

From Europe to China: An OSS Veteran's Reflections

Robert R. Kehoe

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In January 1945, the Allied armies in northern Europe were recovering from the setback in the Ardennes campaign and were poised for the advance into Germany. The power and resistance of German forces, demonstrated repeatedly, made it clear that this was to be a harsh and difficult advance. In the Pacific, Allied forces were moving steadily against the Japanese. The wide dispersal of Allied forces and circumscribed Japanese naval and transport capabilities were liabilities for Japan in its efforts to exert control and to prepare for invasion. The tenacity of the Japanese forces, despite shortages of all kinds, had been demonstrated repeatedly and would soon be reasserted in the Okinawa campaign.

One area, however, where the Japanese maintained a continual presence—and from which they exerted offensive action on several occasions during 1944—was China. Though scattered throughout China, Japanese forces there were rarely vulnerable.

As Allied naval and air power made the seas increasingly difficult, Japan concentrated efforts on exploiting China for its existing and potential communication routes, attempting to establish an area of operations there.

The Office of Strategic Services (OSS), CIA's predecessor organiza-

tion, made the decision to reassign some of the resources used in Europe to the China theatre, among them a number of Americans who had been members of the Jedburgh teams.^a The Jedburgh teams, generally comprised of three men (often one American, plus one French and one British national) were parachuted behind enemy lines to work with the resistance forces in France, Belgium, and Holland. The majority of these teams had completed their missions by 1945 and most of the American members had returned to the United States.

It was believed that these men—combat-experienced and knowledgeable in the peculiarities of partisan warfare—could apply their skills in China. They were all qualified as parachutists and a number were experienced radio operators. On the other hand, while most of these men had foreign language skills, few were familiar with the Chinese language. This was an important deficiency, but there was no way around it because few members of the Allied forces spoke Chinese. It was believed that this deficiency could be partially overcome through interpreters and

a. For more on the Jedburghs, see Robert R. Kehoe, "1944: An Allied Team With the French Resistance" *Studies in Intelligence* 42, no. 5 (Spring 1997), <https://www.cia.gov/library/center-for-the-study-of-intelligence/kent-csi/vol42no5/pdf/v42i5a03p.pdf>.

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The Great Leap: An OSS Jedburgh Goes to China

education about the area of operations.

As one of the Jedburgh radio operators, I was among those assigned to this mission. Following home leave, we received some orientation in the Washington, DC, area along with inoculations for all sorts of dreaded diseases such as cholera and bubonic plague. I remember reading about these diseases in *National Geographic* articles about the Japanese invasion of Manchuria and adjacent Chinese provinces.

I traveled by train with a number of my colleagues to Miami Beach, Florida, to await transport to China. There were fewer than 100 of us, and about a third were radio operators. Traveling by train through the tide-water areas of the Carolinas, a poor area of pine woods and unpainted buildings, we were reminded that the Great Depression was not long past. I noted in my journal that there was not the same excitement in this move as there had been with our move to Britain a year earlier. I anticipated another parachute drop behind enemy lines, more escape and evasion, more

late night radio transmissions, and so on. I was soon to learn, though, that expecting this level of sophistication in China was not very realistic.

Most transport to the Far East was by slow-moving ship across the Pacific or through the South Atlantic and Indian Ocean. The Air Force, however, had established an air route, designed to move its own personnel to that part of the world. We thought ourselves fortunate to use that route. It was to be a fascinating journey across remote and strange parts of the world. Most of my colleagues, like



The author's travels within China.

myself, had rarely been in an airplane except for parachute jumps and training. The planes used at this time were all low-flying by today's standards, and we were able to see the scenery of these varied countries close up and in detail.

On 4 February, we boarded a B-24 bomber that had been converted to transport duty. With eight men and their baggage, the plane was roomy and comfortable. We flew to Natal in eastern Brazil, stopping only for fuel. We made most of the trip over Brazil by moonlight, permitting a spectacu-

lar view of the Amazon and the vast rain forest.

We stayed at hot, humid Natal for 15 hours, departing at 2:00 a.m. for a voyage across the narrowest part of the Atlantic. Our only stop during the crossing was at Ascension Island, a rock almost on the Equator that had been a British colony since Napoleonic times. Our stay was 24 hours, longer than planned, owing to the need for repairs to the aircraft.

Because of hazardous undertow, swimming there was dangerous but we did go fishing in the Atlantic. The

island has one green spot, high up; the remainder is rock. From Ascension we traveled on to the African mainland, first to Liberia and then to Accra in what was then the Gold Coast. Our few days there were pleasant with surf, swimming, and good food—benefits of the planning and work the Air Force had done to set up this remarkable series of stop-over and refueling points across half a continent.

After Accra, we flew across Nigeria, equatorial Africa, and the Sudan with many stops, finally arriving in Aden. Our overnight at Aden was overshadowed by a brief set-down at a small airport on the south coast of Arabia. We arrived just as the local sheik—with his bodyguard of fierce looking riflemen—were arriving on beautiful Arabian horses to pay a courtesy call on the base commander: it was a scene out of *Lawrence of Arabia*. We soon resumed flight, traveling to Karachi, on the southwest coast of what was then India.

Karachi was a staging area for troops going to various parts of India and to China. For those of us headed for China, this was where we awaited transport to the Assam Province of Northeast India. After two-and-a-half weeks we took off across India to Chabua, and the plane circled the Taj Mahal en route. There was one, 10-hour stop for repairs, and our plane took fire twice (fortunately while still on the ground, on both occasions); but in retrospect, I see we were amazingly casual about the incidents—perhaps a by-product of being at war, or perhaps because we were all so young.

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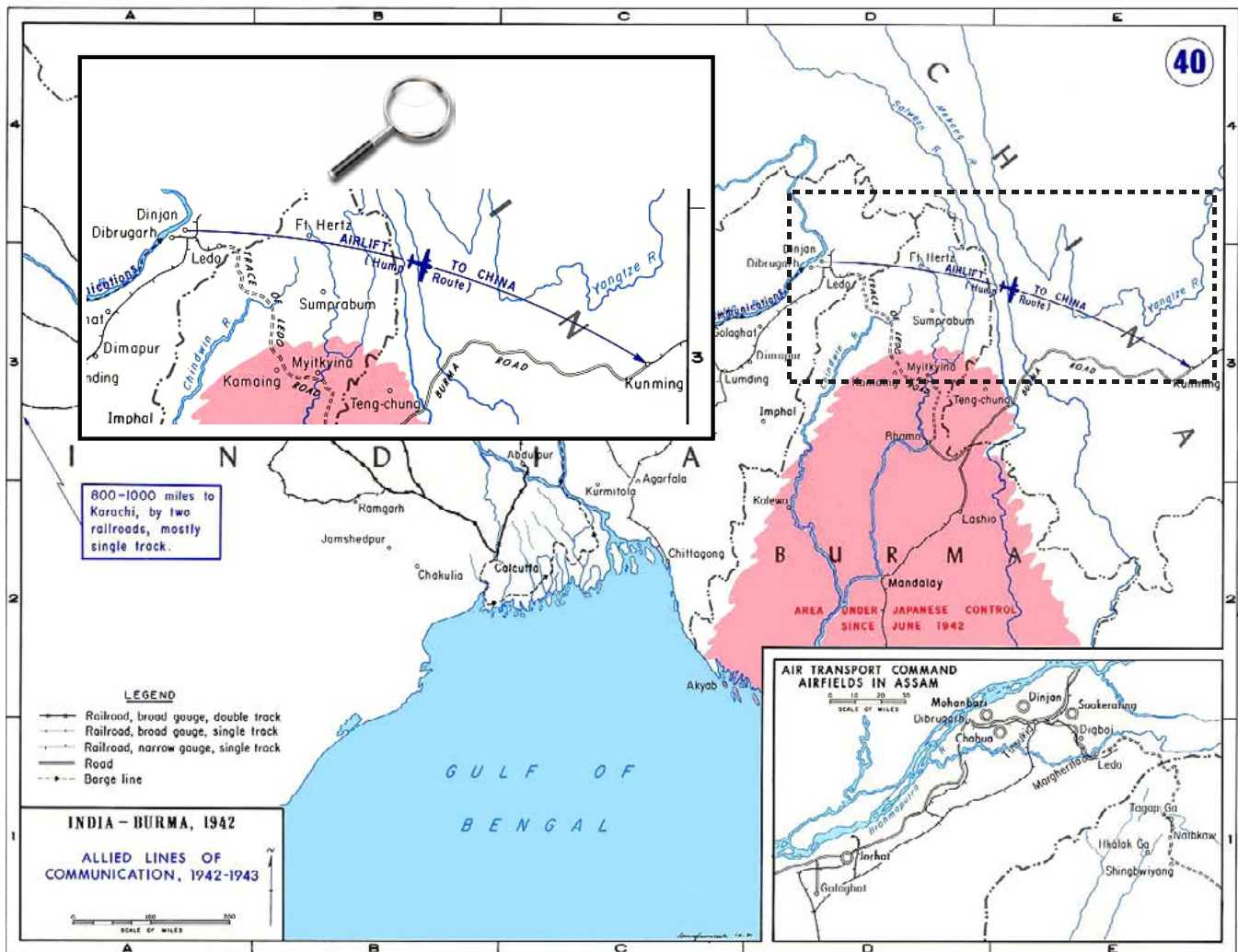
After Chabua, we made the legendary trip over the mountains—crossing “The Hump” (below)—into China. Our trip, which took only about three hours, was smooth but spectacular, as was the landing at the airport near Kunming in southwest China: the pilots and crew were skilled at adjusting to hazardous winds, icing, and sudden storms, characteristic of the region, which sweep in from every direction, challenging the course of the planes. Kunming, in late February, was a

beautiful sight with the fruit trees bordering the large lake adjacent to the city already in blossom.

After reporting in, we moved to a training site called the “Country House,” where we remained for most of the next month or two. Members of our former Jedburch teams arrived in Kunming over several weeks. The time here was spent in training and acclimating to this very different theatre of war. Signals training continued. We were well qualified

in radio but the equipment we were to work with was different from and more powerful than what we had used in France. We also had a brief introduction to the Chinese language, which gave us a notion of its complexities and variations. From the very beginning, it was evident that we were going to have to depend on interpreters.

Although this was a beautiful region with a pleasant climate, we were anxious to get into action. This required, first, that the commanding officer assign us to teams, which he did in typical military fashion. I



was assigned to a team led by one of our Jedburgh officers, Capt. Henry MacIntosh. I was not well acquainted with MacIntosh. He was a hardworking and committed officer who tried to lead his team through what were often complex situations, although sometimes too much of a straight shooter for the convoluted situation in wartime China. Our second in command was Lt. Stanley Gromnicki. He was a former football player, powerfully built, a pleasant disposition; his size and muscle impressed the Chinese.

Cpl. Richard Hawkins was the other American on our team. He was one of those graduates of the Army Specialized Training Program who really had a “feel” for the language and had achieved much in his study of Chinese. Over the next few months, he would further develop his skills in speech and comprehension, even making progress in our regional dialect. “Hawk”, as we called him, had been a full-time student in dramatic arts at Baylor University.

Our Chinese interpreter was a man of about 30, one Frank Chen Kou-Yen, whom we knew as “Frank.” He was a student of the College of Agriculture at the University of Nanjing. He had developed his language skills while at the university and earlier schools. Frank was anxious to do a good job, and this sometimes forced him to juggle meeting the needs of our team while not failing to meet those of the Chinese officers with whom we worked. Frank was a man of integrity, always honest and conscientious. He was an interested and good natured person, and it was a pleasure to be with him.

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On 27 April 1945 our team set out with a number of other OSS personnel and a considerable supply of weapons and supplies. The personnel on board included a few of our old Jedburgh colleagues, as well as some OSS personnel who had been engaged in the recent operations in South China. There were also two or three Koreans, who were no better acquainted with the China scene than we, but who were closely tied in with the Korean independence movement. They were looked upon with some curiosity by the Chinese, and by us; I still do not know why they were in southern China.

We were traveling in Army two-ton trucks over a gravel road, parts of which were barely completed; in fact, some of the northern section was not at all completed, as we were to find out in the course of the journey. Driving was difficult and required careful attention to edges and possible slides in this very hilly terrain. The trucks, which had moved into China over the Ledo Road, had been heavily used and were not in the best condition: there were frequent breakdowns. Fortunately, the mechanic traveling with us was able to adapt to all sorts of requirements with minimal resources. He was the type of man who, in the vast support infrastructure of the US Army, kept the whole thing running. As a result, despite breakdowns, we got through from Kunming to Xi’an—a distance of a thousand miles—in about 14 days, which was a real accomplishment. I believe that our convoy of about 12 trucks was the first to make this difficult trip.

We passed through a great variety of terrain. The area north of Kunming was very poor. It seemed that much of it was not arable, which would account for what seemed to be an absence of a local populace—but the trucks had only to stop a moment for people to emerge, as though from cracks in the earth.

Even 70 years ago, China, including these areas at the periphery of the great Tibetan upland, was heavily populated. It was desolate, but there were fields in production or being prepared for crops wherever there was a bit of level land and access to water. It was inhospitable to farming but a great variety of crops were grown there nonetheless. Some of the fields were so small that a plow could not operate, leaving the grub hoe as the key tool. Throughout, human labor was intensively utilized, supplemented by water buffalo, donkeys, or horses.

This was a type of agriculture none of us had experienced or observed. Not long before this moment in our lives, we may have read Pearl S. Buck’s *The Good Earth*—but here it was, right in front of us. Animal and human waste was collected and applied heavily. There were no outhouses here in the countryside; the fields consumed everything directly. All labor was utilized: even old men, too frail for field work, were posted to collect any droppings as animals passed through the village.

Our convoy was quite a sight. Children overwhelmed us at every stop. Still too innocent to beg, they

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were ecstatic over any candy or chewing gum we might have for them. Within a day or so we became aware of the vastness and variety of China when even our interpreters experienced difficulty translating to-and-from the local dialects in these isolated areas, cut off from the more urban areas by hills and mountains. Our interpreters frequently tried to communicate in writing, but often enough this was useless because of the high rate of illiteracy.

Sichuan

From the northern part of Yunnan province we moved to Sichuan, which was at the time the most populated province in China. While there, one of the major problems for our convoy was river crossings: there were ferries, but often fording was required. Entering this region from the south, we encountered hills and mountains, which gradually became a landscape of deep canyons and declining elevation that culminated in the great basin that surrounds the provincial capital of Chengdu.

The approach to Chengdu was beautiful, with miles of peach trees in blossom. Land here was intensively cultivated, with terracing throughout the basin.

Chengdu was a city of at least a million people, with many refugees from occupied China. Most were poor: without resources, they relied on any day labor that came along or on public welfare handouts. Those in Chengdu who did possess resources had fled the east. Chengdu was the temporary home to a number of

universities, including the University of Nanjing. Likewise, a number of missionary organizations, both educational and medical, had moved to Chengdu for safety. The fiancée of our interpreter, Frank, was also in temporary residence there.

The couple was quite westernized. Frank introduced us to the young lady—not typical in China in those days, when traditional customs still dictated behavior between the sexes. In fact, throughout our tour in China, we had almost no contact with women except on a professional basis, such as when dealing with shopkeepers and waitresses. American soldiers' not-inappropriate but casual familiarity with such members of the opposite sex was considered improper in China. But there was, of course, prostitution, which was generally found in identifiable "red light" districts, and American soldiers were duly cautioned away from them.

The travel from Chengdu to Xi'an covered terrain and climate quite different from what we had previously seen. It was cooler, and there was much more wheat, potatoes, and maize in evidence, although rice was still cultivated where terraced irrigation was available. There was more use of animal labor on the farms, with horses, donkeys, cows, and mules sometimes working together in a field. I was told that sharecropping and tenant farming were the dominant patterns of land usage, with a few controlling much; taxes were overwhelming, and one had the impression of a highly exploited land and people.

I recall how dirty the people were in this area, as there was little waste of water on bathing—and this was evident not only by appearance but by pungent body odor. This, together with the omnipresent manure for farming and the heavy use of garlic in cooking, made for a potent atmosphere.

We arrived in Xi'an late at night on the 11th of May. The last hundred miles of our trip from Chengdu to Xi'an was by railroad flatcar, since the bridges were unreliable and the road was badly washed out. This was the easy part of our trip.

Movement to Area of Operations and Training for Guerrilla Attacks

We spent three weeks in Xi'an with pleasant accommodations and good food. We did many interesting "route marches" across the countryside, which gave us a glimpse of a very different part of China. The weather was warm and dry, and the countryside, fields, houses, and villages were very different from those we had seen on the way north from Kunming.

On our treks through the countryside we passed large areas surrounded by armed guards and identified as "off limits," said to be ancient ruins. All we could see were large, earth-covered pyramids or earth mounds. On visiting Xi'an many years later to see the archeological ruins, we were told that they had only recently been systematically explored—but they were certainly not "recently" discovered.

The city of Xi'an, home to the first dynasty to unite China, retained

more of the ancient walls and fortifications than others we had visited. In fact, although there were many people and dwellings outside the walls, a large part of the city was still within them, as were shops and restaurants. Our interpreters' work was easier here than in the regions farther south, since the north Chinese dialect was standard and they had learned it at home or in school.

By this time we were beginning to understand the complex political scene in China. Ours was a very tiny part of the American forces involved in the anti-Japanese struggle in China, but the problems facing us were similar to those facing American leaders and policymakers—factionalized, ill-trained leaders little inclined to following up on promises to foreigners or to fighting the Japanese.

China had been involved in the struggle against Japan for years. The unofficial war started in 1937, but the hostilities went back before that, at least to the Japanese invasion of Manchuria in 1931. Throughout this period, Japan was organized, disciplined, unified, and militarily strong. The Chinese, in contrast, were disorganized, seemingly undisciplined, and militarily decentralized.

Chinese military power consisted of a conglomerate of forces answering to different leaders and held together by a patchwork of political alliances. Much of the fighting in China in the 1920s and 1930s had been civil war, directed by one warlord against another. By the thirties, the Chinese Nationalist party, the Kuomintang (KMT), was ostensibly in control of much of China.

This control, however, was shaky, and dependent on local military com-

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manders whose cooperation could be unpredictable. Behind this political scene was a backward economy. For example, when the Japanese invaded Manchuria, they seized most of China's iron ore and much of its coal and steel production. These inchoate beginnings of a modern industrial economy were insufficient to support a modern military force.

China was also dominantly agricultural and its agricultural economy had to support an enormous population. Without any real industrial manufacturing capability, the Chinese had to import weapons, equipment, vehicles, and other manufactured goods. They could only pay with money earned from the sale or export of agricultural goods, of which there was virtually no surplus for trade.

Americans greatly admired the bravery and endurance of the Chinese people during this period in history. China was seen as an important, potentially powerful ally in the anti-Japanese struggle—a perception supported by the movement of large numbers of people away from the occupied areas, the emergence of a paramilitary resistance, and the obvious failure of the Japanese puppet government under Wang Jingwei to legitimate Japan's occupation of large swaths of the country.

Bitter divisions, particularly between the Nationalist and Communist leadership, as well as the very shaky nature of Chiang Kai-shek's regime, were not emphasized. One has the impression that even President Roosevelt was inclined to believe

the optimistic reports about China. America was not ignorant, having been active in various ways for decades in China: trade there had gone on for more than a hundred years; educational and medical investments had been made; and Christian missionary societies of various denominations had functioned there since the 1500s, with Americans involved in missionary work there since early in the 19th century. Prominent Americans had served in China, including the Army chief of staff, George C. Marshall, who had been a military attaché in Beijing during the 1920s. Gen. Joseph S. Stilwell had been in Beijing for several years, learning the Chinese language and establishing himself as a military expert on China.

After Pearl Harbor and the US entry into the Sino-Japanese War, Stilwell became chief of staff to Chiang Kai-Shek. Stilwell had responsibility for all US lend-lease supplies and considerable training and operational duties in the Chinese army. With great faith in the possibilities of his mission, Stilwell nevertheless had little faith in Chiang Kai-Shek, and Chiang, in turn, had little confidence in Stilwell's military judgment and in the commonality of their goals.

Stilwell believed in the possibilities of building up some type of cooperative arrangement with the Communists who, by now, controlled large parts of north and northwest China. Chiang, naturally, had a strong disinclination towards this course of action.



Chiang Kai-shek, his wife Soong Mei-ling, and US Army Gen. Joseph W. Stilwell. (Image: US Army Center for Military History.)

By the time of our arrival, tensions between and among the president, Chiang Kai-shek, and Stilwell had resulted in Stilwell's being recalled; however, the American mission in China continued, focusing on mobilizing all forces in opposition to the Japanese. This was far from an easy task: the Nationalist leaders, both in Chongqing and in the smaller field units with which we were to work, were inconsistent on this point. That is, one had the impression they believed the Americans were going to win the war, vanquishing an enemy that they, the Chinese, had spent years fighting.

To be fair, the Nationalist armies had fought the Japanese with great desperation and great losses in cities such as Shanghai, Taierzhuang, and Changsha for five long years before America ever entered into the conflict. As the war dragged on, how-

ever, exhaustion had set in and, by 1944, the Nationalists appeared to be appraising developments while they conserved strength for later battles with their archenemy.

The briefings we received stressed the political complexities that would face us. The KMT reacted negatively to the suggestion that OSS teams might be able to work with the Communists, who were often in ideal positions for unconventional warfare and were experienced at it. As far as I know, the only cooperation that was permitted was assistance to the rescue operations at POW camps in Manchuria, after Japan's announcement of surrender.

The most significant American military presence in China was the 14th Air Force, built on the earlier *Flying Tiger* volunteer force that had been formed by Claire Chennault. It played an important role in deterring Japanese advance. The Air Force and the Chinese army were heavily dependent on American logistical support, which came through India—by truck, via the Ledo Road, and by “The Hump” air supply route.

There were other American forces in China, but OSS was focused on those who might be involved in intelligence collection or in unconventional warfare operations. One of the most interesting of these was a force called the Sino-American Cooperation Organization (SACO), which was headed by an American naval officer, Adm. Milton E. Miles, and manned on the US side by naval personnel. OSS and SACO had worked closely during the Kweilin campaign of the previous year. Their work was closely aligned with that of OSS. Where else but in China could

we have had an American naval contingent working a thousand miles from the sea, on guerrilla warfare operations?

The briefing we received on our planned area of operations went into some of these details. Our team, Hyena, was to be landed by plane in central Anhwei province, which was within what the Chinese command called the “10th War Area.” This 10th War Area was surrounded by territory under Japanese control, but the region itself was not within Japanese military occupation. The area was cut off from land access to the Nationalist-controlled areas to the west when the Japanese seized the Pinghan Railroad in 1944, as part of Operation Ichi-Go, the largest operation conducted by the Japanese Army during the war.

The Pinghan Railroad runs from Beijing in the north, to Wuhan in central China, and the 10th War Area lies between this railroad and the Japanese occupied coastal areas to the east. There were large numbers of Nationalist soldiers in various organizational components throughout the area. The command looked well articulated on paper, but in reality it was rather amorphous. The typical soldier had little incentive to heed commands of far-off Nationalist commanders, since the Nationalists government provided little in the way of resources and the soldier's pay, if any, was in the form of near worthless, paper currency.

The purpose of Team Hyena was to arm and train a group of about 150 men. These men were to be used in small bands for attacks on Japanese holdings, particularly the Pinghan Railroad. The railway was an important means of communication and transportation for the Japanese forces in China and, by extension, their forces in Indo-China and Southeast Asia. It was under surveillance (and attack, from time to time) by the 14th Air Force, but this did not put the railway out of operation.

The railroad was one of the major military targets in China. Other military objectives included the rolling stock and Japanese garrisons nearby. The Chinese Nationalists army was theoretically poised for attacks on these objectives, but experience had shown that they had neither the resources nor the skills for such unconventional responses. The hope was that we could assist in developing such skills and in directing the Chinese forces toward their accomplishment. Another team, Team Grizzly—led by a Jedburgh veteran, Maj. Charles Carman—was landed in a nearby area. Another Jedburgh and an old friend, Frank Cole, was the radio operator with that team.

There was already an OSS Advanced Liaison officer in the 10th War Area, Capt. Jack Finnegan, whom we contacted a few days later. An agreement was made for Team Grizzly to turn over some of their supplies to our team, since they received enough for 250 men (whereas we had only enough for 100). Looking to the future, we divided up the target areas, with our team designated to operate against the Pinghan Railway along a 100-mile stretch between Xinyang



Team Hyena with local war officials. The author is on the right, second from the end. (Image: author's collection.)

and Suiping in the adjacent Henan Province.

The flight from Xi'an was over 500 miles. We made a successful landing at a place called Valley Field near Li Huang in western Anhwei Province. Shortly afterward, the other members of the team departed for Li Huang to meet with local commanders and make arrangements for our training location and identify the men assigned to be with us. Of course, the most valuable thing we had was our collection of supplies—weapons, ammunition, explosive material, etc. These were moved by porters from the landing field to nearby spots, some of them in temporary shelters and some in the open.

I thought it somewhat ironic that I was in charge of this collection, which was priceless in this country where weapons were so highly valued and difficult to acquire. What would I do if I were to perceive

improper movement of the boxes of rifles? In fact, what would be improper movement? This was a humid country and I could be told simply that they were being moved to protect against the rain. Fortunately I saw no challenge to what I thought to be proper handling.

Still, our team was frustrated by a confusing pattern of Chinese command and responsibility, and this frustration continued throughout the time we worked with them.

We were able to set up what was to be our training base about 10 to 15 miles from Li Huang, a pleasant spot in a heavily agricultural area. Small huts were erected for us and areas were cleared for training. Most of the radio work was carried out from a nearby hill, which provided clear transmission facilities.

This was all very different from how things had worked in France.



Preparing the training base near Li Huang. Radio operations were conducted from the nearby hills. (Image: author's collection.)

There was no question that the Japanese could move into the area without very effective opposition. The previous year, with the Japanese army on the offensive in China, the danger of such a move would have been acute; it was considered unlikely, now. Their closest contingents were a considerable distance, roughly 30 to 50 miles, and were now essentially in a defensive posture.

Recognizing how quickly and forcefully the Japanese could move if they found it necessary, we sometimes felt that the Chinese were too sanguine about the security of their position: things were so open, in fact, that we just assumed Japanese intelligence on activities in the area was probably accurate. Our concern was that they might take preemptive action. Nothing happened, but might have, had the war lasted into the winter months as expected.

The first contingent of officers arrived in early July. After weeding out some of the least qualified, we began training with those who remained. It was not until 15 July that training of the enlisted men began, creating a very tight schedule in light of the planned 1 August departure date, when we would head westward toward the railroad.

During this period we concentrated on the training facilities, including preparing ranges for rifle and mortar practice, building obstacle courses, and creating exercise facilities. Our radio contact was good, but messages were minimal since we had little to say.

We used a hand generator, for which we had plenty of labor available. (There was a kerosene-powered generator available, but I did not have the transformer available to adapt this to radio needs.) In any case, we expected that we would be

relying on the radio more heavily later on, once we'd advanced toward the Pinghan Railroad. After I wired our quarters, we did use the generator to supply electric light for short periods each day.

Throughout the whole period of the mission, we sent in daily weather reports by radio. These were highly desired by the Air Force and eventually reached the Navy. The weather reports followed a regular pattern, which, when combined, were used to predict weather patterns throughout north and central China. This was one area where the Communists were of assistance, but they were working on their own—not through OSS teams.

During this time, though, we did become better acquainted with our Chinese colleagues. With us was a small contingent of officers, together with service personnel, which included cooks, cleaners, and porters, etc. Over the following two months, three more Americans joined us; one was a physician, but I do not know the nature of his mission. Whatever it was, his effectiveness was greatly diminished because, ignoring the very rules he preached, he was sick most of the time!

The other two Americans, a Major Walker and a Sergeant Romney were representatives of the OSS MO (Morale Operations) which was responsible for certain aspects of propaganda, particularly "black propaganda." Black propaganda was designed to appear as if it emanated from the enemy.

Throughout this period, we were able to observe, closely and critically, the Chinese social system, which was evident in the interactions we

witnessed between officers and the enlisted. On the one hand, it seemed very informal: officers wore loose clothing, with little concern about the informality of their attire (unless in a command setting). On the other hand, officers held themselves on a superior plane and treated as inferior, often harshly, the enlisted men. I once observed an officer beat a coolie with a stick: the coolie had slipped into a rice paddy alongside a narrow path, and when he did not immediately extricate himself, others were assigned to take over his load, and another officer kicked him into the paddy.

Whether this was typical or not we could not say: being foreigners, it was a glimpse of the interactions among the Chinese to which we weren't often privy. Overall, we felt we were in a pleasant setting with good food and adequate quarters.

It was, however, a hot and humid area, requiring protection against mosquitoes. There was much malaria, though I do not believe it was as bad as in the paddy areas of South China or of Southeast Asia. We took atabrine, a synthetic replacement for the traditional quinine. Few Chinese had preventive medicine of any type; rather, they relied upon their own natural immunity, which, of course, varied from one person to another. Medicine in this area was mostly traditional; some of it may have been useful, but it was contrary to our thinking, for the most part. We didn't have antibiotics yet, but we did have a handful of sulphur drugs that we kept for medical emergencies. Fortunately our team remained well.

Once our contingent got settled, they proved to be enthusiastic. They were ignorant of the weapons we had

Russia's entry into the war and the dropping of the atomic bomb—two developments that arose nearly simultaneously—abruptly changed these plans.

brought, but they learned fast. They were very agile—quick at gymnastics and anything related to it. Instructional assignments were divided among our team members and then among the Chinese cadre. The men responded well and seemed to enjoy the training.

Much time was spent during this and the next month negotiating with the Chinese command over our planned operations. The first colonel commanding our contingent was unreliable and was finally replaced by another, more effective leader. It was finally agreed that we would aim to begin on 12 August, which was to be a firm date—although the definition of “firm” was difficult to determine. Our life during this time was routine, with much effort expended trying to figure out what we would need for the coming operation, and identifying, particularly, the adaptations that would be required for the coming winter months.

While winters were not as severe as they were north of the Yellow River, this area could still get cold, and we had to prepare for that. Winter clothing and adequate shelter had to be provided, and details associated with procuring and moving weapons and munitions had to be worked out. The furious battle for Okinawa and the tenacity of the Japanese in defending their homeland made it seem likely that a long winter campaign would be ahead of us.

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simultaneously—abruptly changed these plans.

Surrender and Our Journey to the Capital

We heard the news of Japan's announcement of surrender the night before it was official, but this was reason enough for everyone to travel to a nearby village for celebrations. Upon confirmation the next day, our entire operation was put on standby, pending instructions from Headquarters.

I noted in my journal that the problems with surrender were tremendous: even in the late stages of the war, there were more than a million Japanese troops remaining in China, all of whom needed to be peacefully subdued and transported out of the country. From our higher-ups, we received some confusing inquiries about our team's going to Hankou, a large city and major Japanese logistics center for operations in southern China on the Yangtze River, some 200 miles to our southwest.

We learned that, apparently, the idea was to take over the Japanese counterintelligence files. But we never learned the precise nature of the mission: our Chinese colleagues immediately negated the plan, saying it was impossible. In later years, I was to learn that a very substantial Communist contingent led by Li Xiannian (who would later become president of the PRC) was operating in that area—and while this aspect of the situation was never mentioned, I

After a few days, we were dispatched for Kunming—and the end of the mission of Team Hyena.

suspect that it, too, may have been a reason for them to negate the plan.

Almost immediately, Headquarters returned with orders for us to proceed to Nanjing, which was the prewar capital, the seat of the puppet government during wartime, and a major Japanese position. We were told to collect information on Japanese atrocities in the areas en route.

One thing I found confusing at first was that all the radio traffic was now coming in clear text. It took me a short time to adjust to this since I had become so fixed on the regularity of the cipher groups. The clear text traffic was much easier to handle since there was no cipher work and mistakes could be checked immediately.

The next few days were busy with plans for our move and for handing over weapons and supplies to the Chinese Nationalists. We worked out a plan for this turnover and for our team's further movement. Our trip

was partly by boat along one of the many canals flowing quietly through central China; part was on horseback, but most of our travel was on foot. It was a fascinating trip that allowed us to experience the densely populated rice paddy region of central Anhui, a poor area with little urban development and a lot of marginal farmland.

We were welcomed in the provincial capital, Hefei, and in other cities and villages along the route. Captain MacIntosh, however, found the Chinese quite uncooperative regarding atrocities: he was chagrined that they seemed to be welcoming back the puppet troops as prodigal sons. It was difficult for us to distinguish the local leaders from those who supported the puppet government.

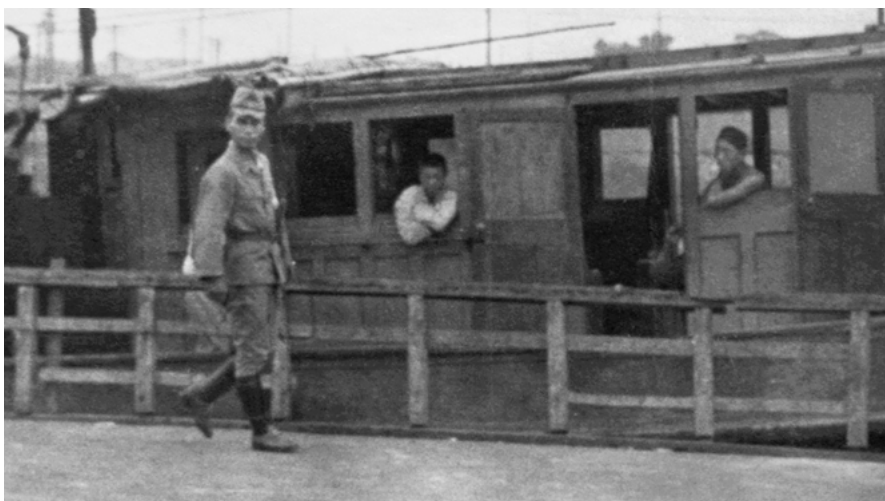
Our trip took about two weeks, becoming ever more uncertain as we approached Nanjing. For many miles outside the city, there were Japanese or puppet soldiers posted as guards at intervals of several hundred yards at first, then decreasing to 10-yard

intervals as we approached Pukou, the city on the far side of the Yangtze from Nanjing. I recall thinking how strange this was: these men, with whom we would have exchanged fire but a short time ago, were now watching and saluting as we passed. I remember thinking that one of them might get trigger happy, recalling what he had pledged to do to an American over the previous few years.

On our arrival in Pokou, we were met by a Japanese officer who was overseeing the river crossing. He arranged a boat to take us across the river into the capital city. It seemed ironic that Japanese soldiers were posted as guards on one side of the street, while just across the same street were soldiers of the Nationalist armies who had just begun to arrive in Nanjing, ferried by American transport planes.

A handful of senior OSS officers had already arrived. We were directed to their headquarters, which was allegedly the home of the late Wang Jingwei, who had led the pro-Japanese puppet government. After a few days, we were dispatched for Kunming—and the end of the mission of Team Hyena.

While waiting, I was approached by a lieutenant from OSS counterintelligence who was about to depart for Shanghai. He asked if I would accompany him to act as a radio operator and general assistant. The colonel in charge of the OSS contingent said that I should return with our team; I believe, however, that I could have persuaded him to assign me to this task—but I decided not to. Perhaps an exciting opportunity, missed?



A Japanese soldier arranging a ferry ride. (Image: author's collection.)



The opportunity aspect notwithstanding, I believe I was already showing the symptoms of malaria that would become particularly troublesome on the boat ride home. Fortunately they resolved by the time we arrived stateside.

It is pure speculation as to whether Team Hyena would have been able to do much toward its mission had the war continued. We were ready to move and reasonably prepared for a move toward the Pinghan Railway, as planned.

In retrospect, we know that the major concern of Nationalist armies at the time was not so much the Japanese enemy as the prospect of a Communist civil war in the post-war period. But that does not mean that they would not have proceeded with our mission had pressure continued. Some OSS teams did accomplish more under a variety of conditions. Some OSS special operations units had already done a lot during the 1944 period of the Japanese advance in south China which was prior to our arrival.

For me, personally, this part of my OSS service was a great experience, regardless of the military success. The chance to interact with a very different people and witness the workings of a very different civilization was a special, once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

Aftermath

After the war, the only direct contact I had with our Chinese compatriots was by correspondence with Frank, our interpreter. We exchanged several letters from 1946 until July 1948. Frank had accompanied our team to Kunming, where we separated: the Americans headed home, and Frank planned his next steps.

After a short time in Kunming, Frank went north. I believe he went to Nanking where he found employment, first, in an agricultural college and later with the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization. There, he worked in horticulture, his chosen field, but he also continued to do translation work. His letters, both

handwritten and typed, demonstrated a very good command of English.

In his early letters, Frank mentioned the hardships of the country and his own difficulties, but he remained optimistic about China and his own prospects. He spoke of his marriage and sent a photo of the wedding party (left)—posed Western style.

Frank would ask about my academic work, farming, and even about my girlfriend, remembering very well the conversations we'd had in camp. As 1947 passed into 1948, though, the content and tone of Frank's letters changed. Communist forces were no longer groups of poorly armed partisans but were now a well-organized and well-armed army. They had moved from their victories in Manchuria in to North China and, by mid-1947, were poised to go south. In his letters, Frank now dwelled more on the miseries in Nanking—the violence, the hordes of refugees, the shortages of everything, and the pervasive sense of fear. He was by this time desperate to get out of China, hoping to get a fellowship or scholarship to an American university or agricultural school.

Just finishing college on the GI bill, I could offer little but compassion. His letter of July 1948 was the last I heard from Frank. I suspect he would have been treated badly by the Communists: he was an intellectual with a higher level of education than most, had worked with the Nationalist army and, most damaging of all, had served with an American team associated with the forces of the Nationalist government. Hopefully, Frank's many assets would have protected him. I suspect others among

our Chinese compatriots faced similar challenges.

Professional Impact

World War II had a lasting impact on Americans serving abroad. As with others, we in OSS were quite innocent of the world at large; before the war, most of us had never been outside the United States. Foreign language competence was limited.

But we learned quickly. In my case, my view of the world vastly expanded. My comrades and I learned much about the beauty and nature of other cultures. We learned the importance of discipline, at both the group and personal levels. We learned how to train and prepare for any action. We learned about weapons—the variety, power, and limits of them. Most important of all, we learned about dealing with people: be honest, yet skeptical; friendly, but detached; forceful, yet understanding. Finally,

we learned to balance risk with caution, a lesson equally applicable to both civilian and military life.

For me, an interest in China and its people and culture remained. I stayed involved with China affairs through academic study and continuous observation of the China scene throughout the many years when direct access was impossible. I worked as an intelligence officer in operations and analysis, but primarily as a training officer. My wartime experience was invaluable.

