

= Dixie Mission =

The United States Army Observation Group , commonly known as the Dixie Mission , was the first U.S. effort to establish official relations with the Communist Party of China and the People 's Liberation Army , then headquartered in the mountainous city of Yan 'an . This mission was launched on 22 July 1944 during World War II , and lasted until 11 March 1947 .

In addition to establishing relations , the goal was to investigate the Communist Party politically and militarily , and determine if the U.S. would benefit from establishing liaison . John S. Service , of the United States Department of State , was responsible for political analysis , and Colonel David D. Barrett of the United States Army performed the military analysis . Initially , they reported that the Chinese Communists might be useful wartime and post @-@ war ally , and that the atmosphere in Yan 'an was more energetic and less corrupt than in Nationalist areas . After the war , the Dixie Mission 's reports , and Service and Barrett , were condemned by pro @-@ Chinese Nationalist factions in the American government and fell victim to McCarthyism . Service was fired from his position at the State Department , and Barrett was denied a promotion to brigadier general .

The Dixie Mission hosted the Patrick Hurley and George Marshall diplomatic missions to negotiate a unification of the Chinese Communists and Nationalists . Both diplomatic efforts failed . Later , the brief existence of the Dixie Mission served as a positive memory between the People 's Republic of China and the United States during the administration of President Richard M. Nixon when official relations between the two countries were re @-@ established . Veterans of the Dixie Mission , like John Service and Koji Ariyoshi , were among the first Americans invited to visit the People 's Republic of China .

= = Origin = =

Prior to the Dixie Mission , the U.S considered military interventions into CPC held China , such as an unimplemented idea by the Office of Strategic Services to send agents into north China . The Dixie Mission began , according to John Paton Davies , Jr . ' s memo , on January 15 , 1944 . Davies , a Foreign Service Officer serving in the China Burma India Theater (CBI) , called for the establishment of an observers ' mission in Chinese Communist territory . Davies argued that the communists offered attractive strategic benefits in the fight against Japan and that the more the U.S. ignored the communists , the closer Yan 'an - the ' capital ' of CPC held China - would move to Moscow . With the support of Davies ' superior , General Joseph Stilwell , this memorandum successfully convinced the administration of Franklin D. Roosevelt to put the plan into motion .

The Roosevelt Administration asked Chinese Nationalist president Chiang Kai @-@ shek 's permission to send U.S. observers to visit the CPC . Initially , Chiang was hostile to the proposal and delayed action . The Generalissimo consented after foreign correspondents that he had permitted to visit Yan 'an reported on the CPC to U.S. readers . Chiang agreed after American Vice @-@ President Henry Wallace made a state visit to Chungking , the nationalists ' capital , in late June 1944 . John Carter Vincent , an experienced State Department China expert , assisted Wallace in persuading Chiang to allow the U.S. to visit the CPC in Yan 'an without Nationalist supervision . In exchange , the U.S. promised to replace the American commander of the Burma India Theater , General Stilwell . He was removed from command in October 1944 .

= = Mission arrives in Yan 'an = =

= = First arrivals = = =

The first members of the Dixie Mission arrived in Yan 'an on July 22 , 1944 , on an Army C @-@ 47 . This team consisted of : Colonel David D. Barrett , John S. Service , Major Melvin A. Casberg , Major Ray Cromley , Captain John G. Colling , Captain Charles G. Stelle , Captain Paul C. Domke , 1st Lieutenant Henry S. Whittlesey , and Staff Sergeant Anton H Remenih . .

The second half of the team arrived on August 7 , and consisted of : Raymond P. Ludden , Lieutenant Colonel Reginald E. Foss , Major Wilbur J. Peterkin , Major Charles E. Dole , Captain Brooke Dolan , Lieutenant Simon H. Hitch , 1st Lieutenant Louis M. Jones , Sergeant Walter Gress , and Technician 4th Class George I. Nakamura . Later , other members , including Koji Ariyoshi , joined the mission .

= = = At work in Yan 'an = = =

John Service , while under Stilwell 's command , served as a diplomatic observer for both Stilwell and the American Embassy in Chungking . Over the next three months , he sent a series of reports to Chungking , and sparked controversy immediately . Service praised the CPC and compared them to European socialists , rather than the feared U.S.S.R. Service credited the CPC for a clean and superior society in stark contrast to the corruption and chaos he saw in the Nationalist areas controlled by Chiang Kai @-@ shek . He was found bias . After visiting Yan 'an , Service advocated that the United States should work with the forces opposed to the Nationalists , such as the Communists , though he did not advocate abandoning Chiang . This opinion was shared by John Paton Davies , and this position ruined both careers .

Colonel David Barrett evaluated the communists ' military potential by observing war games between CPC troops and visiting war schools set up to train the Chinese officer corps . Barrett felt the CPC emphasized indoctrinating their soldiers over military training , but he believed that American advisors could train the CPC soldiers to become excellent fighters .

The Americans were impressed by the CPC 's attacks on the Japanese , often in guerilla raids . However , the last significant CPC military campaign against the Japanese had occurred four years earlier in the Hundred Regiments Campaign by the Chinese Communist 8th Route Army . After disastrous results , the CPC avoided large campaigns against the Japanese , but maintained an illusion as active fighters .

= = Diplomacy at Dixie = =

= = = Hurley Mission = = =

On 7 November 1944 , General Patrick Hurley arrived in Yan 'an . Hurley had been in the CBI theater since August , as part of an agreement between Wallace and Chiang to provide a liaison for Chiang to communicate directly with Roosevelt and circumvent Stilwell . Successful in negotiating in the private sector , Hurley was sent to China to improve operations in the China theater , which he extended to uniting the Nationalists and CPC in a unified government . Hurley approached the CPC and the KMT without knowledge of either political group , and believed that their differences were no greater than those between the Republican and Democratic parties in the United States . He failed at reconciling the Nationalists and Chinese Communists and blamed Dixie Mission staff , John Service and John Paton Davies , and others .

= = = Marshall and Wedemeyer Missions = = =

Following the Japanese surrender , the KMT and the CPC resumed the Chinese Civil War which they had set aside in the United Front to fight the Japanese in 1937 . In December 1945 , President Harry S. Truman sent General George C. Marshall to China to negotiate a ceasefire and to form a unified government between the CPC and the KMT . While Marshall spent most of his time in Chungking , the Dixie Mission hosted Marshall in Yan 'an so he could speak with the CPC leadership . Like Hurley , Marshall failed to develop a lasting compromise , and the Civil War resumed .

Truman then sent another representative to China , General Albert Wedemeyer , who had commanded U.S. troops in China during the war , on a fact finding mission . Again , the Dixie

Mission in Yan 'an hosted the presidential mission . Wedemeyer reported that U.S. interests were best served by continued support for the Nationalist government , but Truman suppressed the report because he was waiting to see who would win and refused to expand aid the Nationalists so as to avoid involvement in the Chinese Civil War . After Wedemeyer 's visit , the U.S. packed up operations in Yan 'an and liquidated everything that could not be transported aboard a C @-@ 47 . On 11 March 1947 , the last members of the Dixie Mission left Yan 'an .

= = Question of Communist subterfuge = =

Dixie Mission participants such as John Service were criticized for viewing the CPC leadership as socialist agrarian reformers , who claimed that China under their rule would not follow the violent path of Russia under the Bolsheviks . Instead , socialism would come to China only after economic reforms that preserved capitalism , so as to mature the society to a point where it would be prepared for a peaceful transition to a communist society . This belief was disseminated to the American people prior to and during the war by the popular authors Edgar Snow and Agnes Smedley . In his August 3 , 1944 , report , " The Communist Policy Towards the Kuomintang , " Service underlined his opinion of the Communists as such and stated :

" And the impressive personal qualities of the Communist leaders , their seeming sincerity , and the coherence and logical nature of their program leads me , at least , toward general acceptance of the first explanation -- that the Communists base their policy toward the Kuomintang on a real desire for democracy in China under which there can be orderly economic growth through a stage of private enterprise to eventual socialism without the need of violent social upheaval and revolution . "

After the Dixie Mission , Colonel Barrett reflected upon this position and wrote in his memoir :

" In addition , I had fallen to some extent , not as much perhaps as did some other foreigners , for the " agrarian reformer " guff . I should have known better than this , particularly since the Chinese Communists themselves never at any time made claim to being anything but revolutionaries - period . "

The history of China after the revolution is that the CPC did not pursue a slow gradual change in the economy as some believed in 1944 . Regardless , 25 years later Service believed that American cooperation with the CPC might have prevented the excesses that occurred under Mao Zedong 's leadership after the war . After the same number of years , John Davies , in his memoir , Dragon by the Tail , defended his belief that the CPC would have been a better Chinese ally for the U.S. than the Kuomintang . Davies believes that the U.S. interests would have been better served allying with the CPC based on Realpolitik practical considerations . Allying with the CPC would have prevented it from allying with the Soviet Union , and lessened the risk and anxiety that the U.S. and the world experienced in the Cold War . In the " Lost Chance " theory , the United States missed the opportunity to build a friendly relationship with the CPC and prevent their later alignment with the Soviet Union . Service and Davies reported in good faith what they saw at the time .

= = Lasting impact = =

The Dixie Mission had consequences for individuals , and for the nation . Many participants were accused of being communists , such as John Davies and John Service . Both were subjected to multiple Congressional investigations that consistently found that they were not Communist Party members , agents of foreign powers , or disloyal to the United States . This did not spare Service from termination at the State Department . He appealed this decision and ultimately the Supreme Court of the United States ruled in his favor . Davies was exiled from China , his field of expertise , by Hurley . Then he was hounded from a position in Russia to an inconsequential post in South America . Davies resigned that position and began manufacturing furniture . Hurley accused Colonel David Barrett of sabotaging his diplomacy with the KMT and the CPC . He succeeded in preventing Barrett from promotion to brigadier general , even though Barrett 's promotion was endorsed by the theater commander , General Albert C. Wedemeyer . Barrett was retained in the China Theater , but placed in an inferior position .

Misperceptions of the Dixie Mission contributed to the nationwide Red Scare in the 1950s and 1960s . Thawing relations between the People 's Republic of China and the United States in the 1970s opened a new chapter for the mission . For the first time , the mission and its participants became the subject of serious scholarship , and many of the mission participants were among the first Americans invited to visit China in twenty years . In China , the Dixie Mission is remembered as a positive time between the two nations , and a symbol of Sino @-@ American cooperation .

In 2013 , the story of the Dixie Mission served as the historical basis for a new WWII novel called Two Sons of China , by Andrew Lam (author) . It was released by Bondfire Books in December 2013 .

= = Nickname = =

While fondly referred to as " Dixie " or the Dixie Mission , the true name of the mission was the United States Army Observation Group to Yan 'an . One war scholar attributes the name to the number of Southerners amongst the mission 's personnel . John Davies declared in his memoir , Dragon by the Tail ' , ' that the mission was called ' Dixie ' , as a reference to its location within " rebel " CPC held territory , by himself and his peers , a glib comparison to the territory of the Confederate States of America .

= = Notable members = =

Colonel David D. Barrett (1892 ? 1977) , first commanding officer of the Dixie Mission .

John S. Service (1909 ? 1999) , first State Department representative to arrive and operate as part of the Dixie Mission .

John P. Davies (1908 ? 1999) , State Department official instrumental in the creation of the mission .

Koji Ariyoshi (1914 ? 1976) , Hawaii labor editor and later a leader of the U.S.-China People 's Friendship Association .

Raymond P. Ludden (1909 ? 1970) , State Department officer who undertook dangerous mission into Japanese occupied China .

Henry C. Whittlesey , a writer

Colonel Raymond Allen Cromley (

= = = Dixie Mission Commanding Officers = = =

Colonel David D. Barrett

Colonel Morris DePass

Colonel Wilbur J. Peterkin

Major Clifford F. Young

Colonel John Sells

Colonel Raymond Allen Cromley

= = Resources = =