanese Workers and Peasants School (Nihon Rono Gakko) and members of Japanese Emancipation League (Nihon Kaiho Remmei.)

These organizations were the workings of Okano Susumu.

Nozaka Sanzo, to use Okano's true name, had been in Yenan since 1940 and had formed the school to indoctrinate the POWs to communism with the idea of having these converts as the nucleus of the postwar Japanese Communist Party.

The function of the Emancipation League was propaganda pointed to the Japanese troops in China.

The principal themes were designed to offer a way out for the harried Japanese soldier in the field: good treatment, food, shelter, freedom from officer cruelty, and a chance to win freedom from the militarists and the industrialists responsible for the war.

Although Nakamura and I did speak to Nosaka on the functions and objectives of the school and the Emancipation League, our later conversations with him were only of a social nature.

However, John Emerson, Koji Ariyoshi, and Adie Suesdorf, who were with the OWI (Office of War Information), our propaganda unit, did work in depth with Nozaka.

Several cadre members of the Workers and Peasants School became prominent Communist activists in postwar Japan; namely, Akiyama Yoshiaki, Sato Masao, and Yoshishige Kiyoshi.

One of the more memorable events during my stay in Yenan, was the arrival of Major General Patrick J. Hurley on November 7, 1944.

Hurley was a tall, gray haired, extremely handsome man.

As he was being escorted from the plane to our command by Col. Barrett, and Chairman Mao and Chou En-lai, he drew himself up to his full impressive height and let out a screeching Choctaw Indian warwhoop.

None of us will ever forget the startled faces of Mao and Chou at this totally unexpected behavior on the part of this distinguished visitor.

Hurley's primary mission was to attempt a coalition between Chiang Kai-Shek and the Communists.

He returned to Chungking with Chou for a conference with this in mind. However this conference and a subsequent

session proved unsuccessful. When the second conference failed, the atmosphere in Yenan became tense...pins and needles.

As it is related in Barrett's memoirs, the Dixie Mission was one that "failed" in conventional terms, for it didn't lead anywhere.

For the moment at least it

lies in the "dustbin of history" to which Chairman Mao has assigned so much of the record of Sino-American relations. End quote.

Had things been handled differently, in my humble opinion, there may not have been the Korean War nor the mess in Viet Nam. Hindsight is always 20-20.

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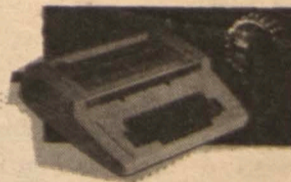
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